

TOWARDS A POST-NAZI EDUCATION: ADMINISTRATORS REBUILD THE GERMAN
SCHOOL SYSTEM 1945-1949

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ABSTRACT

Andrew E. Haeberlin: Towards a Post-Nazi Education: Administrators rebuild the German school system 1945-1949
(Under the direction of Konrad H. Jarausch)

This dissertation examines the role played by German educational administrators in the states of Hesse and Thuringia immediately after World War II, both within the educational system and the wider context of the occupation government. This was a key transitional period in German history, one that stretched from the final agonies of Nazi Germany to the establishment of the two-state system that prevailed throughout the Cold War. These administrators, while not involved at the classroom level in the educational systems that they operated within, helped shape how that system would be reformed and what it would look like in the future. Furthermore, they filled a key role as intermediaries between the German public and the Allied Control Council and foreign military officers who were in ultimate control of the government and had their own, sometimes competing, visions for what German education after National Socialism should look like. Finally, the administrators and the bureaucratic posts that they occupied became politically contested sites in and of themselves, in large part due to the agency and influence that those positions entailed.

To Morgan.

Thank you for all of your love and support, without which this would not have been possible.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADLLV	Allgemeinen Deutscher Lehrer- und Lehrerinnenverband
AMGOT	Allied Military Government for Occupied Territories
BBF-DIPF	Bibliothek für Bildungsgeschichtliche Forschung - Deutsches Institut für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung
BDM	Bund Deutscher Mädel (League of German Girls)
CDU	<i>Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands</i> (Christian Democratic Union of Germany)
DFD	Demokratische Frauenbund Deutschlands (German League of Democratic Women)
DLV	Deutsche Lehrerverein (German Teacher's Association)
E&RA	Education & Religious Affairs Division
FDJ	Freie Deutsche Jugend - (Free German Youth)
HHStAW	Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv – Wiesbaden
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Communist Party of Germany)
LT-MfV	Land Thüringen - Ministerium für Volksbildung
NEA	National Educational Association
NKVD	Narodnyy Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs)
NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Workers' Party)
NSLB	Nationalsozialistische Lehrerbund (National Socialist Teachers League)
NSV	Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt (National Socialist People's Welfare Association)
OMGUS	Office of Military Government, United States
OMGH	Office of Military Government, Hesse

SBZ	Sowjetische Besetzungszone (Soviet Occupation Zone)
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party of Germany)
SMAD	Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland, (Soviet Military Administration in Germany)
SMA-Th.	Sowjetische Militäradministration in Thüringen (Soviet Military Administration in Thuringia)
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
THStAW	Thüringisches Hauptstaatsarchiv – Weimar

CHAPTER 1: RETHINKING THE ROLE OF ADMINISTRATION

Education is a weapon the effect of which is determined by the hands that wield it, by who is to be struck down.

-Joseph Stalin, 1934¹

There can be no revolution without a radical change in the educational system. It is sufficient to quote . . . the example of the German Republic, which did not touch the old educational system, and therefore never became a republic.

-H.G. Wells, 1934²

In the fall of 1945 schools in the German city of Wiesbaden faced a fearful array of crises and challenges. The immediate problems included the lack of basic school supplies, bombed out or otherwise damaged classrooms, a dearth of qualified teachers in the wake of denazification purges, want of politically suitable textbooks and teaching aids, and shortages of heating coal in the face of the approaching winter. Even though the city, now capital of the newly formed state of Greater Hesse, was plagued by all of these problems and more, when the Lord Mayor of

¹ H.G. Wells, "Marxism vs. liberalism: an interview [between] Joseph Stalin [and] H.G. Wells." (New York: New Century Publishers, 1945)

² *Ibid.*

Wiesbaden wrote to the state government on October 19, 1945 he did not ask for teachers, books, classroom space, or coal. Instead, he asked for a school inspector.³

This was not a case of replacing an existing inspector, filling a vacancy created by the war or denazification, or resuming services that had been suspended in the chaos of the final years of Hitler's Reich. Wiesbaden already had an inspector and by every report he was both active and competent. What the city needed was a second school inspector to ease the burden on the man who already held the position and ensure that nothing was overlooked. In his letter requesting the immediate creation of a second inspector position, the Mayor was very clear about how important the job had become in light of the reforms, rebuilding, and expansion that were sweeping German education after the peace. He wrote that, "The reconstruction [of the schools] in the new spirit demands ever more extensive and responsible work of the school inspectors."⁴

He went on to enumerate a number of the specific duties that the inspectors were responsible for, and which were proving so vital to educational reconstruction. These included communication with the occupation authorities, overseeing the selection and training of new teachers, institution of new curriculums, and preparing new teaching materials. All of this was in addition to the usual tasks of inspecting school facilities and certifying instructor competency, which was deemed a full time job in and of itself under normal circumstances. Many of the new tasks that they were burdened with fell far outside of their professional routine. What was the nature of this activity, and what made it so vital that the mayor of a city in crisis would prioritize acquiring a second school inspector? What was the role of educational administrators in

³ "Der Oberbürgermeister der Stadt Wiesbaden an den Herrn Regierungspräsidenten, Abteilung II; Betr: Berufung eines zweiten Schulrats für die Volksschulen in Wiesbaden," 19. October, 1945, Abt. 650 B Nr. 2920 – Personal Akte – Heinrich Schaab, HHStAW

⁴ *Ibid.*

rebuilding German education after World War 2? How did this fit into broader reconstruction agendas, and how did this in turn affect the educational systems that they oversaw? In addition to molding the form that a new, non-fascist German educational system would take and overseeing the resumption of the educational routine, school inspectors were acting as key intermediaries between Allied occupation authorities and the teachers who formed the working core of the schools. In doing so they were making a major contribution to the nation building enterprise that lay at the core of Europe's recovery from World War 2.

The school inspectorate in Hesse was not alone in assuming these tasks. Throughout Germany, both under Western and Soviet occupation, educational administrators of all levels helped, from the earliest days of the occupation, to articulate and shape precisely what the educational mission of the systems they worked within would be and how it would be carried out. Furthermore, they served as intermediaries between German schools that, as part of the German government, were subject to the oversight and final authority of the Allied Control Council and the foreign military officers who had their own visions for what German education after National Socialism should look like, agendas that were sometimes at odds with the level of reform that was desired by the Germans themselves. Their complex existence at the intersection of military, civilian, state, and national influences and demands made them both the wielders of significant political agency, and simultaneously the targets of other politically active groups seeking to further their own agendas.

For the victors of World War II, denazification and the demilitarization of Germany were the overriding concerns of the immediate post-war period, although the exact form of a post-Nazi Germany was a point of strong contention. It was widely agreed, however, that resuming the education of German youth in a productive manner was key to the nation-building project. It

was also vital in order to undo some of the excesses of the recent past and hopefully salvage a generation of young Germans that many feared were irredeemably tainted by more than a decade of Nazi education. Selection of the Germans who would staff this new educational system, both on the classroom and administrative levels, was highly politicized. Serving in a public capacity was also dependent upon being certified through the denazification process as not being implicated in any National Socialist organizations or activities. Due to the ways that Nazi organizations insinuated themselves into almost every level of German society and the specific ways in which they targeted professionals via organizations such as the National Socialist Teachers' League (NSLB), men and women with such clean political bills of health were not easy to find. While these requirements were eased somewhat in subsequent years, the people chosen to work in German civil services immediately after the war were exceptional in many ways.

Frequently returning from years of exile abroad, often emerging from a self-imposed 'inner-exile' of non-engagement with the Nazi state, and sometimes coming directly from political prisons and concentration camps, these men and women brought with them a wartime experience that was wholly different from most of their fellow countrymen. Some shared the most radical goals of the occupiers and viewed defeat as an opportunity to build a truly new society. Others preferred a return to the norms of the democratic Weimar Republic or even older models such as the glory days of the Second Reich, a time when German education was hailed as an international model and emulated by developing nations such as the United States. In most cases they had pre-war experience as educators. Some had already risen to the ranks of the local educational administrative corps by the time of the Nazi takeover and had their careers cut short

due to the political purges of 1933. They not only carried out the policies of the occupation authorities, but articulated their own set of uniquely German educational goals.

German educational administration serves as an excellent case study of the interactions between occupiers, local populations, and those among the occupied tasked with rebuilding and reforming their own systems. Examining these issues allows us to see how Germans themselves were, for better or worse, partially responsible for the course that their country – or perhaps more appropriately countries – took in the years after World War II and were not simply the passive objects of the Cold War international politics of the superpowers. It also illuminates the nature of occupational administration in general and the roles played by both occupiers and occupied in reshaping recently destabilized nations.

Rather than focus on the policies of the occupiers, this study highlights the ways in which German education was reshaped by the people for whom it was being reformed and puts German policy makers and the concerns, needs, and desires of the citizens they served back into the discussion of how two radically different yet distinctly German educational systems emerged from the chaos of postwar Europe. It is, however, more than just a story of educational reform. By examining areas in what would eventually become parts of both East and West Germany it challenges earlier views of East/West divides that were impermeable even at this early stage and describes the evolution of two systems that, while not developing together in the same direction, were still part of a common German educational tradition that had not yet wholly broken down or been superseded by newer structures operating on purely Cold War lines. This is not intended to claim that they were operating in tandem or without reference to the ever-solidifying institutional boundaries that resulted from the escalating international tensions, but to show that

the divides that evolved were grounded just as much in German political traditions and considerations as they were in the international policies of the conquerors.

Literature Review

Much of the recent scholarship on post-war German education focuses on how far reform and denazification efforts progressed and to what degree the new school systems represented a break with both the Nazi and pre-Nazi past. In the West German context the issue is framed as an attempt to explain the ultimate success of the transformation – Germany today is a stable democracy with an educational system that, while not without internal criticism and frictions, is generally well regarded and produces relatively well educated citizens. The key questions surround the degree to which this is due to occupation-era reforms, and how much of it is the result of later initiatives in the 50s and 60s. There is also the issue of what role Weimar and Imperial-era policies and practices played, and whether the rebuilding of German education created a break with these older forms, or if the reforms were ultimately defeated by an older generation of teachers invested in pre-Nazi structures and traditions.⁵

Many earlier analyses emerged from the context of criticisms originating from West German educational reformers. They frequently argued that during the occupation the

⁵ For an example of arguments centered on occupation policy see James F. Tent, *Mission on the Rhine: Reeducation and denazification in American-occupied Germany*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982). For a more recent study that focuses on the importance of post-occupation grass roots reform, see Brian M. Puaca, *Learning Democracy: education reform in West Germany, 1945-1965*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009). For a recent study that, while it focuses on the Soviet occupied east, argues for the presence of a strong continuity in classroom-level education via consistently retained or rehired teaching staffs see Benita Blessing, *The Antifascist Classroom: Denazification in Soviet-occupied Germany 1945-1949*, (New York: Palmgrave, 2006)

educational system entered a period of stagnation in which few substantial reforms were made and practices largely reverted to structures and patterns dating from before the Nazi takeover.⁶ This is closely related to a literature on the Western occupation of Germany in general that claimed it was ill run, did not successfully introduce substantial change into German culture or politics beyond the initial destruction of National Socialism, and gained its most notable successes by increasingly removing itself from the day to day governance of the country.⁷ Later writers such as Mitter and Hearnden have reinforced this view by highlighting the resistance of German educators to British and American reforms and their tendency to fall back on the systems with which had the most familiarity, namely those of the Weimar Republic and the Kaiserreich. Where significant deviation from these older structures was evident the changes were not portrayed as innovations by young teachers or dictates from the occupation authorities, but as National Socialist measures that were never purged from the laws governing West German education.⁸ This literature borrows heavily from critiques of West German higher education that were popular in the late 60s and 70s. While the student radicals of 1968 railed against “the mildew of thousands of years” under the academic gowns of their professors, critics of West German primary and secondary education deplored what they saw as distasteful remnants of the most troubling periods of German history.

⁶ Saul Robinsohn and J. Caspart Kuhlmann, “Two decades of non-reform in West German education” *Comparative Education Review* vol. 11 no. 3 (October 1963): 311-330, and Tent, *Mission on the Rhine*

⁷ Edward N. Peterson, *The American Occupation of Germany: Retreat to Victory*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1977)

⁸ Arthur Hearnden, *Education in the two Germanies*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1974); Arthur Hearnden, “Problems in German secondary education [1985],” in *Education in Germany: Tradition and reform in historical context*, David Phillips, ed., (London: Routledge, 1995); Wolfgang Mitter, “Continuity and Change: A basic question for German education,” in *Education*, vol. 33 (1995): 7-23

More recent scholarship has shifted towards a more charitable assessment of the changes made in German education after the war. In one study Brian Puaca argues that grassroots efforts significantly reformed the school system despite official neglect, and explores the ways in which the foundations of successful German democracy were formed through day-to-day educational interactions between students and teachers in the 40s and 50s.⁹ Beate Rosenzweig argues similarly in a comparative study of post-war Germany and Japan. She asserts that even though German politicians and educational planners resisted structural changes far more vigorously and successfully than their Japanese counterparts it was the German system that experienced more meaningful institutional, structural, and pedagogical reform.¹⁰ Like Puaca, she argues that this comparative German success was due largely to a greater over-all familiarity with and acceptance of basic democratic principles. This in turn is part of a larger trend towards recognizing a slow pattern of democratization and the development of every-day democratic practices and traditions in Germany stretching back into the Imperial era.¹¹

Literature on East Germany inverts these assessments. The radical political changes demanded by the occupying Soviets and the complete restructuring of most aspects of German politics allow historians to take for granted a clean break with previous traditions while questioning the ultimate success of a process that led to yet another single party German dictatorship. Historians writing about East Germany also tend to put much more stock in the influence of the occupying power and, in the context of East German education, concentrate on

⁹ Puaca, *Learning Democracy*

¹⁰ Beate Rosenzweig, *Erziehung zur Demokratie? : amerikanische Besatzungs- und Schulreformpolitik in Deutschland und Japan*. (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1998)

¹¹ Margaret Anderson, *Practicing Democracy: Elections and Political Culture in Imperial Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000)

the needs, concerns, and dictates of the Soviets while portraying German educators as passive recipients of this change. Treatments of Soviet cultural policies towards education in Eastern Europe in general, and Germany in particular, emphasize the political nature of the instruction and the ulterior motivations of the “reformers.” John Connelly has focused on the nation building aspirations of the Soviets as the root cause for what is portrayed as a Stalinization of Eastern European higher education,¹² while John Rodden describes the primary school system as a mechanism for conscious political indoctrination and Stalinization that simply shifted the ideological focus from fascism to communism while leaving the most repressive aspects intact.¹³

More recent scholarship has begun to address in part some of the issues surrounding German administrators and their relationships to central authority in the Soviet Zones. Benitia Blessing, for example, notes that educational theorists and administrators in the Soviet Zone were not part of the inner circles of SED elites such as the Moscow-trained “Ulbricht Group.” She credits this with reining in the impact of politics on their decisions and policies, ascribing party concerns an “integral” rather than a “leading” role, but she does not explore any other impacts that isolation from the most powerful political cadres may have had on their work.¹⁴ In almost all cases the focus is upon the needs and political wishes of the occupying powers and the ways in which the educational system was mobilized as a means to these ends. Most recently, Charles Lansing has examined the occupation period and the early history of East Germany to

¹² John Connelly, *Captive University: The sovietization of East German, Czech, and Polish higher education, 1945-1956*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000)

¹³ John Rodden, *Repainting the Little Red Schoolhouse: A history of Eastern German education, 1945-1995*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), John Rodden, *Textbook Reds: Schoolbooks, Ideology, and Eastern German Identity*, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006)

¹⁴ Blessing, *The Antifascist Classroom*

probe how the German teaching profession changed during the transition from Nazism to Communism. Based on research on the town of Brandenburg an der Havel, he maintains that rather than a clean break with a Nazi past there was significantly more continuity in the teaching corps between the National Socialist years and the Communist years than other researchers have seen, but emphasizes gradual perceptual change on the part of the staff as the region underwent ideological reeducation under the Soviets.¹⁵ In contrast to the previously widely accepted Cold War narrative of an East German educational system that broke strongly with earlier traditions as part of the process of becoming the ideological mouthpiece of a second German dictatorship, Lansing describes a system where the under-performance of ill-trained replacements and ongoing shortages forced the rehiring of many older teachers, while those poorly-prepared replacements dropped out of the profession at much higher than normal rates after a few years. He is far from the first to recognize any of these particular trends, however his approach is notable in recognizing institutional continuities and ideological shifts due to broader changes in German society.¹⁶

There exists a more recent strain of literature - particularly in the German language historiography - that is concerned with re-evaluating education in the former east without the ingrained political agendas of either the Cold War or the post-unification decade. Scholars such as Emanuel Droit attempt to remove themselves from both the triumphalist narrative of the former West and the rose-tinted nostalgia of the former East in order to more objectively assess

¹⁵ Charles B. Lansing, *From Nazism to Communism: German Schoolteachers under Two Dictatorships*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010)

¹⁶ For another, earlier study that recognizes some of the institutional continuities and relatively short-lived duration of many replacement teachers without drawing some of the ideological conclusions of Lansing, see Brigitte Hohlfeld, *Die Neulehrer in der SBZ/DDR 1945-1953: Ihre Rolle bei der Umgestaltung von Gesellschaft und Staat* (Weinheim: Deutscher Studien Verlag, 1992)

the successes, failures, and ultimate legacy of an East German educational project that shaped the lives and culture of a major portion of the German speaking world for half a century. This literature largely steers clear of the debates surrounding denazification and attempts to place East Germany's educational system in its proper historical context. Droit in particular takes seriously the GDR system's attempts at social engineering as a means for regime stabilization and attempts an assessment of how successful this was over the nation's 50 year life span.¹⁷

Finally, there is a more recent trend to attempt to address the German experience of the Cold War not as two separate histories, but as a shared event with two different vantage points. This is an approach that attempts to acknowledge the ways in which the events of the 20th century profoundly divided Germans, yet at the same time left them far more connected than is normal for neighboring countries, even those with strong linguistic and cultural ties. For example, after the collapse of the Third Reich only the most radical pan-Germanist would speak of a 'Greater Germany' encompassing Austria, much less Switzerland and Lichtenstein, yet even after half a century of division the political collapse of East German socialism led very rapidly to a seemingly inevitable reunification. This cannot simply be ascribed to ancient cultural tradition or a long-standing political identity; the first unified German state scarcely lasted three-quarters of a century before its partition.

The issue of how to address this complex relationship and create histories of 20th century Germany that present both sides of the Iron Curtain as two halves of a shared whole has begun to be taken up in the English language historiography in the past decade, although scattered attempts to do so go back in the German literature as far as the early 80s. Konrad H. Jarausch has traced the unsatisfactory manner in which this issue has been taken up in an essay published

¹⁷ Emmanuel Droit. *Vorwärts zum neuen Menschen?: Die sozialistische Erziehung in der DDR (1949-1989)*. (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2014)

on the online discussion forum H-German in 2011,¹⁸ and used such a “cross cutting” approach in discussing the post-Nazi cultural renewal of Germany in *After Hitler*.¹⁹ While the realities of the post-war occupation and the establishment of multiple occupation zones each with their own bureaucratic and administrative framework prevents the examination of post-war Germany in a fully integrated manner, this work examines both the Soviet administration in Thuringia and the American administration in Hesse in order to show how similar backgrounds and circumstances led ultimately to different outcomes and to generate some insight into why this was so.

In both Eastern and Western contexts, the current scholarship largely fails to address the issues surrounding the German administrators who served as intermediaries between Allied policy makers and the educators in the classrooms. Previous studies have concentrated either on the highest levels of occupation planning and military administration²⁰ or on the local levels of individual schools, teachers, and classrooms.²¹ Both of these approaches successfully demonstrate what kinds of issues were of importance to the occupying powers and how the experience of the German classroom changed over this time. What is currently lacking, however, is a close examination of the intervening layer of administrators, school inspectors, and educational theorists who mediated between the high politics of occupation policy and the every

¹⁸ Konrad H. Jarausch, “Divided, Yet Reunited - The Challenge of Integrating German Post-War Histories,” posted on H-German@H-Net.msu.edu, 1 February 2011.

¹⁹ Konrad H. Jarausch, *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germans 1945-1995*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005)

²⁰ for example: Tent, *Mission on the Rhine*; Peterson, *The American Occupation of Germany*; and Norman M. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A history of the Soviet zone of occupation, 1945-1949*. (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1995)

²¹ for example: Puaca, *Learning Democracy*; and Lansing, *From Nazism to Communism*

day realities of teaching. This project intends to fill that gap by examining the role of state administrators in the rebuilding of the educational system.

The role of administration

That this work is situated between many existing literatures - bridging both political and professional histories as well examining events under both American and Soviet occupation - is fitting given the intermediary role played by the educational administrators who are its major subjects. The problems and challenges of education in post-war Germany loom large, and play a major role in the events and circumstances that are discussed, but this is not a purely educational history. In the process of doing their jobs these administrators played a substantive but underappreciated intermediary role in the broader project of reconstructing German politics and society after the war. This complex contribution to the post-war order provides an excellent platform for examining the occupation as a whole, and the way that occupiers and occupied interacted within it.

First, education was widely acknowledged to be a key component to any meaningful rehabilitation of the German nation, both by the Allied occupiers and by the Germans themselves. Much ink was spilled during the war, both by military professionals planning the eventual occupation and by expatriates attempting to envision the form of a post-Hitler German national community, on questions of how to best reform and rehabilitate what had once been one of Europe's proudest educational traditions. Among the Germans the authors were varied and represented a broad cross section of those who had found themselves unwelcome in Hitler's Reich and had the means to leave before the war. This was a group that simultaneously included

both Erika Mann - actress, author, war correspondent, cabaret proprietor, and daughter of novelist Thomas Mann - a woman who was well known in German language literary and cultural circles for her outspoken politics and non-traditional lifestyles and Dr. Werner Richter, a former undersecretary of education in the state of Prussia who was deeply concerned with the connection between state culture and public education.²² If anything binds the German voices on this issue together, it is the shared antipathy towards the fascist project that motivated them to flee abroad, and a sense of mission grounded in a shared early 20th century appreciation for the power of public education as a tool for social engineering. In their understanding public schools were where new generations learned what it was to be German and the stakes involved in rebuilding that system were no less than the future soul of their nation.

Second, education was (and remains) a core government service that touched upon virtually all members of the community in some way or another, whether directly through school aged children of their own or indirectly via the children of friends and relatives. As such, it engendered a great deal of community participation and attention, both positive and negative. Administrators therefore faced pressures and demands not only from occupation authorities to whom they were responsible, but also from German citizens in the areas under their purview. This came both directly via letters and other personal correspondence between individual citizens and educational officials and indirectly via elected governmental representatives. The officials themselves must be taken into account as well as they had personal political agendas and beliefs and inevitably became entangled in the needs of the political parties that they affiliated themselves with.

²² Erika Mann, *School For Barbarians*. (New York: Modern Age Books, 1938) and Werner Richter, *Re-Educating Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945) are both excellent examples of this that were widely published.

Finally, the administrative layer of the German educational system was simultaneously one of the areas in German civil administration most damaged by Nazi ideologies and one of the more successful denazification stories. It is also a story that largely remains to be told. The specific numbers of administrators who lost their positions in the post-war purging of Nazi sympathizers has not been determined, however a close examination of the personnel files of the Thuringian and Hessian educational ministries indicates a much cleaner break with the recent past than other studies have found in comparable teaching corps.²³ While far from a comprehensive study, an examination of 40 Thuringian and 63 Hessian administrators employed immediately after the war shows only one that worked at the administrative level under the previous regime, and that single case was an elderly man who took his pension before the new year. All instances of senior ministerial staff had exceptionally clean wartime records, with exile or imprisonment being *de rigueur*.²⁴ The reasons for this success probably lie in a combination of the higher amounts of power and authority vested in these positions and the relatively lower number of positions to be filled. This was not a case of changing over tens of thousands of teachers but of finding replacements for a few hundred bureaucrats.

The consequence of this is that the Germans who were eventually selected to participate in reconstruction not only had a clear and relatively well-defined task to accomplish, but it was also much more likely that they were generally unsympathetic to what was being replaced. For the researcher this means that rather than bogging down in the questions and concerns of a

²³ See Lansing, *From Nazism to Communism* and Puaca, *Learning Democracy* for recent examples of this. Both studies found a striking continuity between the teaching staffs in localities on both sides of the Iron Curtain in the years following the war, despite a nation-wide denazification program that should have eliminated many of them.

²⁴ Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Wiesbaden (HHStA-W), Abt. 650 B - Personalakten, HHStAW and Personalakten aus dem Bereich Volksbildung, THStA-W

National Socialist past, attention may instead be focused on how the surviving remnants of pre-1933 anti-Nazi political forces within Germany worked to build a postwar future. This stands in marked contrast to aspects of civil administration like the West German judiciary, where lofty pre-surrender ideals of completely purging and rebuilding the system were soon abandoned as impractical due to the requirements of maintaining law and order, and men within the system who were complicit in all manner of Nazi crimes continued their professional careers.²⁵

At the same time, the fact that these administrators almost always had some degree of pre-Nazi employment history or other professional contact with the German school system - sometimes as Weimar-era administrators or inspectors, frequently as classroom teachers - meant that they did not have questions of their competency hanging over them, unlike their colleagues in the classrooms. Post-war teacher shortages, the immediate need to rapidly reopen schools, and the short-term ravages of denazification on the ranks of teaching staffs meant that replacements had to be found and trained in extremely short time and in large numbers. The immediate consequence was that these *Neulehrer* - “new teachers” - were simultaneously heralded by champions of post-Nazi reform as the vanguard of a new era in education while constantly dogged by allegations of incompetence and indifference that undercut their relationships with the communities that they served in. The administrative ranks, again due

²⁵ For a good examination of this process in the West German judicial context, see Andrew Szanajda, *The Restoration of Justice in Postwar Hesse, 1945-1949*, (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2007). For a more general approach to the subject and the difficulties faced in denazifying German institutions see: Armin Schuster, *Die Entnazifizierung in Hessen, 1945-1954: Vergangenheitspolitik in der Nachkriegszeit* (Wiesbaden: Historische Kommission für Nassau, 1999).

largely to the vastly smaller numbers of people who had to be replaced, largely escaped this complication.²⁶

Recently, some historians have argued for the importance of evaluating educational reform at the level of the classroom due to questions surrounding the relationship between state-level policy and the individual school. In doing so Brian Puaca emphasizes the “process of negotiation that occurred as postwar German educators adopted and adapted some American educational ideas and methods while rejecting others,”²⁷ as a way of highlighting just how much agency rested in the hands of local teachers. While this is a valid point, I argue that the nature of a military occupation and the unequal power relationships between occupier and occupied magnify the importance of the local administrators on whose shoulders fell the tasks of interpreting policies from above and ensuring at least a minimum level of compliance from those below them. These administrators had a unique position within the German educational system, straddling the worlds of the Western and Soviet occupiers who were setting policy on the broadest levels and the German educators who were implementing them on the local level.

While native Germans themselves, many of these men and women were – although not always – highly familiar and comfortable with the language, culture, and political views of the occupiers. This was in large part due to the selection process used by the occupation forces in the first years after the war, which placed a high value on anti-fascist political views dating from before 1933, or at the very least non-participation in overtly Nazi organizations. A large number

²⁶ For more on the Neulehrer in general, their role in the rebuilding of German Education after the war, and the specific meanings that various groups ascribed to them see Petra Gruner, *Die Neulehrer, ein Schlüsselsymbol der DDR-Gesellschaft: Biographische Konstruktionen von Lehrern zwischen Erfahrungen und gesellschaftlichen Erwartungen*. (Weinheim: Deutscher Studien Verlag, 2000)

²⁷ See Puaca, *Learning Democracy*: 9

of these politically acceptable Germans displayed a high degree of intellectual hybridism, operating on a multi-national level far more than was common at that time. Examples of this included educators who, before the war, had contributed to international educational journals, participated in foreign exchange programs, spent time in Moscow due to communist convictions, or who retreated into exile abroad as the political situation in Germany worsened throughout the early and mid 30s. Their ability to function in both sets of political and social networks made them invaluable intermediaries between the occupiers and the occupied.

It should be acknowledged that many of the men and women examined in this work were members of state-level ministries of education, and count among their numbers the ministers themselves. It may seem curious to include such relatively lofty positions in a discussion of mid-level bureaucrats, however Germany during the years of the Allied occupation is not a normal society operating under the usual set of power relationships. Normally people in top-level offices such as these are policy makers, men and women with an extreme amount of independent authority. In the unusual circumstance of total governmental collapse followed by military occupation, however, those offices assume an unusually subordinate role. As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, the existence of a civilian administration answerable to a foreign military occupation structure meant that these high ministerial officials did not have the ability to craft and direct top-level policy that they would have under normal circumstances, but still had considerable ability to shape directives from above in ways that matched their own priorities and world-views. In this way they functioned much more as mid-level administrators of policies dictated by others rather than top-level policy makers.

The Case Studies: Thuringia and Hesse

The decision to conduct this study at the level of state government rather than on a national or zonal level was made due to the political uncertainty within Germany during this period and the results that it had on how the occupation was structured. From the beginning the question of how, exactly, a final political reorganization of central Europe was to be undertaken was highly contested. In the wake of the Yalta Conference the question was left open whether Germany was to be broken up, and if so into how many separate states, or whether it would be allowed to remain whole. In the end the ad-hoc arrangement of occupation zones solidified into two distinct political entities as early Cold War animosities drove an increasingly large wedge between the Western Allies and the Soviets, beginning with economic and travel restrictions between zones in the West and culminating in the creation of two politically independent German states in 1949.²⁸

Between the dismemberment of Nazi Germany and the foundation of its successor states there was little in the way of a centralized political authority. Unable to come to an agreement on how to organize a single state, and not wishing to totally abandon the future possibility of one in favor of the de facto multi state arrangement that grew out of the occupation, both the Soviets and the Western Allies avoided creating robust national-level administrative apparatuses, defaulting to a federal model where civil government on the state level handled most of the day to day administrative needs of the region. While a joint occupation administrative framework for the entire nation existed, its inherently cooperative framework meant that it became less powerful and less influential as time passed and Cold War animosities deepened and solidified.

²⁸ For broad looks at the occupation of both the American and Soviet Zones of Germany see Tent, *Mission on the Rhine* and Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*

Meanwhile, local structures and government became increasingly responsible and influential due to this power vacuum.²⁹

In the West this process continued via the foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany as a federally organized state. In the Eastern German Democratic Republic the national ministries in Berlin quickly reasserted their power, culminating in the official dissolution of the East German states in 1952. In the interim between surrender and the foundation of East and West Germany the level of state administration and bureaucracy being investigated here represents not only the key level of German government, but one of the defining attributes which sets it apart from both what came before and after and argues for handling the region as a single entity rather than two.

The temporal boundaries of this project were also determined by two other factors, one originating in the reconstruction politics of the East and the other in the personnel policies of the West. In what eventually became the German Democratic Republic the formation of a centralized state was accompanied by a shift of educational policies and decisions being made on the level of the individual Länder to a centralized ministry in Berlin where the SED could exert more direct control. This represents a basic change in the pressures and influences that policy makers were working under, moving away from local needs and issues and to questions of national policy and politics. Eventually this culminated in the 1952 dissolution of federal states in East Germany in favor of direct administration of districts from the national capital. The shift in power from the regional to the national level began a couple of years before that, however, so that by the time of their official dissolution the states were little more than administrative fictions

²⁹ For an in-depth examination of the administrative structure of the Soviet occupation of Germany, see Jan Foitzik, *Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland (SMAD) 1945-1949: Struktur und Funktion*, (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999). For the American sectors Tent covers much the same ground in *Mission on the Rhine*.

bearing little resemblance to the assertive local governments visible in the five years after the war.

In the West this shift was far less jarring, as the state as a whole and education in particular continued to be organized along a federal model. But the period from 1949 to the early 1950s marks another kind of break, namely a shift in administrative cohorts. Due to the politics of denazification a large number of the men and women drawn into the administrative ranks in the years immediately after the war were educators whose careers had been prematurely cut short by the *Gleichschaltung* of 1933, most of whom were born in the 1880s. Once re-hired their pensions and retirement dates were calculated as if they had never been terminated in the 30s. The mandatory retirement age for Hessian government workers, including both teachers and administrators, at this time was 65. The over-all result of this was that there was a massive wave of retirements in 1949 and 1950. This picture is further complicated by the legal rehabilitation of many former Nazis in the early 50s, leading many to resume to their former occupations. By and large the administrators who oversaw the early years of Hessian education in the 1950s FRG were a different group than those who had taken on the task of rebuilding and reforming the system during the interim, occupation years.

The period between 1945 and 1949 is not simply the epilogue to Nazi Germany and World War 2, nor is it merely the prologue to Germany's fractured Cold War history. It is a moment in time that, brief though it may have been, featured radically different organizing principles and political potentials than the eras that immediately preceded and followed it. This study is not, of course, unique in embracing this periodization nor does it argue that these

temporal boundaries form hard conceptual borders that preclude any other approaches.³⁰ If nothing else history as a scholarly discipline highlights both continuities and caesuras across any event or point in time, no matter how natural or arbitrary it may seem. As deeply transitional Germany's post-war it may have been, however, this need not affect the analysis of it as a distinct period in its history any more than our knowledge of what follows 1933 should constrain the study of the Weimar Republic on its own merits.

The unique character of this era demanded a comparative approach that integrated both the Soviet and Western zones of occupation. The Cold War tensions that would divide the German-speaking world had not yet fully solidified, yet were still visible in almost every aspect of daily life. It was necessary to select regions for this study that would represent historical pathways that led both to the socialist GDR and the capitalist BRD, yet not be so dissimilar that meaningful comparison would be impossible. In the end I settled on the neighboring regions of Hesse and Thuringia because they were geographically close and yet ideologically distinctive.

Hesse was chosen for three main reasons: First, it was under American occupation. As the occupation matured Anglo-American cooperation and coordination in their duties and policies drew their respective zones together, eventually culminating in their effective merger into a single economic and political body in 1947, with Bizonia forming the core of what would eventually become the Federal Republic of Germany. While the areas in the Southwest under French occupation would join a year later, this early and close cooperation makes the experience of the American and British sectors far more typical of a generalized 'West German experience.' Within this bi-zonal region Hesse has a number of other characteristics that made it stand out. Its

³⁰ For two other studies that utilized similar periodization, albeit without arguing as explicitly for the recognition of post-war Germany as its own distinctly unique moment in time, see Tent, *Mission on the Rhine* and Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*.

geographical and cultural identity, while certainly unique, is not so strongly articulated that it must be constantly corrected for, something which would be a constant issue in the far south or the far north. Confessionally, in 1947 it was almost perfectly split along the same lines as Germany as a whole, with roughly a 2 to 1 ratio of Protestants to Catholics.

Thuringia was chosen for many of the same reasons as exemplar of the nascent GDR. As a neighboring state it shares many cultural similarities with its western neighbor. Before half a century of communist rule decimated religious observance it had a confessional makeup very similar to Hesse's, with a Lutheran majority that lived with a very large Catholic minority. Like Hesse its regional cultural identity is not so strongly articulated as to make it unrepresentative of larger trends. As with the case of Hesse, this confessional mixing left religion and its relationships to the schools as a major issue that post-war occupiers and educational reformers had to contend with, but did not completely dominate the discourse as it did in Catholic Bavaria. Thuringia was also attractive from a research perspective, as there were large, readily available archival holdings on many prominent Thuringian educational administrators, both in Thuringia's own state archives and in the Berlin-based Research Library for the History of Education, part of the German Institute for International Educational Research.³¹

These files, coupled with the relevant ministerial holdings and personnel files held at the Hessian State Archive in Wiesbaden and the Thuringian State Archive in Weimar provided the archival backbone for this study; smaller sections depended on a diverse array of published

³¹ For example: Personalakten aus dem Bereich Volksbildung, THStAW; Nachlass Walter Wolf, THStAW; Nachlass Walter Wolf, BBF-DIPF; Nachlass Marie Torhorst, BBF-DIPF, among others. See the bibliography for a full listing of archival and published primary sources.

literature from the period and American occupation documents published as microfiche sets.³²

Linguistic difficulties precluded the inclusion of sources directly from Russian or ex-Soviet archives, however the most important edicts, orders, and other acts of military governance were available in translation.

It must be acknowledged that Thuringia is somewhat of an outlier in that it was a hotbed of very early National Socialist activity. National Socialists entered the government there in 1930, and Wilhelm Frick - a prominent Nazi who would become the Minister of the Interior in Hitler's cabinet in 1933 - was given the position of Thuringian Minister of the Interior and Education, the first ministerial level position held by the NSDAP.³³ This very early acquaintance with National Socialism does not seem to have stifled pre-war protests against the government or led to a particularly deep uniformity of Nazi thought. If anything, judging purely from the post-war denazification papers of numerous officials in Thuringia's educational ministry, it seems to have had a higher than average rate of overt resistance to National Socialism, perhaps born of the antipathy that only prolonged, close contact can create. Regardless, the by the late 40s Thuringia does not appear to have been remarkable one way or the other in the amount of zeal its citizens displayed for a return to fascism.

Finally, both regions were attractive in that they were not complicated by the presence of military administration before the end of the war or the territorial concessions made after the war. This is an issue that greatly complicates the occupation history of much of the Rhineland, where large areas were under an early form of occupation administration as early as the fall of

³² For example: *The U.S. Occupation of Germany: Educational Reform, 1945-1949 Microfiche Collection*, (Congressional Information Service, Inc., 1991). See the bibliography for a full listing of archival and published primary sources

³³ Bernhard Fulda, *Press and Politics in the Weimar Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009): 152

1944. For the sake of simplicity it was desirable to avoid the need to consider the wide array of ad-hoc wartime arrangements that this entailed. So to the more eastern reaches of the eventual GDR were complicated by the internationally unsettled nature of border between Germany and Poland during this era. As neighboring regions at the geographic center of Germany, both Hesse and Thuringia avoided these issues that, while important in any understanding of occupation-era Germany as a whole, could be gainfully avoided in a more narrow discussion of the relationship between civil administration, military occupation, and how it affected educational reconstruction.

Given these criteria it might seem strange that Berlin has not been included as a point of comparison. While Berlin does share many of the characteristics that made Thuringia and Hesse attractive, its story is greatly complicated by its unique position in German Cold War history. As a single city jointly under the direct administration of the Allied Control Council it was not yet neatly - and notoriously - divided between east and west as it would be after 1961. Other scholars have identified it as a ideological and pedagogical “hot spot” - an area that was at the forefront of educational experimentation during the reconstruction period and later, due precisely to the high-profile enclave nature of half of the city.³⁴ Its post-war educational history is unique enough to not be representative of the rest of Germany and deserves to be addressed in its own work.

³⁴ Puaca, *Learning Democracy*: 6, Robert F. Lawson, “Education in Postwar Berlin: a comparative laboratory ,” in *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, Vol. 18, Issue 2, 1988

Administrators as intermediaries

This study is also deeply indebted to other work that has been done on the concept of administrative intermediaries, and borrows heavily from this conceptual framework to understand how German educational administrators functioned under the unique circumstances of military occupation. Intermediaries or ‘go-betweens’ are those people who enable or facilitate some form of contact or communication between two groups that would otherwise be more difficult, if not impossible, due to local conditions. The concept is used frequently in studying the relations between indigenous peoples and Europeans during the colonization of North America. In that context historians have analyzed the importance of native converts to Christianity, European missionaries and shipwreck survivors, and others who had a degree of both linguistic and cultural familiarity with the indigenous people and their European colonizers.³⁵ While post-war Germany did not experience anything as extreme or profound as the collision of worlds that took place in the 15th Century Americas, the dominance of foreign military governments presented a need for men and women who could understand and communicate the priorities, needs, and cultural backgrounds of both the occupiers and the occupied. In this regard this work also owes a debt to the work done by David Pike on German authors who went into exile in the Soviet Union during the Nazi regime, and the ways in which

³⁵ For four relatively recent examples see: Alida C. Metcalf, *Go-betweens and the Colonization of Brazil: 1500-1600*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005); Yanna Yannakakis, *The Art of Being In-between: Native intermediaries, Indian Identity, and Local Rule in Colonial Oaxaca* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Benjamin N. Lawrance, Emily Lynn Osborn, and Richard L. Roberts, eds., *Intermediaries: Interpreters, and Clerks: African employees in the making of colonial Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006); and Danna Agmon, *An Uneasy Alliance: Traders, Missionaries and Tamil Intermediaries in Eighteenth-Century French India*. Dissertation, University of Michigan. Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI, 2011. (Publication No. 918695367). I am particularly indebted to Metcalf for her model of the three different sorts of intermediaries and understanding of how each functioned.

they functioned as cultural intermediaries in both the pre-war and wartime battles against German fascism, as well as to the work done by Arnd Bauerkämper, Konrad H. Jaraus, and Marcus M. Payk on trans-Atlantic intermediaries in the post-war cultural integration of West Germany.³⁶

There are multiple recognized forms of intermediary relationships. At their simplest and most direct even a plant, animal, disease, or object can function as a physical intermediary by creating a shared point of reference or contact for two otherwise dissimilar or remote cultures. German educational administrators served, for the most part, as what are described as transactional intermediaries: “those who facilitate social interaction between worlds.”³⁷ Translators, diplomats, cultural brokers, negotiators, all of these are examples of the transactional intermediary. Many of those roles could describe the varied and multi-faceted jobs that educational administrators filled in post-war Germany.

Transactional intermediaries are distinguished from other types of intermediaries by being a third party that facilitates otherwise difficult or inconvenient communication between two others. In order to do so they must be familiar with, trusted by, and capable of communicating with both of the others. This third party is frequently at least nominally neutral, although this is not a requirement and in practice they are often observed working more closely with one side than the other. In such situations they sometimes come promote the interests of one over the other. There also remains the issue of what the interests of the intermediary are, and whether these are injected into the communications at any time. The men and women examined

³⁶ David Pike, *German Writers in Soviet Exile, 1933-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Arnd Bauerkämper, Konrad H. Jaraus, and Marcus M. Payk, *Demokratiewunder: Transatlantische Mittler und die kulturelle Öffnung Westdeutschlands 1945-1970*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005)

³⁷ Metcalf, *Go-betweens and the Colonization of Brazil*: 12

in this work behaved as transactional intermediaries while maintaining their own personal agendas, as well as remaining mindful of the needs of their political parties or any other constituencies they felt themselves responsible to. Such considerations could, of course, affect how they approached to their positions and the decisions they made in office.

The educational administrators who either kept their positions through the first wave of denazification or who were appointed in the first days of the occupation tended to be well-positioned to serve as transactional intermediaries. Many of them, whether through deliberate choice by the occupation authorities during the selection process or because of previous engagement with international professional networks, were bilingual. They frequently had political convictions that were in line with the Allied power occupying the zone that they lived in. Some of them had spent the Nazi years as political refugees and were already used to serving in some intermediary capacity due to their wartime experiences.

Finally, intermediaries not only enhance communication, and thereby enable governance and dialogue where it might not otherwise be tenable, but they also wield a significant amount of autonomous agency in how they choose to relay the messages they are entrusted with, and whether they choose to do so at all. Individuals may choose to block, degrade, and obfuscate communication as easily as they may choose to faithfully transmit it. Transactional intermediaries not only connect groups that might otherwise have difficulty communicating, they also serve as informational gatekeepers. There is a significant amount of power present in such a relationship and the altering or selective transmission of data can be incredibly effective for furthering one's own goals or affecting a desired change in a situation. Serving as an intermediary is ultimately as much about deciding what information gets passed on as it is enabling that activity in the first place.

The structure of the argument

It would be impossible to fully understand the various aspects of these intermediary relationships without a sufficient background in the educational histories and backgrounds of the key players in them. The goal of the second chapter is to situate the reader in the historical and educational context that these relationships emerged from and examines intertwined pre-war histories of the German, American, and Russian educational systems. The late 19th and early 20th century histories of these three systems and ways that their development related to one another had profound implications for the reconstruction of German education after the war. Not only did they provide the ideological and pedagogical backgrounds that would shape German, Soviet, and American educational policies and expectations in the mid-20th century, but the men and women who were tasked with rebuilding German education were themselves products of these systems.

Chapter three explores how these histories shaped wartime planning for post-war German educational reconstruction and what the various expectations and priorities of each nation were. It also goes into detail on the precise challenges facing German education after the collapse of the government in May of 1945 and the imposition of military occupation. Many of the challenges that faced educational administrators between the war's end and the foundation of the post-war successor states can be directly traced to the material difficulties presented by Germany's devastation, while wartime planning - or lack thereof - did much to dictate what the immediate shape of civil administration in a peace-time Germany would be.

Chapter four continues with this theme by concentrating on the initial measures and restructuring that took place in the immediate aftermath of the war. From the restructuring of the

administrative layout of the German interior to the enactment of sweeping denazification policies, the reorganization that was carried out by the occupation militaries was quick, decisive, and had long-lasting implications for how educational reforms could be carried out. It also explores the denazification efforts of the occupation governments and what the implications were for what kind of person ended up staffing the civil administrative framework of the new educational systems. This phase of very early reform represents the high water mark of direct military influence; after this moment the presence of an established German bureaucracy meant that there was some space for resisting or at least tempering Allied initiatives, whether they chose to use it or not.

Chapter five focuses on how German educational administrators functioned as intermediaries between the occupation powers and the larger population. By providing an easily accessible contact point for both individual citizens seeking to address grievances or voice opinions about educational reform and occupation authorities who needed a means of rapidly carrying out large-scale policies, these administrators acted as both information conduits and gatekeepers. This gatekeeper function was especially valuable in that it allowed them to mediate internal tensions within the educational system in such a way that the intervention of occupation authorities who might not be aware of the nuances of specific issues was not always necessary, usually to the benefit of all involved.

Chapter six examines the ways in which this intermediary position granted educational administrators a significant amount of agency over the precise ways in which reform was carried out. While they still lacked the ability to unilaterally decide the largest issues in how the German educational system would be reformed, they retained the ability to shape how it was

implemented and what aspects of the agendas prescribed by the occupation powers were emphasized.

Finally, chapter seven shows the various ways that this limited agency made the administrators themselves as well as the positions they occupied targets for other political actors in post-war Germany. This became increasingly important towards the end of the occupation as domestic German political life began to reassert itself and native political parties grew in both strength and confidence. In the case of the east this was mostly a process of the consolidation of power under the SED as a precursor to the single-party dictatorship that would follow, while in the west it involved the reemergence of pre-war political parties and divisions or the reestablishment of older political constituencies under new party structures better suited to the political realities of a post-fascism Germany.

One of the more common metaphors of political scientists, pundits, leaders, and historians when describing the role of leadership in shaping the fate of men and nations has long been the 'ship of state.' The importance of the decision making power wielded by world leaders and statesmen has long been evident to even the most casual of observers and these 'helmsmen' the subsequent subject of both paeans and polemics. More recently our understanding has expanded to include how the 'ship' itself - the nation of individuals who are lead - participates in the metaphorical voyage and how events have been shaped by all manner of cultural, social, economic, and political considerations emanating from every possible corner of society. To extend this already over-wrought metaphor one step further, however, there is still significant work to be done on what role the 'crew' plays in all of this. The men and women who are not operating at the high level of the leadership elite, yet whose daily toil is specifically directed at maintaining the state and ensuring its smooth operation. Whether called administrators,

bureaucrats, *Beamten*, or by some other name they exert a significant amount of quiet influence on the world around them, and nowhere is this more visible than in those rare moments of extremity when, faced by total governmental collapse, they must participate not only in the maintenance and running of civil society, but in the planning and construction of a new one.

CHAPTER 2: THREE CONVERGING HISTORIES

There are many excellent features of the Prussian school system; there are many things which we would do well to study carefully. The Prussian king's conception of education for the lower classes, however, is directly opposed to everything American.

-Thomas Alexander, 1919³⁸

At all costs we must break the old, absurd, savage, despicable and disgusting prejudice that only the so-called "upper classes" - only the rich, and those who have gone through the school of the rich - are capable of administering the state and directing the organizational development of socialist society.

-Vladimir Lenin, 1917³⁹

In 1919, Thomas Alexander, a professor of elementary education at a teacher's college in Tennessee, published an account of his recent tour of Prussia. He traveled there shortly before

³⁸ Thomas Alexander, *The Prussian Elementary Schools*, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1919): v-vi

³⁹ Vladimir Lenin, "How to organize Competition?" in *V.I. Lenin: collected works, Volume 26: September 1917 - February 1918* (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1964): 404

World War I to study the public elementary school system and learn how they had achieved their remarkable successes, in the hopes of bringing some of these techniques back to the United States. Professor Alexander's 'educational tourism' was far from an exceptional act. He was the latest in a long tradition of educators from countries with developing educational systems traveling to Europe in order to observe, report, and hopefully integrate the most modern practices upon their return home.

Writing after the war, however, Alexander was highly ambivalent about what he had seen. While broadly laudatory when describing literacy rates, school attendance, the quality of instruction teachers received, and the hygiene of the pupils he met, he was deeply troubled by what he regarded as an underlying state agenda. He wrote that, "the Prussian is to a large measure enslaved through the medium of his school; . . . the whole scheme of Prussian elementary education is shaped with the express purpose of making ninety-five out of every hundred citizens subservient to the ruling house and to the state." In the tracked divisions of the Prussian educational system he perceived a scheme "fashioned so as to make spiritual and intellectual slaves of the lower classes. . . [and] to establish more firmly the Hohenzollern upon his throne." Opportunities for social and economic mobility existed, but were largely reserved for pupils from families that already had the means to take advantage of them. The rest were educated to be content with their station in life and loyalty to the state was heavily emphasized. "The Prussian elementary school is the best in the world from the point of view of the upper classes of Germany, . . . [but for] the lower classes it is the worst system, for it takes from them all hope of improving their condition in life." He acknowledged that there was much the American elementary school system could learn from Prussia, but stridently emphasized that the model could not be copied directly. "There are many excellent features of the Prussian school

system; there are many things which we would do well to study carefully. The Prussian king's conception of education for the lower classes, however, is directly opposed to everything American.⁴⁰

It is tempting to dismiss Alexander's pessimism regarding what he saw in Prussia as the product of wartime anti-German sentiment. His comments, however, are a product of fundamental differences in the ways that American and German education had developed in the previous fifty years and the fundamental goals and educational priorities that underpinned them. They also presage many of the tensions that would emerge a quarter century later as another generation of American educators prepared for their roll in the occupation of Germany following World War II.

For over a century educators from across the globe had held up Germany (and, earlier, Prussia) as a model for how a public, free, mass school system should function. This was part of a broader industrial-era realization that the shift from agrarian to industrial economies meant that it was now necessary to impart a basic level of education onto the entire population.⁴¹

Germany's literacy rate in the years before World War I was among the highest in the world, and its university system was broadly regarded as one of the most advanced and fruitful. Even the most cursory glance at the lists of Nobel Prize recipients in the late 19th and early 20th centuries reveals a telling proportion of awardees from institutions inside the *Kaiserreich*. The high volume of educational tourism directed at Germany is a further testament of the high esteem in which foreign governments and educational theorists held its school system. From the 1830s to

⁴⁰ Alexander, *The Prussian Elementary Schools* : v-vi

⁴¹ For more on the relationship between industrialization and the spread of mandatory primary education, see Patricia Alberg Graham, *Community and Class in American Education, 1865-1918*. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1974): 14-16

the 1930s Germany was considered a top destination for both privileged students seeking a superior quality of education and educators in search of the latest and most effective models and techniques. Many nations sent delegations to Germany with the express purpose of learning how to reproduce some of its educational successes within their own developing school systems, including both the US and Russia.

This professional admiration was later complicated by a widespread conviction that the schools of Imperial Germany bore significant responsibility for the tragic European experience of the first half of the twentieth century. This belief went back to the years immediately following World War I and crystalized in the aftermath of World War II. Beyond the well publicized abuses and excesses of the Nazi period, German schools were seen as heirs to a highly problematic, decades-long tradition of raising extreme militarism, unthinking loyalty to the state, and blind obedience to the level of civic virtues and implanting them deep into the minds of the children under their care. The victorious Allied powers did not perceive the extreme forms of indoctrination and propagandizing seen under National Socialism as an aberration in German educational traditions, but a continuation of policies and patterns which could be observed, albeit in a more cultivated form, in the classrooms of the *Kaiserreich* as well. In the wake of World War II many believed that Germany had somehow deviated from the ‘normal’ path of Western Civilization. It stood to reason that its schools, as the institutions that had shaped generation after generation of German citizens, must bear some of the responsibility for that tragic waywardness.

Meanwhile, American and Russian education had come of age. By the mid 1930s both nations had public primary and secondary educational systems that rivaled any other industrialized nation on the planet, and which had developed their own unique educational

philosophies. Rather than frontier societies looking to a more highly developed Western Europe in search of instruction and inspiration, they were now global political, military, and economic powerhouses with school systems that they felt promoted their own visions of a healthy, egalitarian society in ways that the German model did not and never had. Both the Russian and American school systems were represented by their champions as creating opportunities and mobility for all children, regardless of their background, rather than systematically reproducing and entrenching inequalities, as they charged that the German system had.

This was of course an idealized vision and ignored many barriers, inequities, and injustices within the schools of both the USA and USSR. However, these idealizations of what Russian and American education embodied formed the basis of what occupation planners felt German education should be capable of and should aspire to. It also provided a measure against which they believed it had fallen short, however much they may have previously admired and in many cases emulated its 19th century accomplishments. These idealized models of their own educational systems also provided a starting point for what became an ongoing dialogue between occupation forces that wanted to fundamentally reform and renew German schools, and German officials who had their own opinions about how thorough reconstruction needed to be.

Germany

The German educational system inherited by the Nazi Party was the result of a century of institutional development between the Napoleonic Wars and the outbreak of World War I. While the political fragmentation of Central Europe at the beginning of the 19th century meant that regional variations were abundant and would continue to be important well into the 20th

century, German speaking educational theorists were part of an intellectual community that worked across many of these international boundaries as early as the 18th century. Furthermore, the ever-increasing political domination of Prussia during the 19th century, culminating in German unification under the Hohenzollern crown, meant that other regions and states adopted many Prussian models. Modern Prussian public education began with post-Napoleonic reforms designed to reproduce some of the patriotic spirit of France's revolutionary armies absent their republican ideals. As the 19th century progressed Prussian education developed to meet the workforce needs of an industrializing society, the cultural needs of a collection of independent states that were slowly coalescing into a single nation, and the political needs of an older aristocratic class that did not want to give up their increasingly tenuous grip on power. In the decades that followed a combination of pressures rising out of contemporary politics, the growing professionalization of teaching, and social tensions within the German Empire led to a number of attempts at reform, although results were mixed.

At its most basic, the system that emerged by the end of the 19th century can be described as organized along three tracks. At the top, both in terms of social prestige and educational attainment, was an upper-level consisting of the *Gymnasium* and other secondary schools that granted the *Abitur*. The *Abitur* was a certification required for matriculation to a university or employment in many white-collar and low-level civil administrative jobs and, for the growing middle class, a *sine qua non* for social mobility. The middle-level consisted of various forms of *Realschule*, secondary schools that did not grant the *Abitur* but prepared students for entrance into a trade via technical instruction and apprenticeships. Finally there was an elementary-level *Volks-* or *Hauptschule* aimed at providing for the basic educational needs of an industrial workforce. It was mandatory for all school aged children and it imparted the basic literacy and

numeracy that was required for employment in a modern economy. It also served as an early contact point between the state and individual and marked the beginning of a lifetime of exposure to nationalistic propaganda aimed at producing loyal subjects to the crown. Attached to this network of formal instruction, there was also an extensive apprenticeship framework.

While graduates of the *Realschule* entered training for white collar occupations, *Volksschule* graduates would go on to apprenticeships in skilled positions, respectively, while continuing to receive limited training at one day a week trade schools. This combination of scholastic education with occupational training resulted in a very tightly structured system that was highly dependent upon both social position and educational performance early in life to determine what the professional outcome would be for any given child.

One of the legacies of Germany's relatively late political unification was a federal framework in which individual states, the remnants of the independent kingdoms that were bound together to form the Empire, had significant room to tailor their educational systems as they wished. Even so, much as in the federal American system which was developing along similarly fractured lines, there was a national dialogue on education in which certain theorists and states came to dominate, setting standards and practices that spread to the rest of the nation. This ultimately led to a model that was broadly similar from state to state, while still enjoying a strong regional character. In the German case the political domination of Prussia during the unification process, together with its disproportionately large size and the increasing importance of Imperial funds to finance local schools, meant that it frequently set the standards that other states followed. This was true to an extent even before the advent of the Empire, as the Prussian

government made reforms and pushed forward with educational development in a way that quickly became a model for others to follow.⁴²

During the eighteenth and the early part of the nineteenth century medieval forms of education present in what became Germany developed into recognizable antecedents of modern structures.⁴³ In German-speaking territories there was a tradition of basic schooling through local churches going back to the Protestant reformation and related literacy campaigns aimed at preparing children to participate in their religious communities.⁴⁴ Beginning in the early 18th century local governments began to make the first moves towards making schools state institutions. This began a slow process of secularization that would extend through the 19th century. Although education would ultimately come to be seen as the purview of the state, religious authorities always maintained a foothold via in-school religious instruction and ecclesiastical schools. Church and secular authorities would continue to have a very close and complex relationship over educational matters well into the 20th century.

Starting with Frederick William I and continuing under his son Frederick the Great, the Prussian government enacted a series of laws that had the cumulative effect of creating a compulsory primary school, the *Volksschule*. They also set forth a common, nation-wide

⁴² For a much more extensive examination of the development of the Prussian educational system and its relationship to German society as a whole, see Marjorie Lamberti, *State, Society, and the Elementary School in Imperial Germany*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

⁴³ For more on the very early history of education in Germany, see Gerald Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning: Indoctrination of the Young in the German Reformation*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), Arno Siefert, "Das höhere Schulwesen: Universitäten und Gymnasien," in *Handbuch der deutschen Bildungsgeschichte: Band I, 15. bis 17. Jahrhundert*, Notker Hammerstein, hg. (München: Verlag CH Beck, 1996), and Rudolf Endres, "Handwerk – Berufsbildung," in *Handbuch der deutschen Bildungsgeschichte: Band I, 15. bis 17. Jahrhundert*, Notker Hammerstein, hg. (München: Verlag CH Beck, 1996)

⁴⁴ Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning*

curriculum concentrating on both basic academic skills as well as moral and religious lessons. State inspection and certification of all schools was required and delegated to local pastors. Eventually this oversight was transferred to appointed government inspectors, creating a pattern of local administration and supervision that endures to this day.⁴⁵ In 1794 another law, the *Preußischen Allgemeinen Landrechts*, made the education of the youth of Prussia an explicitly governmental concern. It reserved for the state the right to determine specifics of instruction and required the licensing and oversight of all public and private schools and universities.⁴⁶

The embarrassing military defeats at the hands of Napoleon in 1806-07 and the harsh peace settlement that followed resulted in a sweeping campaign of reform, reorganization, and modernization within the Prussian government and military. The school system was specifically targeted as part of this process, and the combination of educational and professional reform that emerged in the first half of the 19th century created the broad institutional framework that was largely still in place at the end of World War II.

During this time period the neohumanistic ideal of self-cultivation or *Bildung* championed by Wilhelm von Humboldt emerged as a major component of a new pedagogical outlook in the universities and *Gymnasien*.⁴⁷ Usually translated as either “cultivation” or “education,” *Bildung* referred to both the process and the final result of intellectual development.

⁴⁵ Alexander, *The Prussian Elementary Schools*: 9-16

⁴⁶ “Die Schulartikel des Preußischen Allgemeinen Landrechts von 1794,” in *Quellen zur deutschen Schulgeschichte seit 1800*, Gerhardt Giese, hg. (Göttingen: Musterschmidt Verlag, 1961): 61-64

⁴⁷ For an in-depth examination of the exact meaning of *Bildung*, see George Mosse’s essay “The Meaning of *Bildung* – A Concept in Universality” in *Disseminating German Tradition: The Thyssen Lectures*, Dan Diner and Moshe Zimmermann, eds., (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2009): 15-27. For a much earlier, but still relevant, examination of its Enlightenment origins see Hans Weil, *Die Entstehung des deutschen Bildungsprinzips* (Bonn, 1930).

For early theorists like Humboldt there was a heavy emphasis on the individual's freedom to develop his own talents to the greatest possible extent, which led to a general antipathy for training for a specific career or trade. Once a student's *Bildung* was complete he would be broadly prepared to engage with educated society as a whole and could receive any additional, specific training required for his chosen profession either through his own initiative or at the behest of his employer.

This lent an internal tension to *Bildung* with regards to social mobility. In applying a measure for social position and prestige that was based on educational achievement rather than hereditary status it had a significant democratic component. However, the reality of early 19th century German education meant that there was also an inherent bias towards those who had the free time and financial resources to pursue the cultivation of purely intellectual talents.⁴⁸ Juxtaposed against the more utilitarian concept of practical instruction, or *Erziehung*, and the frivolity of courtly dilettantism, *Bildung* managed to provide grounds upon which a growing body of professionals and civil servants could lay claim to a measure of social prestige above the traditional trades and commercial classes and put themselves on more even footing with established social elites. Simultaneously it provided a way for those same elites to further justify their position in society through extensive, and expensive, education aimed at personal refinement.⁴⁹ Finally, it presented a socially acceptable way for the ruling elites to employ and seek council from educated specialists. While certainly not elevating doctors, lawyers,

⁴⁸ James C. Albisetti, *Secondary School Reform in Imperial Germany*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983): 16-17

⁴⁹ For more on the changes in German educational thinking wrought by the neohumanist shift, see Anthony J. La Vopa, *Grace, Talent and Merit: Poor students, clerical careers, and professional ideology in eighteenth century Germany*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988): 264-278

engineers, and tutors to the level of the aristocracy, this model of intellectual refinement allowed for the possibility of discourse between them and the nobility that sought their professional expertise based on intellectual, if not social, equality.

While in some ways the ideal of the *gebildite* man provided a means to promote oneself above the rest of the growing bourgeois middle class, the financial and institutional barriers to entry meant that only a very narrow section of German society was able to take advantage of it. As early as 1779 Frederick the Great, concerned with the impact that universal education might have on his agrarian economic base, wrote that rural farmers “must be taught in such a way that they will not run away from the villages but remain there contentedly. . .”⁵⁰ While not always as explicit as this, the growing state oversight over educational matters and increasingly inflexible admittance requirements for universities served to restrict the ways in which education could be used as a tool for social advancement.

One of those barriers was the *Abitur*, the final examination given upon completion of the course of studies at a *Gymnasium*. By 1812 it was theoretically the mandatory pre-requisite for matriculation at a university. In reality universities continued to waive this requirement and offer separate entrance examinations for nobles or other socially connected students well into the 1830s.⁵¹ For the average student it was an effective barrier from the outset. Admittance policies for *Abitur*-awarding schools and the near requirement that pupils hoping to attend one pay for expensive, private preparatory academies served to limit the degree to which a socially or economically disadvantaged student, no matter how clever, could depend on education as a

⁵⁰ Cited in Alexander, *The Prussian Elementary Schools*: 18

⁵¹ Gerhardt Giese, “Einführung,” in *Quellen zur deutschen Schulgeschichte seit 1800*, Gerhardt Giese, ed. (Göttingen: Musterschmidt Verlag, 1961): 24-25; and Albisetti, *Secondary School Reform in Imperial Germany*: 23

means for social promotion within his lifetime. The best that could generally be hoped for was marginal advancement compounded over generations.

At the same time as the neohumanistic shift was re-aligning the aims of secondary and university education, governmental reforms and an ongoing process of professionalization were altering how teachers viewed themselves and their position in society. The reforms of the *Vormärz* and the growth of governmental certification and inspection fundamentally altered teaching as a career. It shifted away from being a temporary job performed mostly by aspiring young clerics who had not yet found a permanent position to a distinct calling in its own right.⁵² At the same time, increasing state regulation via the introduction of certification exams was increasing governmental control over the teaching corps. Choosing local teachers had previously been both the responsibility and prerogative of local rulers, whether they were nobles, mayors, or church officials. With the advent of state certification in 1810 and the administration of standardized exams to obtain those certificates, local officials were forced to choose from a much narrower field of potential candidates, all of them previously vetted by the state.⁵³

As the size of the Prussian civil service grew the social prestige enjoyed by its members increased as well. The increasing state involvement in selecting and certifying teachers led them to agitate for recognition as civil servants, or *Beamte*. Among those directly associated with education only school inspectors and superintendents were initially included in this category, but it quickly expanded to include secondary school teachers as well. This created a significant social, economic, and professional divide between secondary and primary school teachers, who

⁵² LaVopa, *Grace, Talent, and Merit* :10-21

⁵³ Albisetti, *Secondary School Reform in Imperial Germany*: p. 21

were not recognized as *Beamte*.⁵⁴ This was further reinforced by certification requirements that required instructors in secondary schools to have a university degree, while mandating that elementary school teachers only needed to hold a certificate from a teaching academy. Teaching academies were far less restrictive in their admissions practices than universities, frequently not requiring an *Abitur* and generally far more open to applicants from lower social orders. The result was two entirely separate bodies of Prussian teachers with very different professional needs and, due to the degree of selection in *Gymnasium* and university admissions, equally distinct social backgrounds. It also severely limited the ability of primary school teachers to advance into positions in secondary schools. An ambitious secondary school teacher could seek additional certifications and pursue appointment as the rector of a school or a regional school inspector, with additional prospects to advance further in the administrative hierarchy. As a university educated individual relatively high government office was not outside their reach. Such opportunities were rare for the primary school teacher, and effectively capped how far they could expect to rise in their career.

The institutional and professional divides present in the pre-Unification Prussian educational system were certainly less than ideal from the standpoint of social mobility, both from the perspective of those who wished to advance via a teaching career and those who sought to offer pathways for advancement via education to the population as a whole. Be that as it may, however, the end result of a widely available form of basic, elementary education was impressive in and of itself. Not only were schools accessible both in cities and rural districts, but they were also highly effective at instilling basic skills in the majority of the population. As early

⁵⁴LaVopa, *Grace, Talent, and Merit* and Konrad H. Jarausch, “The German Professions in History and Theory” in *German Professions, 1800-1950*, Geoffrey Cocks and Konrad H. Jarausch, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990): 9-20

as 1849 81% of school aged children in Prussia were attending school for at least part of the year. Expansion, both in terms of the number of children attending primary school and the number of school days attended by each child per year, happened so rapidly through the 1850s and 1860s that there was a critical shortage of teachers and a concerted effort had to be made to both raise teaching salaries and open additional *Lehrseminare* (teaching academies) in order to quickly fill vacant positions.⁵⁵ When it came to providing the basic skills that were necessary for an industrial workforce the Prussian educational system excelled, and generations of working and lower-middle class Prussians - and eventually Germans - directly benefited.

One measure of the success of the 19th century Prussian and Imperial German school systems is the proportion of the population that was literate. On the eve of Unification only 3.42% of the population of the Kingdom of Prussia as a whole was illiterate, although regional unevenness somewhat marred these accomplishments. In more economically developed areas such as Brandenburg, Hannover, and Hesse this rate was much lower, roughly half of a percent. At the same time 9.28% of people in East Prussia and 15.59% of those in Posen could not read or write. Within a generation this economic unevenness would be somewhat addressed and illiteracy would largely be stamped out. In 1902 the Kingdom of Prussia, now a state in the German Empire, could boast of a general illiteracy rate of only .02%, and even in previously troubled Posen only .06% of the population was officially deemed illiterate.⁵⁶ It is worth noting that Posen in particular was challenged by the presence of a large natively Polish-speaking population as “literacy” was defined by the ability to read and write in German. The successes in raising that figure can also be read not only in purely educational terms, but also as a success in

⁵⁵ Marjorie Lamberti, *The Politics of Education: Teachers and School Reform in Weimar Germany*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002): 19

⁵⁶ Figures cited in Alexander, *The Prussian Elementary Schools*: 43.

using public education as a tool for integrating – although not fully assimilating – the Polish population in that region.⁵⁷

The period immediately preceding and following Germany's unification saw the spread of Prussian educational laws and models throughout the rest of the *Kaiserreich*, as well as the rapid industrialization of large areas of the new nation. The resulting economic pressures were in part responsible for the rise of a new series of technical subjects that challenged the neohumanist monopoly of the *Gymnasium*. The demand for modern subjects, or *Realien*, was fueled by rapidly expanding vocational opportunities in industry, trade, engineering, and civil administration. These were fields where a firm grasp Latin or familiarity with Greek classics were of little use, but where technical training in specific areas of science and math was vital and a working understanding of modern foreign languages very useful. The final component of the tripartite German educational system, the *Realschule*, arose in the 1850s as an alternative form of secondary school to meet these demands.⁵⁸ As more and more technical subjects began to require a depth of training only available through concentrated university study the need for some form of *Abitur*-granting technical preparatory school grew. The reach of the *Realschule* also ratcheted upwards with the foundation of numerous technical institutes, institutions that generally had much lower entrance requirements than the classical universities.⁵⁹

The role and position of the *Realschulen* with regards to the *Gymnasien* was highly controversial and a hotly contested issue. At the core of the debate was the fact that initially *Realschulen* did not award the *Abitur*, and therefore a certificate from one did not suffice for

⁵⁷ Lamberti, *The Politics of Education: Teachers and School Reform in Weimar Germany*: 26 and Lamberti, *State, Society, and the Elementary School in Imperial Germany*: 109-153

⁵⁸ Arthur Hearnden, *Education in the Two Germanies*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1974): 19-22

⁵⁹ Albisetti, *Secondary School Reform in Imperial Germany*

matriculation at a university. For many who had questions about the utility of the older models this was not entirely a bad thing. Critics of the neohumanistic *Bildung* of the *Gymnasium* and university claimed that the courses of study pursued there did not prepare students for gainful, worthwhile employment in the modern workforce, but simply served as a form of social refinement for established elites. For these individuals eventual career paths had more to do with family connections and personal ties than credentials.⁶⁰ They held that this kind of education was a waste of time for students embarking upon a career in a technical field. The issue of language training was frequently singled out as an example of what some considered outdated curricula in these institutions. English, for example, was considered vital for a budding engineer and any time spent studying Greek or Latin needlessly delayed its mastery.⁶¹ Critics also claimed that by perpetuating the dominance of the *Gymnasium* and its privileged status in German society young, talented men were squandered on professions that held limited social or economic utility. Modern subjects were complex enough to require courses of study that were just as rigorous and time-intensive as their neoclassical counterparts, and to expect a full mastery of both was unrealistic. This was the core criticism articulated by Friedrich Paulsen when he wrote that it “is impossible to demand of the average student both the classically learned *Bildung* and modern, scientific training.”⁶²

⁶⁰ Ulrich Herrmann, “Pädagogisches Denken und Anfänge der Reformpädagogik,” in *Handbuch der deutschen Bildungsgeschichte: Band IV, 1870-1918*, Christina Berg, ed. (München: Verlag CH Beck, 1991): 151-152

⁶¹ *Ibid.*: 153

⁶² Friedrich Paulsen, *Geschichte des gelehrten Unterrichts auf den deutschen Schulen und Universitäten vom Ausgang des Mittelalters bis zur Gegenwart: mit besonderer Rücksicht auf den klassischen Unterricht, Volumen 2* (Leipzig: Verlag von Veit & Comp. 1885): 649

Other criticisms were rooted firmly in social and political considerations. German nationalists claimed that the *Gymnasium* unjustly raised dead languages above the German tongue and led to a *gebildete* class that was steeped in neither German culture nor patriotic ideals. Kaiser Wilhelm II opined in an 1890 speech before a national conference on schools that they “should raise young Germans, not young Greeks and Romans.”⁶³ Other criticisms from less nationalistic quarters emphasized the ways in which *Bildung* created a social divide between those privileged enough to pursue it and those who lacked the opportunity or means to do so.⁶⁴ This was not just the traditional divide between social classes, but part of the newer divisions between economic classes. Proponents of this view attacked the preparatory academies that equipped students for the *Gymnasium* and the *Abitur* in general on the grounds that they posed a nearly insurmountable economic hurdle for the majority of the population.⁶⁵

There was also a counter-charge from conservative quarters concerned with maintaining the social status quo. They contended that the availability of alternate ways to achieve a status that was increasingly perceived as the social equal of the traditional *Gebildeten* was leading to a critical over-enrollment at universities and advanced secondary schools. They charged that this diluted the quality of education, produced a glut of unemployable professionals, and destroyed social order.⁶⁶

⁶³ cited in Albisetti, *Secondary School Reform in Imperial Germany*: 140

⁶⁴ Paulsen, *Geschichte des gelehrten Unterrichts auf den deutschen Schulen und Universitäten vom Ausgang des Mittelalters bis zur Gegenwart*: 148-149

⁶⁵ Frank-Michael Kuhlemann, “Schulen, Hochschulen, Lehrer: I. Schulsystem: I. Niedere Schulen” in *Handbuch der deutschen Bildungsgeschichte: Band IV, 1870-1918*, Christina Berg, ed. (München: Verlag CH Beck, 1991): 191

⁶⁶ Margret Kraul, *Das Deutsche Gymnasium, 1780-1980*, (Frankfurt, Suhrkamp Verlag: 1984): 85-93; and Konrad H. Jarausch, “Universität und Hochschule” in *Handbuch der deutschen*

An eventual resolution, although perhaps not a solution, was reached through curricular shifts in both *Gymnasien* and *Realschulen*. By the early 1880s some *Realschulen* were incorporating increasing amounts of Latin and other classical subjects in their curricula in an attempt to become *Abitur*-awarding institutions in their own right.⁶⁷ At the same time there was a general reduction of the number of hours spent on classical languages within the *Gymnasium* and an increasing emphasis on modern foreign languages, mathematics, physics, natural science, and other more contemporary subjects.⁶⁸ By 1901 a patchwork of such measures and a network of compromises and Imperial decrees over the previous 20 years broke the absolute monopoly of the classical *Gymnasium* on university entrance. The Royal Decree of November 26, 1900 stipulated that the right to enter a university be extended to holders of certificates from *Gymnasium*, *Realgymnasium*, and, *Oberrealschule*, effectively encompassing the upper end of the spectrum of *Realschulen*.⁶⁹ While this did not completely dismantle the cultural differentiation between the graduates of the *Gymnasien* and universities and those emerging from *Realschulen* and technical institutes, it did somewhat blur and complicate these distinctions moving into the 20th century.

It is important to note that these debates over secondary school education never became major sources of contention for the political parties of this era. Religious and ideological sources of confrontation, such as can be seen in the contemporaneous battles over religious education

Bildungsgeschichte: Band IV, 1870-1918, Christina Berg, ed. (München: Verlag CH Beck, 1991): 321

⁶⁷ Albisetti, *Secondary School Reform in Imperial Germany*: 75-77

⁶⁸ *Quellen zur deutschen Schulgeschichte seit 1800*, Gerhardt Giese, ed. (Göttingen: Musterschmidt Verlag, 1961): 38-39

⁶⁹ reproduced in “Die preußischen Lehrpläne von 1901,” in *Quellen zur deutschen Schulgeschichte seit 1800*, Gerhardt Giese, ed. :215-217

and related issues connected to the *Kulturkampf*, were largely absent. The debates remained largely restricted to issues of educational and social prestige and the importance of *Bildung* in establishing it, and how this would affect the social status of various professions. Proponents of maintaining Greek and Latin training for physicians, for example, maintained that without a classical *Bildung* it would be impossible for the medical profession to maintain its current social and cultural prestige, and that without this social respectability it would be difficult to effectively advise and care for members of the social elite. Advocates for both views could be found in all of the major parties in the Reichstag. Furthermore, the Social Democrats – who until 1908 were not represented in the Reichstag at all – had long identified primary education as their chosen field for confronting educational inequalities, and largely absented themselves from debates concerning the higher schools.⁷⁰

In comparison to the debates over secondary education, primary education had been slowly politicized along party lines since the first reforms in teacher education following Prussia's Napoleonic humiliation. In 1806 training for elementary teachers began to be improved and regulated with the establishment of teacher's academies (*Lehrerseminare*), examinations, and state certification. Critically, however, the *Lehrerseminare* did not require an *Abitur* for attendance and their graduates were recognized neither as *gebildete* professionals nor as *Beamte*. Elementary schools remained primarily under the supervision of local parishes, and teachers were frequently required to engage in church-related duties such as playing the organ at services. The result was a population of well-regulated, competent educators that was developing a growing professional awareness and increasingly advocating for a separation of education and religious matters. Direct state supervision and administration of schools was

⁷⁰ Albisetti, *Secondary School Reform in Imperial Germany*: 60-61, 71-82, 96-97

demanded not only to relieve them of clerical interference and parochial duties, but also in the hopes of achieving the salaries, pensions, and status that attended recognition as civil servants. Part of this growing professional awareness was the founding of politically active teachers' associations that lobbied directly for these reforms.⁷¹

This political action intensified during the 1848 revolutions. Teachers associations organized their members for political action related to both educational and governmental questions, and educational reformers published general calls for restructuring the primary school system. In particular, they lobbied for a common primary school, secular school inspectors, and folding the *Lehrerseminare* into the existing university system. These were radical reforms that, at a stroke, would have eliminated many of the social barriers inherent in the Prussian educational system, both for students and educators. While this reform movement was ultimately quashed in the wake of the political restoration that followed the revolutions, it significantly politicized the issue of primary education in the eyes of both politicians and the greater public. In particular the language demanding state supervision and control of elementary education proved highly incendiary and durable. Democrats within the National Assembly latched onto it as a way of extending state power at the expense of traditional elites, principally the clergy, while religious constituencies, especially Catholic ones, opposed it on spiritual and moral grounds and out of fear that it would further cultural integration or marginalization of Catholics. It was also opposed by educational traditionalists who feared that it would provoke the wide-spread establishment of private parochial schools that would further fracture primary

⁷¹ Anthony J. LaVopa, *Prussian Schoolteachers: Profession and Office, 1763-1848*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press): 52-60, 82-98

education and disrupt the professional progress and development that had already been achieved.⁷²

In the decades that followed liberal political factions within the Prussian government increasingly took up primary school reform. Members of both the Progressive and National Liberal parties desired a religiously neutral state and pursued policies, such as interconfessional schools, that would further this agenda. Following German unification in 1870 educational policy and reform were swept up in Bismarck's larger *Kulturkampf* against political Catholicism. As part of their attempt to extend the authority of the state at the expense of local Catholic power centers, Bismarck and his Minister of Education, Adalbert Falk, introduced measures to appoint full-time government school inspectors (*Schulräte*) in place of the parish priests who had previously discharged those duties. They sought to introduce an interconfessional framework as well, as part of a larger post-unification nation-building exercise in promoting cultural integration and eroding religious particularism.

Interconfessional schools never received widespread public support and remained the exception, rather than the rule, in German education into the early 20th century. The administrative reforms proved far more durable, and oversight of public education was firmly established as a duty of the state. Importantly, this also contributed to a political legacy of suspicion of the motives behind any future reform efforts among German Catholics. Later attempts to introduce a common school or remove religious education from the state curriculum would be viewed with suspicion and interpreted not as a purely educational matter, but as an

⁷² Lamberti, *State, Society, and the Elementary School in Imperial Germany*: 27-32

indication of a renewed *Kulturkampf*.⁷³ This would prove to be a perpetual challenge and sticking point for future reformers, who had to contend with opposition based in fears of religious and cultural marginalization that might not have existed otherwise.

At the turn of the 20th Century, Imperial Germany retreated from some of Bismarck's more contentious social policies and moderated the official stance on a number of major issues. Along with relaxing older prohibitions on Marxist and socialist political activism that had all but banned mass working class political parties, this era saw the emergence of a distinctly politicalized drive for reform from within the ranks of the primary school teachers, both on professional and pedagogical grounds. There was a spectrum of pedagogically reform-oriented teachers who broadly supported the goals of political democratization. They generally aligned themselves on educational issues with the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the mass socialist party that eventually emerged as the main voice for socialist and working class politics at the opening of the 20th century. They ranged from older National Liberals who supported SPD measures that were related to educational reform to more moderate SPD members whose political views favored a form of democratic socialism and desired a more socially equitable education system.⁷⁴

This was not an entirely tranquil or uniform alignment of interests, and was put on hold at times as other political priorities overrode educational concerns. In the past, elements from the National Liberals and other parties of the educated middle class had feared that the *Lehrerseminare* were hotbeds of socialist activism and indoctrination. No matter how they may

⁷³ For a very detailed examination of the politics surrounding the attempts to reform religious education in first Prussia and later Imperial Germany and the political results of this, see Lamberti, *State, Society, and the Elementary School in Imperial Germany*.

⁷⁴ Tobias Rülcker, "Demokratische Reformpädagogik: Eine Einführung," in *Demokratische Reformpädagogik*, Heike Neuhäuser and Tobias Rülcker, eds., (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2000): 18

have felt about specific educational issues they were still concerned with the threat that they perceived from more radical working class political organizations. This fear that elementary educators were becoming radicalized by the institutions that trained them led many to question the increasingly politicized ways that activist primary school educators pushed for professional and pedagogical change.⁷⁵ Nonetheless, during the *Kulturkampf* many of them had supported a reform of the primary school system on anti-clerical and nationalist grounds, and would continue to ally themselves with the SPD on many educational policies.⁷⁶

One of the more noteworthy campaigns at this time was the push against the preparatory *Volkschulen*, private preparatory academies that were virtual pre-requisites completion of the *Abitur* and an advantage mostly reserved for the more privileged ranks of society. The push to abolish these preparatory schools was one of the catalysts that led reformist elementary school teachers to establish the League for School Reform in 1908 and the contemporaneous creation of an office within the German Teachers' League (DLV) for the promotion of progressive pedagogical techniques.⁷⁷ 1908 was also the year that the SPD finally achieved full recognition as a political party and was allowed to send delegates into the Reichstag, permitting it, and by extension those who voted for it, to have a voice in national educational policy and debates.

The reform initiatives of the early 20th century diverged from earlier attempts to reform, restructure, or improve German education in key ways. These were the frequent ties to socialist and social democratic political movements, the increased emphasis upon schools and education as a vehicle for social reform, and the specific challenges it made to established professional and

⁷⁵ Lamberti, *State, Society, and the Elementary School in Imperial Germany*: 105

⁷⁶ Lamberti, *The Politics of Education: Teachers and School Reform in Weimar Germany*: 10

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*: 11-18

pedagogical models. The growing emphasis on social activism was grounded in the cultural milieu that many of its adherents emerged from. Many of them were the gifted sons and daughters of small farmers, artisans, shopkeepers, and lower tier civil servants who entered the *Lehreminare* in pursuit of what social mobility was available. While many of these groups exhibited a surprising degree of social conservatism, especially with regards to religious questions, the concrete limits placed on their own mobility within the German educational system sensitized them to the larger, pervasive inequalities that ran throughout it. Daily experience with the realities of a system in which university-trained educators at the *Gymnasium* were held in higher social standing and received greater pay than *Lehrerseminare*-trained *Volksschule* teachers sensitized them to the professional realities of their situation. Institutions and traditions like the *Vorschule* and non-standardized admittance criteria for *Abitur*-granting secondary schools highlighted the challenges facing their students in a system with little regard for talent but an emphasis on social standing. Inequalities such as these presented a professional and educational challenge that was imbued by many with moral characteristics. As a consequence many young primary teachers of this era gravitated towards left-liberal and socialist political parties and activism.⁷⁸

Advocates for major pedagogical or professional change, especially those within the ranks of the primary school teachers, had limited successes in the waning years of Imperial Germany. However, the political collapse following World War I provided a rare opportunity for lasting institutional reform, and would bring about the final major revisions in the organization of German education before the end of World War II. The key to this transformation was the political tendencies of the educators most dedicated to reform. With the

⁷⁸ For more on this see Lamberti, *The Politics of Education* and Herrmann, “Pädagogisches Denken und Anfänge der Reformpädagogik.”

collapse of the *Kaiserreich*, the November Revolution, and the general increase in political space for left-of-center politics many reform-minded educators saw room to push for changes that they had been unable to realize in previous years.

The politics of the Weimar Republic were dominated by the highly visible clashes between conservative elements seeking to buttress older forms of privilege and repair the damage to the previous system that had been incurred by the collapse of the Second Empire and those seeking liberalizing social, political, and cultural reforms. The politics of state education during this period mirrored these trends. Otto Boelitz and Carl Becker, the two Prussian ministers for Education between 1921 and 1930, best represent the conservative stance. They both shared an assumption that it was the role of the public school system to renew Germany's sense of national pride and unity after the defeat, and opposed major structural or pedagogical reform.⁷⁹ These views remained influential, as Prussia remained highly influential throughout the Weimar Republic by the simple fact of being by far the single largest German state. At the same time, the major governmental disruptions that Germany suffered at the end of World War I and into the early 20s, coupled with the very unsettled political scene, created a great deal of space for educational reformers to found all manner of experimental educational institutions and lobby for change within both the public school systems and the professional structures of the teaching profession.⁸⁰

Building upon groundwork laid by the DLV during the war years, the key demand of the post-war reformers was the abolition of tracked primary school instruction. Up until this point the three-fold division of the German educational system had penetrated down into the

⁷⁹ [Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*](#): 10

⁸⁰ Lamberti, *The Politics of Education*: 1-22

elementary years, with *Vorschulen*, private academies, and specific public primary schools linked directly to secondary educational paths. This served to track children towards a specific educational goal as early as their third year of schooling. Delays in voting and the rallying of traditionalist and conservative organizations and the subsequent surge in reactionary political movements meant that the most radical aspirations for a single, unified secondary school (*Gesamtschule*) was never fully realized. There was a limited success, however, with the consolidation of primary education under a single set of elementary schools which all children were theoretically obliged to attend and the gradual elimination of the *Vorschulen* by the mid-1920s.⁸¹ Reforms such as these did much to eliminate the worst social excesses of tracked education as practiced under the *Kaiserreich* and make higher education more accessible to a broader cross section of society, however little was done to address the pedagogical problems that many perceived in determining a student's educational pathway as early as primary school. In addition, many of the professional grievances of primary school teachers remained, particularly social inequality between them and their secondary school colleagues.

A major component of the reformist policies advocated by many individual instructors and a key element of many of the independent, experimental schools that were founded during this period was an attempt to refocus educational goals on the needs of individual children rather than the objectives of the state. Informal organizations such as the League of Uncompromising School Reformers (*Bund entschiedener Schulreformer*) and professional organizations such as the DLV helped to link together the independently operating experimental educators and agitated

⁸¹ Dieter Langeweische and Heinz-Elmar Tenorth, "Bildung, Formierung, Destruktion: Grundzüge der Bildungsgeschichte von 1918-1945", in *Handbuch der deutschen Bildungsgeschichte Band V: 1918-1945: Die Weimarer Republik und die nationalsozialistische Diktatur*; Dieter Langeweische and Heinz-Elmar Tenorth, ed. (München: Verlag CH Beck, 1989); and Lamberti, *The Politics of Education*: 107-119

for broader reforms in the state educational system. Their successes were limited, although they did much to stir educational debates that could have resulted in significant, long-lasting reform had the Weimar Republic remained viable for longer. Much as it is difficult to assess a lasting institutional legacy for National Socialism due to how short lived it was and the immediate, radical departure from its initiatives after it fell from power, so too it is difficult to assess the ultimate viability of what the Weimar-era reformers proposed. Some of them would be taken up again in the post-war era, however the intervening time and events renders even that an incomplete legacy.⁸²

The study of educational policies under the Nazis is similarly confused by the nature of the Party's rise to power and the subsequent difficulties of the war years. Throughout most of the mid-30s the NSDAP was busy consolidating its power base within the government itself and didn't focus too much on concrete changes to the structure of German education. By 1943 the war had turned decisively against it and those changes that the schools experienced were usually couched in terms of being wartime expediencies designed to remove children from the danger posed by indiscriminate urban bombardment or the acceleration of the final years of schooling to help alleviate manpower shortages at the front. The changes that did happen can broadly be separated into curricular revisions, professional disruptions, and structural reforms.

The curricular revisions that took place were by far the most visible and the most controversial. Major curricular changes were made to subjects such as history, biology to emphasize Nazi Party racial and political views. Even less obviously ideological subjects like

⁸² For a far more comprehensive examination of the legacies of reform under the Weimar Republic see Lamberti, *The Politics of Education*. Gert Geißler's *Schulgeschichte in Deutschland: Von den Anfängen bis in die Gegenwart* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2011) is an excellent over-all introduction to the broadest trends in German educational history and has informed much of this historian's understanding of the major intellectual currents and legacies of the Weimar Republic

mathematics and physics had their textbooks rewritten, presenting children with militarized problem sets in order to maintain a consistent political tone throughout the school day. These changes and others posed significant challenges to post-war educators. They were left without politically acceptable teaching materials and had to face the educational legacy of a generation of children that had been fed a steady diet of political indoctrination and propaganda for more than a decade. This was also part of a broader attempt to inject the state and the Party itself more and more into the raising of the individual child and to separate the children from any conflicting sources of information and ideology, such as church or parents.⁸³ This was done largely through attempting to monopolize the children's time through all manner of extra-curricular youth organizations and party-directed clubs.⁸⁴ The Hitler Youth and its accompanying League of German Girls are by far the most notorious examples of this, however there were also Party-affiliated clubs for activities as diverse as glider flying and the agricultural efforts of the Young Farmer's League.⁸⁵

⁸³ Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*: 26-27

⁸⁴ For a deeper examination specifically of the ambivalent, and frequently troubled, relationships between education under the Nazis and the various party-affiliated youth organizations see Michael Kater, *Hitler Youth*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004)

⁸⁵ for period descriptions of these curricular changes and the impacts that foreign observers and German educators living in exile feared that they would have on German youth after the war, see Gregor Ziemer, *Education For Death: The Making of the Nazi* (London: Oxford University Press, 1941); Erika Mann, *School for Barbarians*, (New York: Modern Age Books, 1938); Karl Lowenstein, *Hitler's Germany: The Nazi Background to War*, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1940); Isaac Kandel, *The Making of Nazis*, (New York: Bureau of Publications Columbia University, 1935); and C.W. Guillebaud, *The Social Policy of Nazi Germany*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1941). For more detailed examinations of the specific changes made to course content and the way that the schools were utilized to further Nazi political and racial agendas see Horst Gies, *Geschichtsunterricht unter der Diktatur Hitlers* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 1992); and Ottwilm Ottweiler, *Die Volksschule im Nationalsozialismus*, (Weinheim: Beltz Verlag, 1979)

The structural changes that took place were more limited and were mostly aimed at eliminating the legacy of the experimental reformers of the Weimar era. Individual experimental academies were taken over by the state and either integrated into the general system or placed under direct Party supervision. It is only possible to speculate about what the eventual fate of most of these institutions would have been, as many of them continued to operate throughout the war years and whatever long term plans may have been in store for them dissipated with the National Socialist state itself.⁸⁶ The most significant structural shift under the Nazi regime was the dramatic pairing down in the number of different types of secondary institutions to a single *Gymnasium* and two types of *Oberschulen*. Other structural changes were made to the way that girls were educated, focused primarily on restricting their education to the skills that were felt appropriate for the state-sanctioned roles for them in the household and community. Options for higher education were restricted to the point that University enrolment of young women plunged to less than 10% of the total student body.⁸⁷ Finally, elite political academies were established for the training of future leadership cadres, although their impact was limited by the short amount of time that they were active. These “Napolas” were among the first state institutions targeted for immediate termination by the Allies after the surrender.⁸⁸

The professional disruptions under National Socialism were mostly the product of the wide-ranging political purges that took place in 1932-1933 as part of the broader

⁸⁶ For a particularly enlightening examination of a single experimental school that delves into the specific changes that were made following the NSDAP takeover and how it was administrated under NSDAP auspices see Dennis Shirley, *The Politics of Progressive Education: The Odenwaldschule in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

⁸⁷ Pine, *Education in Nazi Germany*: 24-28

⁸⁸ For an enlightening view into some of the inner workings and broader goals of these leadership academies see Johannes Leeb, ed. “*Wir warren Hitlers Eliteschüler: Ehemalige Zöglinge der NS-Ausleseschulen brechen ihr Schweigen.*” (Hamburg: Rasch und Röhring, 1998)

Gleichschaltung of the civil service as the Nazi Party consolidated its power within the German state in the early 30s. The 1933 Law for the Restoration of the Civil Service forbade non-Aryans or anyone who had politically opposed the NSDAP from holding civil service jobs, including those involved in education. The politicization of educational policy that had accelerated late in the Empire and during the inter-war years left a significant number of teachers and administrators facing summary termination on the grounds membership and activism with the SPD or the German Communist Party (KPD). A further toll was taken as Jews and, later, those married to Jews were hounded from their positions. Ironically, many elementary school teachers who had unsuccessfully campaigned for decades in search of recognition as *Beamte* now found themselves subject to a civil service law that demanded their dismissal.

The Law for the Restoration of the Civil Service was a short term disaster for German education as it forced many talented individuals out of their careers, a personal tragedy for thousands who quickly found themselves out of work and without pensions, and a national shame for a country that had not enacted anti-Semitic legislation since Jewish emancipation in 1871. Ironically, however, the dismissal of these individuals at the outset of the Nazi regime also served to preserve their reputations and political integrity in the eyes of the victorious allies in 1945. This preserved a professional core around which the educational system could be rebuilt following the initial waves of denazification purges after the war. This was especially true of the administrative ranks, which after the war were extensively purged due to the very high incidence of Nazi Party membership but could be restored very quickly due in no small part to the forcible exclusion of many men and women in the 1930s. Their replacements were drawn in large numbers from men and women who had been experienced educators before the Law for the Restoration of the Civil Service put their careers on hold and who were now among the few

considered politically reliable enough to be trusted with overseeing the post-war rehabilitation of German education.

The United States

The American educational system in 1945 was one marked by strong tensions between the significant advances and accomplishments of the past 100 years, aspirations for continued progress, and the realities of the many shortcomings that still existed within it. The educators who helped articulate America's response to the challenge of rehabilitating Germany tended towards progressive educational ideals grounded in the educational movements and reforms originating in the northeastern states in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It cannot be ignored, however, that American education at this time was equally characterized by immense regional unevenness and, even in relatively developed parts of the country, additional deep divides rooted in race and class. Alongside the celebrated public school systems of highly developed New England states stood the example of entire regions that were only a generation or two removed from being frontier societies with little formal public educational infrastructure. Simultaneously, education in many states remained racially segregated at the turn of the 20th century, and the practice continued in the South with little sign of abating for decades after World War II. Additionally, the means by which public schools were financed depended heavily on local governments. This combined with economic and social clustering within communities to produce a system where the quality of education received in public schools very strongly correlated with the economic background of the community, which in turn had strong racial components. Despite these inequalities, American educators at the outbreak of World War II

generally believed that theirs was a system designed to promote social leveling and meritocratic promotion, and directly compared it to a German system that they interpreted as opposed to these values. Regardless of what the reality might have been, these notions and attitudes were carried with them into the project of rehabilitating education in Germany and helped shape the specific reforms that they would demand.

One of the key characteristics of the American school system was, and remains, its regional nature. Ultimate authority over educational policies and practices resides with individual states rather than the federal government, although the latter is not completely without influence. The ultimate root of this arrangement can be found in the Constitution. The reserved powers clause of the Tenth Amendment delegates all powers not specifically allocated to the federal government to the individual states. Since the issue of education is not directly addressed anywhere in the document authority over it devolves to state governments. While the prominence of the federal government in educational policy matters increased significantly in the second half of the 20th century through the influence of federal funding for state education, to this day it remains at its core a regionally organized system comprised of individual state educational systems that are coordinated with one another, rather than a centrally administrated one.

There was also a marked unevenness in institutional and economic maturity resulting from the United States' rapid 19th century territorial expansion. This combined with the constitutional legacy to produce a pattern of educational development where a shared national dialogue with strong roots in the Northeast was overlaid on regional implementation. Generally, specific movements or practices would originate and gain prominence in areas, most often in the Northeast, with a high degree of economic development and educational traditions dating back to

the Colonial period. From there they would move to the still developing Midwest and South, and onward from there to the far more recently settled Western fringes. This trend was exacerbated by the uneven industrial development in the United States during the 19th century. Modern public education has evolved in many ways to respond to the needs for a literate, numerate workforce in an industrial economy, and the uneven distribution of American industry in the 19th century was mirrored by uneven educational development.

Despite this highly regional implementation and the disproportionate influence of Northeastern traditions in particular, there was a national dialogue of educators, theorists, and administrators that helped to coordinate the individual state and territorial systems. Alongside this existed various attempts by the federal government to guide educational policy, usually through the targeted funding of specific programs or endeavors. These measures were sporadically implemented and relatively limited in scope during the 19th and early 20th centuries. As late as 1930 81% of total funding for education still came from state or local coffers, and federal influence remained a secondary concern.⁸⁹ Ultimately this led to an American educational system that developed along common lines with regards to major structures and policies while retaining local administration and strong regional characteristics in specific details.

One of the most significant of these shared backgrounds is the Common School Movement. While there is an educational tradition in the United States dating back to the earliest European settlers to land in the Americas, modern American public education has its clearest antecedent in the Common School movement of the early 19th century. At the end of the 18th century formal education remained a phenomenon mostly reserved for either social elites or

⁸⁹ John D. Pulliam, *History of Education in America: Third Edition*, (Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1982): 137-140

as part of charitable or rehabilitative establishments such as orphanages, poor houses, or reform institutes for delinquent children. In a society that was still on firmly agrarian footing with only modest urban pockets that were beginning to industrialize, extensive formal education was generally not seen as a requirement for success in public life. Agrarian and early industrial workers were trained in the family or on the job and tradesmen learned via apprenticeships. Those destined for careers such as law and medicine that required significant formal education generally came from backgrounds that permitted either private tutoring within the household or attendance at a boarding school or academy.

Beginning with theorists such as James G. Carter and Horace Mann in the early 19th century, this mixture of private and charitable schools, on the job training, and private tutorage came under attack in favor of public schools supported by local governments. A component of this drive was the desire for a common baseline of education for all voting citizens. Carter argued as early as the 1820s that the uneducated strata of a population did not actively and voluntarily seek education for their children and, through their susceptibility to demagoguery and political manipulation, posed a revolutionary threat to the Republic.⁹⁰ While serving as secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education in the 1830s and 40s, Mann advocated for and developed a system of public primary schools that could be attended by all children in the state, theoretically regardless of social or economic position. Like Carter, he held that a literate, broadly educated, and civically aware population was a prerequisite for the proper functioning of a democracy and a bulwark against the excesses of populism and demagoguery. He expressed an almost utopian belief in the power of universal education to act as both a social and political glue. In his view education could play the role usually filled by a shared culture, language, or

⁹⁰ H. Warren Button and Eugene F. Provenzo, Jr. *History of Education and Culture in America*, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1983): 94

religion to bind what was rapidly becoming a diverse republic of immigrants from many national backgrounds into one, while simultaneously providing the necessary intellectual tools to constructively participate in the political life of the community.⁹¹ Significantly, he rejected the idea of a tracked system, such as the Germans and many other continental Europeans favored, and advocated for a common school specifically in order to foster a sense of understanding between children of different economic classes and avoid intractable social divisions that he argued could lead to political unrest.⁹²

Alongside calls for a common education to ensure that citizens understood the responsibilities of republican citizenship, some began to articulate a concern with the increasing foreign immigration that the United States experienced in the decades before and after the Civil War. Increasingly from non-English speaking countries, or countries and regions that spoke a dialect of English markedly different from what was then the American norm, these immigrants were seen by many as a pernicious foreign influence and a threat to the existence of a single, homogenous body politic. Many educators began to see public education as a way to prevent the establishment of long-term ethnic enclaves and speed the assimilation of those that already existed. Calvin Stowe, a proponent of the Common School Movement and husband of abolitionist and author Harriet Beecher Stowe, addressed this issue in 1835 at the annual convention of the Western College of Teachers when he asserted that, “It is altogether essential to our national strength and peace, if not even to our national existence, that the foreigners who

⁹¹ *Ibid.*: 98-99

⁹² Gerald L. Gutek, *Education in the United States: An Historical Perspective*, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1986): 94-98

settle on our soil, should cease to be Europeans and become Americans. . . .⁹³” This trend towards viewing education as a tool for integrating immigrant groups that were seen as culturally, socially, politically problematic would increase throughout the latter 19th century and reach a fever pitch in the years before World War I as anti-foreigner and anti-immigrant sentiments peaked in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The impact of these motivations was evident in the content of the classes themselves. The curriculum was designed not only with academic subjects in mind, but also with regard for the day to day needs of the vast majority of students who would not go on to secondary schools, much less universities. Literacy and basic math skills were emphasized, as were moral, religious, and civic lessons designed to produce students of good character.

By the outbreak of the Civil War this model for public education had spread throughout much of the US. This can partially be explained through the same set of industrial and governmental needs that accompanied the rise of public education in Europe. The industrialization and subsequent urbanization of wide swaths of American society made some form of basic, readily accessible education not only desirable for increasingly large segments of the population, but also far easier to deliver to an ever-increasing number of citizens. The changing nature of the American economy also made some form of primary education both a requirement and an expectation. As the nation as a whole industrialized the nature of the work being done required basic literacy and numeracy in ways that an agrarian economy never had, and employers began to expect some minimum level of education among their employees.

⁹³ Calvin Stowe, “Education of Immigrants: an address delivered before the Western College of Teachers, during their convention held in Cincinnati, October, 1835, at the request of the Emigrants’ Friend Society of Cincinnati.” In *Transactions of the Fifth Annual Meeting of the Western Literary Institute and College of Professional Teachers, Held in Cincinnati, October 1835*. (Cincinnati: N.S. Johnson, 1835): 70

Those areas that lagged the furthest behind the rest of the nation, specifically the South and the less populous parts of the frontier, were precisely those where industrialization had yet to take root, where the population were still largely rural, and population centers were poorly linked together.⁹⁴

It is for this reason that the Common School Movement that emerged as the dominant push for educational development is best attributed to the relatively large numbers of colleges, universities, and teaching academies that were established in New England, where the model had already firmly taken root. From there it spread to the rest of the country as educators who were trained in those institutions spread to other regions. Large numbers of teachers who were eventually employed in other parts of the United States received their basic training in a region highly influenced by Common School philosophies and methodologies, and this showed through in their later work.⁹⁵

The rapidity with which organized, public education spread across the US and the uneven way in which it did can be best seen in the number of students who were attending some form of school for at least part of the year. In 1837 only one third of school aged children in Massachusetts, one of the first states to embrace a universal primary school system and a hotbed of early Common School sentiment, attended any educational institution at any time in the school year.⁹⁶ The number of children regularly attending classes was likely significantly lower, especially during key agricultural seasons. By 1910, with some form of primary education

⁹⁴ Gutek, *Education in the United States*: 94-98 and Graham, *Community & Class in American Education*: 14-16

⁹⁵ in H. Warren Button and Eugene F. Provenzo, Jr. *History of Education and Culture in America*, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1983): 114-115

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*: 97

compulsory in most of the country, the national average stood at 81% of school-aged children and most of those were at least semi-regular students. This figure can be misleading, however, as there were major regional variations. In the Pacific and western mountain regions attendance stood near the national average, while in the South it was a relatively paltry 70%. In the New England, the area of the nation that had the longest standing tradition of community schools paid for with public funds, the figure was nearly 90 percent. Attendance at Midwestern and Mid-Atlantic schools was nearly that of New England.⁹⁷ Compulsory education laws were certainly part of the reason for this surge in attendance; by 1918 every state had a law mandating education in one form or another. Other factors included the rapidly industrializing economy, increasing legislation against child labor, and the growing recognition within the general population that some form of basic literacy and skill with mathematics at the bare minimum was necessary for economic success.

Following in the footsteps of the common elementary school, the public high school as a common secondary institution emerged in the years following the Civil War. Its main competition at the time was the earlier network of academies and private boarding preparatory schools built along the English model. Although these institutions continued to exist in one form or another well into the early 20th century, the public high school eventually overtook them as the predominant model for American education. Initially public high schools were restricted to urban areas with high concentrations of middle-class families who wanted more than a basic primary school education for their children, but either did not have the means or the desire to send them to a private boarding school. Later, child labor laws were strengthened, the number of years of compulsory education steadily increased, and economic conditions in the US shifted

⁹⁷ Graham, *Community & Class in American Education*: 4

such that increasing amounts of fundamental education were required for all but the most simple employment. As a result, the public high school came to be seen as a finishing stage in the education of the average citizen, a necessary final step in the transition from childhood to adulthood.

In the latter half of the 19th century educators at major American universities also became involved in debates over educational policy, primarily due to the fact that the students they instructed were the products of the diverse network of private academies and public secondary schools that was developing at this time. These involvements, and the desire to coordinate and standardize admissions requirements between universities, ultimately lead to regional and national accrediting bodies that helped ensure that schools in different states provided broadly comparable educational experiences. Various regional associations eventually merged into the National Educational Association (NEA) in 1870.⁹⁸

The end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th was a key moment in American educational history that established the core elements that would define it in the early 20th century. Beginning with the NEA's 1892 "Report of the Committee on Secondary Studies" (frequently referred to as the Committee of Ten Report) the recommendation was made that American secondary education should be designed to be accessible and useful for the general population. The Committee was emphatic that secondary schools should not serve purely, or even primarily, as preparatory institutions for university-bound students. The report went so far as to state that its chief interest lay "in the school children who have no expectation of going to college" and heavily advocated as general and practical an education as possible.⁹⁹ The

⁹⁸ Pulliam, *History of Education in America*: 100-101

⁹⁹ National Educational Association, *Report of the Committee on Secondary School Studies Appointed at the Meeting of the National Education Association July 9, 1892*, (Washington:

reasoning behind this was twofold. There were a number of claims, similar to those articulated by the Common School Movement, that an educated population was required for the smooth running of a democracy. There was also the acknowledgment that a modern industrial workforce needed to be both reasonably well educated and accustomed to the regimented timetables and patterns of behavior required in modern industry. The same broad patterns of political and industrial concerns that had driven the push for public primary schools now pressed for public secondary education.

26 years later another NEA-issued report - the “Cardinal Rules of Secondary Education” established by the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education - made this case even more strongly. Influenced in part by the concerns of the Progressive Movement, particularly in the realms of public health and welfare, it proposed seven cardinal principles for organizing American education. These were health, command of fundamental processes, worthy home-membership, vocation, civic education, worthy use of leisure, and ethical character. Most of these principles focused on non-academic aspects of the pupil’s life and were directed towards social engineering. They hoped that public schools could, through influencing successive generations of students, produce healthier, more able workers who would be active and cognizant participants in the democratic process. While advancement to some form of post-secondary education was a possibility for exceptional individual students, it was a distant secondary priority.¹⁰⁰

Government Printing Office, 1893): 12. While that particular quote is to be found on that page and was voiced by the Committee on History, the general theme is repeated time and again in every sub-Committee report in the larger document.

¹⁰⁰ National Educational Association, *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1918)

The report also maintained that in order to achieve these results secondary education must not remain an upper and middle class luxury, and that part-time secondary schooling must be a compulsory minimum across the nation.¹⁰¹ The high school was not conceived of as a means to an end or a checkpoint on the way to a trade or university education, but an end in and of itself, a ‘college of the people’ that would ensure a productive society in a vibrant democracy moving forward into the 20th century. The effect of measures and recommendations such as these, as well as legislation aimed at removing children from the work force once and for all, was enormous. Between 1900 and 1930 the percentage of American children aged 14-17 enrolled in some form of secondary institution rose from 11.4% to 51.4%.¹⁰²

The combined primary and secondary educational system that coalesced in the last half of the 19th century was one that expressly attempted to provide a universal, consistent experience for every student in the nation regardless of social or economic standing and which did so with the self-conscious goal of cultivating civic ideals and the ability to participate actively in a democracy. Inherent in this was a wide-spread conviction that education should be equally accessible and not overly privilege students based on their background, unlike continental European models that tracked students based at least partially on economic and social criteria and which served to limit, rather than promote, social mobility. What social mobility existed in the European models was frequently based on patronage, while the American model that was emerging at this time emphasized meritocratic advancement.¹⁰³ As early as the Committee of

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Frederick M. Raubinger et al., *The Development of Secondary Education*, (Toronto: The Macmillan Company, 1969):15

¹⁰³ For an excellent discussion of the differences between types of social mobility inherent in early 20th Century American and European public education, see Ralph H. Turner, “Sponsored

Ten's Report it was insisted that secondary schools be accessible to all precisely because this opened the possibility for a university education to gifted students from working class families. They maintained that many parents who had not received a college education themselves would not see the utility of sending their children to a special preparatory school and that it would be unjust for such children to be barred from the possibility of a college education if they demonstrated the desire and ability.¹⁰⁴

This egalitarian model was, of course, not the lived reality of public education in the United States. It assumed a level playing field that, due to the varied social and economic circumstances from which children come, was never present regardless of the accessibility of secondary education. The greatest source of inequality between theoretically equal, neighboring school districts – at least in those regions that were not explicitly segregated by race – was financial. Throughout the latter part of the 19th century and on into the early 20th century schools in many areas were chronically under-funded by state and local governments. In wealthier communities this shortage was alleviated by charitable donations from prominent citizens, local businesses, and philanthropic associations. Schools in poorer communities did as well as they could without the benefit of such largesse, resulting in a pattern of educational achievement that very closely mapped to the social and economic makeup of the communities that schools were situated in. Despite all attempts to design a more egalitarian system, it remained so only in theory and was nearly as prone to reproducing existing social orders as the more openly tracked European models that were specifically designed to limit social mobility. The continued

and Contest Mobility and the School System,” in *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 25, No. 6 (December 1960): 855-67

¹⁰⁴ National Educational Association, *Report of the Committee on Secondary School Studies*: 52

existence of private schools, parochial schools, and elite academies only furthered wealth-based disparities.¹⁰⁵

The greatest disparities that existed in the American educational system were, of course, those based in race. Whether in the officially segregated south or in industrialized urban centers in the north where economic clustering led to extreme disparities in racial makeup between different individual institutions, the educational experience of the average Caucasian student remained of a significantly higher quality than that enjoyed by his minority counterparts. This was a situation that had deep roots in the complex legacies of the Civil War and which would continue to blemish American education throughout the 20th century. Indeed, it remains an important issue within elementary and primary education to this day, although significant improvement has been made over the past fifty years.¹⁰⁶

Native American education was of a similarly shameful quality, an issue that was exacerbated by the self-conscious use that missionaries and public authorities made of it in order to “civilize” Native American children away from the cultural practices of their parents. In a process that has been rightfully described as a form of cultural genocide, publicly maintained schools on Native reservations made a concerted effort to strip their wards of native languages, religious practices, and other cultural markers while instructing them in English, Christianity, and patriotic loyalty to the United States. In many ways this was the darker side of the logic behind the Common School Movement, the ultimate expression of an educational model that

¹⁰⁵ Graham, *Community and Class in American Education 1865-1918*: 6-16

¹⁰⁶ For a well-written general examination of African American education in the United States during this period, see Charles L. Glenn, *African-American / Afro-Canadian Schooling: From the Colonial Period to the Present*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011). For a good account specifically of the problems of segregation and early 20th century Northern desegregation, see Davison M. Douglas, *Jim Crow Moves North: The Battle over Northern School Segregation, 1865-1954*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

argued for universal education on the basis of its utility for assimilating immigrants and raising citizens capable of political participation in a republican democracy. This model for Native American education was doubly tragic as it usually emphasized cultural assimilation over academic instruction, leaving generations of children robbed of their Native identities yet without the formal education to succeed economically outside the reservation.¹⁰⁷

Without diminishing or minimizing the significance of these unsightly blemishes on the edifice of American education, they did not inform the vision for German educational reconstruction and reform that the American occupation forces carried across the Rhine in 1945. The American educators who followed in the wake of the US Army, both as officers in that army and as civilian advisors to the occupation government, were far more concerned with an idealized vision of primary and secondary education as they understood it, one grounded far more in theory and aspirations than a reality that all too frequently failed to live up to them. When judging the shortcomings of a German educational system that was in many ways still grounded in Wilhelmine practices and policies they did not articulate their own criticisms of its inequalities and perceived undemocratic nature with an eye towards the reforms that had yet to be made in the United States, but with an emphasis on the successes that had already been achieved. Theirs might have been a somewhat Utopian view of American education and the possibilities that it held, but it was one that they believed was worthy of emulation. The notion

¹⁰⁷ For a general account of the troubled history of American Indian education, see Charles L. Glenn, *American Indian / First Nations Schooling: From the Colonial Period to the Present*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011). For more in-depth examinations of the ways in which Native education was used and abused to Americanize and ‘civilize’ Native children, see Hayes Peter Mauro, *The Art of Americanization at the Carlisle Indian School*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2011). For an excellent discussion of how this fit into the greater patterns of education towards an ideal of Republican citizenship for both Native Americans and African Americans see Kim Cary Warren, *The Quest for Citizenship: African American and Native American Education in Kansas, 1880-1935*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

that public education was a key component in creating a new, democratic Germany and shaping future generations of responsible voters as a bulwark against revanchist authoritarianism was firmly rooted in an idealized vision of America's own public school system and the role that it played in shaping an equally idealized vision of American society.

The Soviet Union

Pre-Revolutionary Russian education was, like many other aspects of its economic and political development during the 19th century, spotty at best. It was characterized by notable local developments that stood out against a backdrop of largely ineffective campaigns to modernize a vast countryside mired in antiquated practices. Earlier Tsarist efforts to spur Russian achievements in the arts and sciences had been devoted almost entirely to developing a post-secondary educational system, which led to a very top-heavy structure.¹⁰⁸ By the late 19th century Russian scientific, engineering, and artistic achievements matched those of many Western European nations, however the vast majority of the population was unable to secure even a rudimentary education from the state.¹⁰⁹ Additionally, as in many of its other modernizing endeavors during this period, there was significant tension between efforts to introduce reforms and reactionary repression caused by fears of revolution brought about by the social changes that accompanied them.

¹⁰⁸ For an overview of the specific policies and goals of Tsarist education before the Revolution see Nicholas Hans, *History of Russian Educational Policy (1701-1917)*, (New York: Russen & Russel, Inc, 1964)

¹⁰⁹ James C. McClelland, *Autocrats and Academics: Education, Culture and Society in Tsarist Russia*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979): 114

The tenures of two Ministers of Education who dominated the latter 19th Century, Count D. A. Tolstoi (1866-1880) and Count T. D. Delyanov (1882-1897) exemplify this. Under their combined oversight total enrollment in educational institutions of all levels - primary schools through advanced university studies - was raised significantly, standing at 16.2% 1880 and expanding very quickly to 22.6% by 1885.¹¹⁰ At the same time as they attempted to expand participation in these institutions, mostly through growing urban access, academic freedoms at the more advanced levels of instruction were restricted in favor of strongly centralized imperial control. Fears of revolution lead to strong police oversight of students, their behavior, and contacts both in class and outside of it. Additionally, universities were required to seek ministerial approval for any major decisions, including hiring faculty. Meanwhile, the church gained increasing influence in the lower levels of education. Parochial primary and secondary schools grew in both number and influence, especially in rural districts. This tension between the desire for educational reform in pursuit of technical and technological competence as part of a long-term modernization campaign and the fear of the revolutionary potential of an educated middle class was a major characteristic of Tsarist education in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

By the outbreak of World War I some efforts towards reform and standardization were under way. The Universal Primary Education Law of 1908, which would have come into full power in 1922 had the Revolution not intervened, called for universal, free, and compulsory primary education for children between eight and eleven years old. It also mandated that an accompanying network of secondary schools would be developed simultaneously.¹¹¹ Despite

¹¹⁰ William W. Brickman, John T. Zepper, *Russian and Soviet Education 1731-1989: A Multilingual Annotated Bibliography*, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992): 24

¹¹¹ McClelland, *Autocrats and Academics*: 40-41

these planned reforms, education in Tsarist Russia remained a profoundly elite phenomenon before the Revolution. For the majority of the population formal, secular education was entirely unavailable. Classroom-based primary education of the sort that a late 19th Century German or American would have recognized was reserved for the urban middle and upper classes, while both urban and rural aristocratic elites relied mostly on individual household tutors or sending their children away to private - and frequently foreign - boarding academies.¹¹²

Finally, pre-Soviet education in Russia was above all else highly regional in nature, more so even than in the contemporary United States. According to the 1897 census, 13% of the 125.6 million subjects of Imperial Russia lived in urban centers. 45% of city-dwellers were literate. In the rural areas of European Russia 17% were literate, while in the Asian territories rates ranged between 0.6% and 1.6%. Progress was evident, however. Among children aged 7-14 the overall literacy rate was 25%, compared to an empire-wide 21%.¹¹³ In comparison, literacy rates in the US and Germany at the end of the 19th century were 93.3% and 99.97% respectively.¹¹⁴

With the advent of the Revolution the new leaders of Russia faced a dual dilemma with regards to education. Most members of the burgeoning intelligentsia that had been cultivated under the Tsarist system sided against the Bolsheviks either during the Revolution or the subsequent civil war and were therefore categorized as class enemies of the proletariat. However, a certain level of specialized, educated expertise was required for technical and administrative tasks. No matter how genuinely eager, willing, and politically reliable a decorated peasant-soldier of the Revolution might be, he was a sorry replacement for even the most

¹¹² E. Thomas Ewing, *The Teachers of Stalinism: Policy, Practice, and Power in Soviet Schools of the 1930s*. (New York: Peter Lang, 2002): 4-5

¹¹³ Brickman, et al., *Russian and Soviet Education 1731-1989*: 27

¹¹⁴ McClelland, *Autocrats and Academics*: 50

aristocratic of university-educated engineers when it came to matters such as building factories or maintaining rail networks. Some form of ‘proletarian intelligentsia’ drawn from the previously repressed classes seemed necessary on this basis alone, but it was hard to justify on purely Marxist principles that did not recognize the possibility of a class of non-exploitive elites.¹¹⁵

This tension was eventually allayed – but never fully resolved – by the system of *vydvizhenie* (promotion) of workers and peasants into higher education and administrative posts. One major component of this was the virtual elimination of admittance standards for universities, which were thenceforth required to admit anyone over 16 who wished to study.¹¹⁶ This led to complications including lowered professional standards, inefficiencies, and created a *de facto* new elite class within a single generation. However, it did so via a process of conspicuous social mobility that permitted the pretense that these new administrators and professionals were still reliable members of the proletariat firmly rooted in their backgrounds as workers and peasants.¹¹⁷ In this regard, at least, these measures proved successful: by 1923 14% of students in universities were officially categorized as workers or peasants, and by 1933 it had climbed to 50%.¹¹⁸ The precise numbers should probably be taken with a healthy dose of skeptical

¹¹⁵ For a collection of contemporary writings that highlights many of these tensions and the attempts to work around them, see Herbert Flach, ed., *Deutschsprachige Publikationen sowjetischer Pädagogen in der Weimarer Zeit*, (Berlin: Volk und Wissen Volkseigener Verlag, 1962)

¹¹⁶ George Z.F. Bereday et al., eds, *The Changing Soviet School: The Comparative Education Society Field Study in the U.S.S.R.*, (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1960): 53

¹¹⁷ Shelia Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union: 1921-1934*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979): 238-253

¹¹⁸ Elizabeth Moos, *Soviet Education: Achievements and Goals*, (New York: National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, 1967): 8-9

appreciation for the reality of statistical reporting in the early Soviet Union, and the quality of instruction in the universities was almost certainly not uplifted by the revolution, however it remains hard to deny that Lenin's followers managed to significantly broaden the backgrounds represented in the student body and opened up the universities to many who would not otherwise have attended them.

The second major issue was the highly underdeveloped nature of public education across much of the Soviet Union. It was widely accepted that a workers' and peasants' state should provide basic education to the people that it claimed to represent, and steps were taken in this direction almost immediately after Lenin returned from exile in 1917. He issued an educational program that called for a secular, unified, trade-oriented, and polytechnical national educational system. This was soon elaborated on by the Commissar of Education, A.V. Lunacharskii, who called for a national network of schools with broadly defined curricular goals but significant local autonomy within those bounds. While progress remained slow due to the ongoing demands of the Revolution and subsequent Civil War, by 1920 education was theoretically compulsory and by the mid-20s approximately half of primary-aged children in Russia were attending some form of school.¹¹⁹ Given the conditions that the reforms were taking place under and the legacy of Tsarist neglect in this area such progress is remarkable.

This pre-Stalinist phase of Soviet education was marked by widespread pedagogical experimentation and an interest at both ministerial and local levels with foreign models that emphasized active learning and teaching techniques. The works of foreign educators such as Dewey, Kilpatrick, Kerschensteiner, and Montessori were widely read and discussed in

¹¹⁹ Brickman, et al., *Russian and Soviet Education 1731-1989*: 31

educational circles and many of their models and methods were pressed into service.¹²⁰ A key example of this was the 1923 promotion by Lunacharskii's Education Commissariat of the "Complex Method", a pedagogical approach highly influenced by Kilpatrick's "Project Method." This educational theory rejected traditional academic subjects and structured classroom lessons according to broad themes such as nature, labor, and society with the ultimate goal of seamlessly and organically demonstrating the interconnected nature of all subjects that the pupils were required to master.¹²¹

Experimentation such as this came at a price. Rapid shifts in educational policy and ministerial re-shuffling led to a great deal of curricular instability; between 1919 and 1927 three completely different programs for primary and secondary education were introduced and the schools required to abruptly transition with no regard to the classroom, administrative, or scheduling disruptions that resulted. The eager embracing of experimental models also encouraged rapid abandonment of projects and policies without enough time passing to effectively evaluate their results, for good or ill. The Complex Method was abandoned only three years after its adaptation, ironically at the very moment when foreign translations of its materials were leading educational progressives in France to proclaim it one of the greatest and most promising accomplishments of the new Soviet government.¹²²

Stalin's consolidation of power in the late 20s and early 30s coincided with increasing restlessness within the Soviet educational community. Many were dismayed by what they

¹²⁰ Bereday et al., eds., *The Changing Soviet School*: 67

¹²¹ Larry E. Holmes, *The Kremlin and the Schoolhouse: Reforming Education in Soviet Russia, 1917-1931*, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991): 32-35

¹²² Nicholas Hans and Sergius Hessen, *Educational Policy in Soviet Russia*, (London: P.S. King & Son, Ltd.: 1930): 203-205

perceived as chaos and a lack of direction. In 1929 A.S. Bubnov, a staunch political ally of Stalin and vocal critic of experimental education, replaced Lunacharskii. This change in leadership, coupled with the renewed emphasis on industrial development in the 30s and an increasingly repressive political atmosphere, combined to re-cast Soviet educational practices in a much more traditional mold. It also ushered in an era that saw some of the most impressive gains in the areas of infrastructure development, meaningful compulsory attendance, and establishment of a consistent national curriculum. Much as in Germany and the United States before it, much of this new educational drive was spurred by the demands of rapid industrialization and the need to transition from an agrarian workforce to one that was fit for factory labor.

As part of the First and Second Five Year Plans and the general emphasis on economic development within the Soviet Union, Stalin and other Party officials made the rapid expansion of primary and secondary education a major state priority. In addition to expanding primary education to ensure a basic level of universal literacy and numeracy, one of the key components of the new direction was a renewed emphasis on polytechnical education. With an eye specifically towards training the engineers, administrators, and technocrats that would be required to successfully industrialize the nation on the desired timetables, Soviet education now emphasized a common curriculum for all students through secondary school and placed a heavy emphasis on preparing them for further technical training. This training primarily took place on the job site, through work programs and apprenticeships, although more specialized and advanced training continued at technical academies. In many ways this can be understood as an inversion of the older system that had privileged classical academic subjects above all others. It also stands in stark contrast to the German secondary school reforms of the late 19th century. In

that case the *Gymnasium* and *Realschule* had emerged on somewhat more equal footing, but there was no real question of the socially superior position still enjoyed by the *Gymnasium* and its graduates. In the Stalinist Soviet Union government praise and accolades were most conspicuously lavished on projects and individuals who had a visible impact on the national crusade for industrialization within a single generation.

As a result of this previously unimaginable level of material and political support, the immediate results for Soviet education were dramatic. During the First Five Year Plan enrollment in schools by children 8 to 11 years old rose from 51% to 97%. By 1934 Soviet officials claimed to have achieved full enrollment of all the nation's youth.¹²³ This rapid rise in attendance, both in terms of the number of pupils and amount of time each one spent in the classroom, greatly exacerbated an existing teacher shortage and necessitated a drive to speedily train as many new educators as possible. The Commissariat for Education estimated that the nation as a whole lacked 250,000 classroom instructors in 1926.¹²⁴ From 1928 to 1934 the number of teachers in the USSR roughly doubled, increasing from approximately 365,000 to 710,000. This emphasis on teacher training continued after the achievement of full enrollment of school-aged children as the state sought to reduce classroom sizes, and by the outbreak of war in 1941 the total number of teachers in the USSR was just over 1.2 million, with an annual rate of growth that averaged 10.1%.¹²⁵ Statistics such as these must be questioned, and what constituted 'literacy' is an open question. Regardless of whether one adopts a charitable or cynical reading of the numbers, however, the fact remains that tens of millions gained at least some basic form of

¹²³ Ewing, *The Teachers of Stalinism*: 50-51

¹²⁴ Scott Nearing, *Education in Soviet Russia*, (New York: International Publishers, 1926): 13

¹²⁵ Ewing, *The Teachers of Stalinism*: 67

literacy and began having regular contact with some form of state-run education. This was a remarkable achievement and represented a genuinely radical improvement in the quality of life for tens of millions of Soviet citizens within the span of a couple decades.

At the same time major purges were undertaken within the Ministry of Education. Many of the most vocal proponents of the experimental models that had dominated in previous years were removed and replaced by advocates of more traditional pedagogical practices based around highly disciplined classroom environments, centrally orchestrated common curricula, and yet another renewed emphasis on specialty occupational training in secondary schools.¹²⁶ Classroom discipline was reintroduced as a core element of Soviet pedagogy at the expense of experimental approaches emphasizing self-directed learning and a new emphasis was placed on political, in addition to technical, instruction for all students. These moves coincided with larger contemporary trends in Soviet politics and society.¹²⁷ Measures were also taken to monitor individual student progress and ensure that standardized prerequisites were met before they advanced to the next level of instruction. The ultimate expression of this was the re-introduction in the mid-30s of concrete and meaningful admissions standards for universities and advanced technical schools. While these changes robbed Soviet education of some of its appeal to Western pedagogical theorists, they did much to re-establish a logical system of dependable technical certifications.

The progress made by the Soviets before World War 2 is remarkable. They succeeded in building a comprehensive educational system theoretically open to all members of society that met the immediate needs of rapid industrialization and, with the exception of a number of

¹²⁶ Holmes, *The Kremlin and the Schoolhouse*: 121-123

¹²⁷ Joseph I. Zajda, *Education in the USSR*, (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1980): 24-27

universities, did so almost from scratch. The results stand for themselves. Where only 21% of the population of Imperial Russia had been deemed literate in the 1897 census, the 1939 census recorded a general literacy rate of 81.2% and a rate of 89.1% for people between nine and 49 years old.¹²⁸ These accomplishments not only represented the true modernization of Russia and its emergence as a major world power, but also laid important groundwork for future efforts in Soviet-occupied Germany. Soviet education as it existed in 1945 was a highly centralized system that was self-consciously organized along strongly polytechnical lines for the express purpose of speeding industrial and agricultural development. While there was no guarantee that the Germans would embrace such a model for themselves, the implications and opportunities that it presented for a nation that was faced with almost completely rebuilding a profoundly shattered economy and utterly discredited political system were plain to see.

A collision of reformist visions

When American and Soviet soldiers clasped hands over the Elbe in the spring of 1945 it was not only two armies that met, or even two nations, but two cultures with vastly different political, institutional, and educational histories. While many celebrated and commemorated that act as a symbolic end to five years of bloodshed and war, in many ways it was the beginning of a new period of struggle and hardship as both groups sought to rebuild a ruined German nation in their own image. What is more, the Germans themselves would not be passive observers for long, but would quickly emerge as active, willing, and eager participants in their own rehabilitation.

¹²⁸ Brickman, et al., *Russian and Soviet Education 1731-1989*: 36

From the point of view of their educational histories, there were similarities that united all three of these traditions despite the different patterns of development rising from their unique histories and circumstances: all three developed universal, compulsory education in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a response to industrialization and the needs of the modern industrial state. In each of them there was a progressive, reformist attempt to humanize the educational apparatus and to make it a venue in which the welfare of the child could be addressed in addition to purely academic goals. In all three universal primary education became the norm as the economy developed and the demands of industry for skilled and semi-skilled labor outstripped what a traditional agrarian society could provide.

All three systems also developed with a social engineering mission as a core component: in the United States this emerges from a political tradition that sought to ensure the smooth running of a democratic republic that was increasingly forced to assimilate foreign immigrants. In the Soviet context it was demanded by the need of the state to politically educate people towards communist doctrine and models, and through a desire born out of Marxist-Leninist philosophy to artificially level society and erase the vast inequalities of previous eras. In Germany it began with early Prussian attempts to re-create and harness the mass patriotism of the French Revolution without its anti-royalist rhetoric and continued with later attempts to impose some level of cultural and political uniformity on a nation that still had many prominent local traditions at the end of the 19th century.

This results in a common set of assumptions about education shared between the Americans, the Russians, and the Germans in 1945: That education was a powerful tool for social engineering and that populations could be educated into behaving in certain ways and believing in certain things. Where they differed was on how much social mobility should be

inherent in that system and how open the resulting society should be. The American and Soviet models implied, in theory at least, a high degree of social mobility as a reward for participation in the broadest agendas of their states: some level of cultural uniformity and assimilation of in the American system, and participation in broader economic and political policies in the Soviet system. The Germans, on the other hand, limited upward mobility in order to reinforce established social structures and limit the challenges that could be posed to traditional elites by a growing middle class.

These differing viewpoints were exacerbated by the fact that the German system was effectively missing an entire age cohort of educators and educational theorists, the professions from which most educational administrators were drawn. The Russians who were in charge of overseeing educational matters in their occupation zones were frequently those who had undergone their higher education in the 20s and 30s under the burgeoning Stalinist system. The Americans who were in similar positions tended to be either the products of Depression-era schools that even further emphasized the need for extensive general education in order to keep as many children out of the work force as possible, or in some cases men who had been beginning their careers as educators during that period. The Germans, on the other hand, had almost two full cohorts of prospective administrators tainted by National Socialism: those who had undergone their training and early teaching careers immediately after WWI and who were emerging into the administrative ranks at the beginning of the Weimar period, and those who underwent their training under the Nazis and began their careers as educators under National Socialism. This cohort gap left a limited body of prospective German administrators that tended to range from people who had been driven out of the field in 1933 at the beginning of their careers at the younger end to elderly individuals who had retired during Weimar and spent most

of their careers under the Imperial system. This left the German participants in the dialogues that emerged divided into two rough groups with very different political outlooks: a younger group that was generally amenable to the institution of radically progressive new models for both personal and political reasons and an older one that had a lifetime of professional investment in models from a much earlier time, and whose previous professional experiences were during an era when educational reform had been an extremely fraught topic.

These tensions would make themselves most visible in attempts to reform German education to ease transition between educational tracks, but professional considerations from earlier eras would also intervene. The administrative corps in late 1945 was burdened with both extremes: those who viewed the collapse of National Socialism as the perfect opportunity to realize decades-old dreams of a progressive *Einheitsschule* model for general education, and those who remembered the political bad blood of the *Kulturkampf* and the contemporaneous fights over the relationship between tracks in the upper schools and pushes towards increased uniformity and unity among the elementary schools. These backgrounds were to prove highly important for determining how individuals would react to the various institutional reforms proposed by the occupying powers, as well as what the shape of those reforms would be.

CHAPTER 3: WARTIME PLANS AND POSTWAR REALITIES

We must guard particularly against this group; these are the most dangerous: German youth, children when the Nazi Party came to power. They know no other system but the one that poisoned their minds. . . . They were brought up on straight propaganda, production of the worst educational crime in the history of the world.

-*Hitler Lives*, 1946 Academy Award
winner for Documentary Short Subject¹²⁹

Upon the spiritual and material rubble that the rule of Nazism bequeathed us in education as in all other areas, we must begin anew, completely anew.

-Paul Wandel, President of the German
Office for Education (Soviet Occupation
Zone), 1946¹³⁰

¹²⁹ *Hitler Lives*, Film, directed by Don Siegel, (Hollywood: Warner Bros., 1945)

¹³⁰ Paul Wandel, "Grundsätze der Erziehung in der Deutsche Demokratischen Schulen,"
Nachlass Karl Sothmann, Folio 5, BBF-DIPF

In the summer of 1945 Germany was a nation defeated root and branch. Six years of warfare had bequeathed a legacy of physical and human desolation, while twelve years of Nazi rule had left behind an equally devastating moral and political vacuum. Urban centers lay in ruins with few buildings suitable for habitation much less government or institutional use. Millions of Germans had died in the past twelve years. They ranged from soldiers and civilians killed in the fighting to those put to death by their own government in its pursuit of a new racial and political order. Millions more who survived with severe mental and physical disfigurements would require care and treatment for decades to come. The nation was the epicenter of a Central European refugee crisis of an unprecedented scale; one legacy of wartime forced labor policies, civilian flight from advancing armies, and the initial stages of post-war territorial concessions. It was occupied by foreign militaries, broken into four distinct territorial zones, and administered by a multinational coalition. Significant questions still remained about whether there would be a single German polity or a collection of smaller states, and debate continued over whether the region should be economically and politically rebuilt or reduced to an essentially pre-industrial footing.

Despite this destruction and uncertainty there remained the immediate need to put civil society back on its feet in some form, whatever alterations future political settlements might demand. Initially this task fell to the foreign military forces that were in the field at the war's end. Control of the state would have to eventually return to civilian, and ultimately German, hands. In the meantime, however neighboring states needed to feel secure that that militaristic recidivism was impossible. As part of this project pre-war and early post-war occupation planners recognized the necessity for restructuring and renewing German education in order to guarantee that future generations of German citizens would be free of what was commonly

described as the taint of “militarism, the spirit of conquest, and . . . Nazism.”¹³¹ There was a shared assumption at this time that education was a powerful tool for social engineering and that it was possible to ‘re-educate’ the German people away from the expansionist, militaristic nationalism that many viewed as the root cause of Europe’s 20th century misfortunes.¹³²

These assumptions were at least in part derived from the recent historical experiences and educational policies of the Allied powers. All four of the countries assigned occupation zones had a history within living memory of using public education as a tool to shape or assimilate a target group in its own society. The French had pioneered this approach in the 19th century, utilizing public education to assimilate provincial identities and stamp out regional languages and dialects in favor of a broader, national identity centered on Paris. Proponents of the Common School Movement in the United States envisioned themselves serving not only an educational need, but also providing a necessary tool for the Americanization of immigrant and Native populations. The British had adopted similar techniques to attempt to Anglicize and pacify Irish populations, and during the inter-war years the Soviet Union had made very profitable use of their rapidly expanding public school system as a platform for political instruction in order to ideologically secure the Communist Revolution for a new generation.¹³³

¹³¹ “Publication of directive on military government, memorandum to Mr. MacLeish with draft report ‘German Education under military government’” 5/17/45, document 1-A-8, *The U.S. Occupation of Germany: Educational Reform, 1945-1949 Microfiche Collection*, Congressional Information Service, Inc., 1991

¹³² James F. Trent, *Mission on the Rhine: Reeducation and Denazification in American-Occupied Germany*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982): p. 2

¹³³ For more on the use of education as a tool for social engineering in the 19th and early 20th century see among: Hayes Peter Mauro, *The Art of Americanization at the Carlisle Indian School*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2011); Michael C. Coleman, *American Indians, the Irish, and Government Schooling: A Comparative Study*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), François Furet and Jacques Ozouf, *Lire et écrire : l’alphabétisation des*

German educators as well accepted the core premise that education would be vital to the social rebuilding and denazification efforts after the war; many of them gloomily referenced National Socialist successes in this regard in their own arguments for an active re-educational policy aimed at the nation's youth.¹³⁴

As military operations ceased and occupation duties began, the core question remained of whether rebuilding a post-Nazi Germany would be accomplished through rehabilitating pre-National Socialist traditions or through a reestablishment of German society and politics *de novo*. No single occupation policy had been agreed upon during the war by the Allied powers, and significant divisions remained within their ranks with regards to how radical a solution was necessary to root out National Socialist and militarist ideologies. Even as fundamental an issue as the number of German states that would result from a post-war settlement hadn't been resolved before the surrender, a situation that became increasingly intractable as wartime alliances weakened and Cold War animosities built.

During the fighting preferences among the various Allied leaders for the eventual peacetime order had shifted with the fortunes of battle and their own political agendas. At Tehran in 1943, for example, Stalin strongly advocated for a permanent division of Germany, but by 1945 he argued at Yalta in favor of maintaining a single German state under multi-power occupation.¹³⁵ Joint wartime planning was very limited, and the agreements reached at these

Français de Calvin à Jules Ferry, (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1977), Scott Nearing, *Education in Soviet Russia*, (New York: International Publishers, 1926)

¹³⁴ See Erika Mann, *School for Barbarians* (New York: Modern Age Books, 1938); Werner Richter, *Re-Educating Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945); and Karl Lowenstein, *Hitler's Germany: The Nazi Background to War*, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1940) for representative examples of this kind of literature.

¹³⁵ Norman M. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995): 9

meetings tended to be on the broadest of possible topics and, as far as the occupation of Germany was concerned, outlined only the barest of essentials. Eventually it was agreed that Germany would be divided into occupation zones between the major allied powers, that each zone would be administered independently of the others, but that a central Allied Control Commission would oversee major issues that impacted all four zones. This joint administration was initially meant to oversee a relatively punitive package of general policies that has since been summed up as the “3 D’s:” *demilitarization, denazification, decartelization*. This lack of specificity left much to the discretion of individual occupation administrations and their own interpretations. Issues as major as the eventual fate of the German state and where precise borders would be drawn were left for future peace-time negotiations.

This wartime confusion and lack of coordination had consequences for the German educational system. The earliest stages of educational reconstruction were largely shaped by general occupation policies enacted in the first months of the after the war and interpreted by local military authorities who, for the time being at least, wielded significant decision making power. These men were not educational specialists or even particularly knowledgeable civilian administrators but soldiers who had to rapidly transition from combat duties to the requirements of a peacetime occupation. This situation did not last long and specialists did follow in their wake, but many of the decisions and appointments they made in the first days of the peace had longer lasting implications. The wartime neglect of specific educational policies also gave German regional administrators, many of who had pre-Nazi experiences with strongly federalist institutional traditions, significant leverage in dealing with the frequently low-ranking and independently operating local military authorities responsible for education. This provided them with the space, especially in the first years after the war, necessary to have a significant hand in

shaping educational reconstruction. The rebuilding of education in Germany after the war became a more negotiated process and with more input from the Germans themselves than would have been suspected during the closing days of the conflict. It was the administrative layer of the educational system that provided most of that influence, whether by interpreting and reshaping the demands of the occupation authorities or by pressing for what they believed were necessary changes and reforms.

It was generally agreed that strong measures of some kind were necessary to remedy what was seen as a 'German problem' in Central Europe. The European experience of Prussian and German influence on international politics over the previous 75 years was overwhelmingly one of belligerence and bloodshed. The emergence of a unified German state was heralded by an aggressive Prussian foreign policy that blemished what was an otherwise notably peaceful Western European 19th century. After World War 2 it was argued by many that the new German nation formed as a result of the 1870 settlement consistently pursued militaristic and aggressive policies both in Europe and in the broader colonial context, and that these fatally destabilized the entire continent and ultimately resulted in two World Wars and bloodshed on a previously unimaginable scale. There was a broad consensus, developed through an active wartime literature on the pathology of German politics, that something was deeply wrong with the developmental path that the German state had taken, and Nazism was but the final, most extreme manifestation of it.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ See, among others: Mann, *School for Barbarians*, Richter, *Re-Educating Germany*; Lowenstein, *Hitler's Germany*; Isaac Kandel, *The Making of Nazis*, (New York: Bureau of Publications Columbia University, 1935); C.W. Guillebaud, *The Social Policy of Nazi Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1941); Gregor Ziemer, *Education for Death: The Making of the Nazi* (London: Oxford University Press, 1941)

In its more positive form, early assessment of the potential for the post-war rehabilitation of Germany emphasized its previous contributions to European culture and some strongly non-militaristic traditions that had been subsumed by Prussian militarism. The hope was that these could be presented as an alternative to the aberrant customs of a cultural and political minority. More negative assessments asserted the deeply problematic aspects of traditional German political and cultural mores and presented them not as one aberrant cultural strand among many, but a dominant cultural leitmotif that permeated every level of society. Proponents of this view envisioned a nation-building project from the ground up, one where the ultimate goal was the creation of a fundamentally new society laid out along more constructively democratic lines, however those were defined. This tension, between salvaging worthwhile traditions and beginning completely anew, informed many of the decisions made in the early years of reconstruction and, within the realm of education, formed the basis for a series of differences that would eventually define two educational systems that grew increasingly distinctive and separate as the victorious United Nations of World War 2 splintered into the opposing sides of the Cold War and central Europe lurched towards a two-state solution to the question of German nationhood.

Within the field of education, the publication of the Potsdam agreement three months after the general surrender was the first articulation of any policy, however broad. Articles 6, 7, and 9 of the Political Principles taken together provided the basic framework upon which post-war education would be constructed. Article 6 mandated the immediate termination of all public employees and people “in positions of responsibility in important private undertakings” who had been “more than nominal participants” in Nazi organizations or activities. Article 7 stipulated that education would be “so controlled as to completely eliminate Nazi and militarist doctrines

and to make possible the successful development of democratic ideas.” Article 9 instructed that civil administration in Germany would be “directed towards the decentralization of the political structure and the development of local responsibility.”¹³⁷

The most immediate consequence was that these measures mandated a localized, federal framework with high degrees of regional autonomy. While German education had a broadly federal structure under the Kaiserreich and Weimar Republic, it had been to a large extent dominated by geographically, demographically, and politically much larger and influential Prussian state. For the areas that would eventually coalesce into the BRD this represented the beginnings of a modern era of robustly federal education. For the areas in the Soviet Zone that evolved into the DDR the years of direct military occupation represent a brief interregnum of regional authority between the much more centralized models of the Nazi state and East Germany.

Planning for peace: the Americans

Internal American planning for a post-war occupation regime in Germany was fragmentary and lacked direction during the war years. In the absence of strong presidential leadership on the matter, individual agencies were left to propose their own solutions within the specific areas that most concerned them, an approach that led to conflicting goals and policy disagreements between different sectors of the government. Examples included State Department proposals that favored the widespread cultural and economic reconstruction of

¹³⁷ “Potsdam Agreement: Protocol of the Proceedings, August 1, 1945” in *A Decade of American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents 1941-1949 Prepared at the request of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations by the Staff of the Committee and the Department of State* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1950)

Germany, War Department proposals that were mostly concerned with divesting post-war occupation duties onto civilian agencies while protecting the sanctity of its authority in war zones, and the highly punitive deindustrialization proposed by the Treasury Department under Henry Morgenthau.¹³⁸

This was partially due to ongoing confusion over who would administer the occupation. During the conflict the War Department was adamant that, in the interest of security, final authority over all occupied enemy territory rest with the Allied Military Government for Occupied Territories (AMGOT), resulting in a reluctance on the part of the State Department to allocate many resources to planning a post-war order with no guarantee that they would have the necessary jurisdiction to see it through. Meanwhile the War Department operated under the presumption that planning for such ‘civilian’ post-war pursuits as rebuilding civil administration was the responsibility of the State Department and consequently devoted very few resources to the issue, concentrating instead on more familiar issues of security and maintaining order. This organizational uncertainty was further exacerbated by a seeming unwillingness of the executive branch to take any lead in clarifying matters, either under Roosevelt or Truman.¹³⁹

The resulting lack of direction had a direct impact on the efficacy of educational reconstruction in the areas under American occupation. Education never received enough attention from the military authorities that would ultimately be tasked with conducting the first years of the occupation, despite the apparent agreement within the State Department that the over-all task of the occupation was to democratize the nation from within. A symptom of this disconnect was that the Education and Religious Affairs branch (E&RA) was assigned no officer

¹³⁸ Trent, *Mission on the Rhine*: 13-15

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*: 16-17

with a rank higher than Major. This later substantially damaged its ability to develop and carry out its own policies within the military occupation framework that eventually developed. The low ranks held by its officers and its institutionally subordinate status to other branches of the occupation lead to enormous difficulties in procuring basic supplies and facilities for its own operations, much less the huge levels of aid and material support required by German educators and administrators in the early post-war period.¹⁴⁰ They were further hampered by general occupation policies that, at this early stage, demanded that the United States Army “take no action that would tend to support basic living standards in Germany on a higher level than that existing in one of the neighboring United Nations.¹⁴¹” This directly resulted in early difficulties establishing the necessary authority to carry through desired reforms as well as more concrete neglect with regards to supplies, facilities, and other material needs. This disorganization did not go unnoticed and unremarked upon. As early as the winter of 1945/46 the lack of any concrete policy developed during the war was criticized in England both in Parliament¹⁴² and in the pages of *The Economist*,¹⁴³ and both warned of the dangers of losing vital time before beginning a meaningful rehabilitation of Germany’s education and the recovery of its children.

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*: 48-50

¹⁴¹ “Publication of directive on military government, memorandum to Mr. MacLeish with draft report ‘German Education under military government’” 5/17/45, document 1-A-8, *The U.S. Occupation of Germany: Educational Reform, 1945-1949 Microfiche Collection*, Congressional Information Service, Inc., 1991

¹⁴² “United Kingdom House of Commons questions on re-education of Germany, debate transcript and letter from London Embassy,” 12/21/44 to 1/6/45, document 1-A-001, *The U.S. Occupation of Germany: Educational Reform, 1945-1949 Microfiche Collection*, Congressional Information Service, Inc., 1991

¹⁴³ “Re-education of Germany, letter from London Embassy, with extract from *The Economist*,” 1/6/45, document 1-A-2, *The U.S. Occupation of Germany: Educational Reform, 1945-1949 Microfiche Collection*, Congressional Information Service, Inc., 1991

Further complicating matters for the American military was the fact that it had been 80 years since it was last faced with occupation duties on this scale or of this nature. While they had aided in the post-war occupation and disarmament of Imperial Germany following World War I, that deployment had been extremely limited in time, geographical scope, and the responsibilities assumed. Their portfolio was strictly military in nature, designed to ensure that post-war disarmament was conducted in good faith and provide the necessary security forces to encourage the German state to begin reparation payments in a timely manner. Furthermore, political pressures in the United States meant that a protracted occupation was not feasible. To many Americans World War I was still “Europe’s War” and there was little domestic political support for a prolonged engagement on the continent. Having achieved the immediate objective of ending hostilities and protecting international trade many now felt that the soldiers should come home and leave Europeans to settle European political issues.¹⁴⁴ Not only was the engagement relatively short lived, but the number of soldiers involved was quickly scaled back. By the official end of the American deployment in 1923 the occupation force had dwindled from the quarter-million initially assigned to the Army of Occupation to less than a thousand men.¹⁴⁵

Other conflicts and deployments in the first quarter of the 20th century and the last decades of the 19th had very different goals as well. America’s numerous Caribbean and Latin American entanglements and the long-running campaign against insurgents in the Philippines had all been colonial in nature, with little thought given to local government or self rule. In these instances long-term security was defined by the ability of American businesses to extract labor

¹⁴⁴ Keith Nelson, *Victors Divided: America and the Allies in Germany: 1918-1923* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975): 6-23

¹⁴⁵ Margaret Pawley, *The Watch on the Rhine: The Military Occupation of the Rhineland, 1918-1930*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007): 77-88.

and crops and the absence of organized, violent resistance to the American military. Far from attempting to organize the local populations for self-government, the purposes of those deployments had been to incorporate them into a nascent American imperial apparatus.

The most recent occupation duty of the type that the US military faced in Germany in 1945 was over three quarters of a century earlier: the occupation and administration of the Confederacy after the Civil War. In many ways the patterns of neglected planning, ad-hoc post-war arrangements, and eventual weak civil administration were similar. Early in the war, as small portions of rebellious states came back under Federal control, local issues such as what to do with liberated slave populations and how to interact with civilian populations were dealt with on an individual basis by the officers on the scene. As the war progressed, Union armies penetrated deeper into the South, and the criteria for readmitting rebellious states to the nation became better articulated the duties of the Army away from the front lines expanded and became ever more complex and local military commanders were assigned responsibility for reestablishing local government under Federal auspices.¹⁴⁶

Drawing from many of the same early Progressive ideals that would shape the development of American public schooling in the coming decades, many educated Northerners predicted a need to re-educate white Southern populations into once again being productive parts of the nation. Addressing a presumably skeptical, mostly ex-Confederate audience a Northern missionary wrote in the *Atlanta Christian Index* in 1866 that the North “should teach the South. . . by military garrisons, by [Freedmen’s] Bureau courts, by Congregational churches, by Northern Settlers, by constitutional amendments, by Christian missionaries, by free schools, lectures,

¹⁴⁶ Wayne J. Urban and Jennings L. Wagoner, Jr., *American Education: A History, Second Edition*, (Boston: McGraw Hill: 2000): 139-141; Charles L. Glenn, *African-American/Afro-Canadian Schooling: From the Colonial Period to the Present*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011): 46-55

newspapers and reading rooms, what be the first principles of social order, political eminence, moral worth and industrial success.”¹⁴⁷ A similar assessment was provided during the war by the general secretary of the American Freedman’s Union Commission who wrote in 1864 that “we have not only to conquer the south – we have to convert it. We have not only to occupy it by bayonets and bullets – but also by ideas and institutions.”¹⁴⁸

While these sentiments proved somewhat naïve in the context of post-Civil War Reconstruction, they were still characteristic in many ways of how the optimistic American planners conceived of their occupation duties in Germany after World War 2. Though National Socialism had been despised for the brutality and destruction that it unleashed on Europe and Prussian militarism was viewed as a profoundly troublesome and in many ways more deeply rooted problem, many in the United States perceived an underlying cultural heritage that they felt sincere respect and affinity for. Critically, these attitudes were present within the War Department headed by Henry Stimson. Unlike the more aggressively anti-German factions within the Treasury Department, many War Department planners saw the potential in rehabilitating what they viewed as a nation of wayward *Dichter und Denker* rather than a nation of latter-day barbaric Huns who had twice threatened the destruction of European civilization.

One draft proposal for education under an American military government published a week and a half after the cease-fire specifically noted, “having purged itself of Nazism and the spirit of conquest, the German people have an old and distinguished culture capable of constructive development.”¹⁴⁹ It strongly emphasized the need to focus on these qualities in the

¹⁴⁷ cited in Glenn, *African-American/Afro-Canadian Schooling*: p. 45

¹⁴⁸ cited in Glenn, *African-American/Afro-Canadian Schooling*: p. 48

¹⁴⁹ “Publication of directive on military government, memorandum to Mr. MacLeish with draft report “German Education under military government”” 5/17/45, document 1-A-8, *The U.S.*

initial stages of the occupation in order to afford the German people the hope of constructive, natively German education in order to prevent the development of a cultural and political vacuum “which could only be filled by the old evil in a different form.”¹⁵⁰ A Joint Chiefs policy memorandum on education, published days after the military surrender of Nazi Germany and re-published the following February, also noted the need for a “cultural revival” and emphasized the opportunities presented by both older, local traditions and the more positive aspects of national culture. “In addition to the mobilization of healthy cultural influence in the locality and in the region, it is essential that the cultural revival be allowed on a national scale. A potential basis for German self-respect is the justifiable pride of Germans in their former great literary, artistic, scholarly, scientific and religious contributions to civilization.” The same memorandum noted the importance of involving Germans in the rebuilding effort, claiming, “Permanent cultural changes can be effected only as they are developed and maintained by the Germans themselves.”¹⁵¹ Tellingly, the specifics of Department of War goals with regards to German education were incredibly vague, referencing only the need to “eliminate Nazi practices and attitudes” and indulging in platitudes about the importance of fostering “universal principles of justice.”¹⁵² In many ways this presented Allied planners in the West with a self-contradictory

Occupation of Germany: Educational Reform, 1945-1949 Microfiche Collection, Congressional Information Service, Inc., 1991

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ “Long-range policy statement for German re-education with referral note and memorandum by State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee” 2/27/46 (originally authored 5/28/45), document 1-A-17, *The U.S. Occupation of Germany: Educational Reform, 1945-1949 Microfiche Collection*, Congressional Information Service, Inc., 1991

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

task: rid German society of the negative elements that had led for the previous 75 years, while pushing it towards self-government as quickly as possible.

General Clay and the military government that he headed understood their role in Germany as that of an “instructional dictatorship” [*Erziehungs Diktatur*]: an openly non-democratic military government with complete control of civil affairs within their occupation zone, but one that existed to teach the German people how to embrace democracy and eventually form their own government along those lines.¹⁵³ They interpreted the sections of the Potsdam Agreement which called for the democratization of German culture as an educational mission and set out with the express goal of helping Germans to set up democratic institutions of their own making rather than imposing a pre-determined structure. This became increasingly apparent as initial efforts to have control of civil affairs inside of Germany transferred from Department of War to State Department hands failed and more concrete policies were articulated and published.¹⁵⁴ In particular the American military authorities mistrusted the strong centralization of state resources, claiming that such measures “hold within them the danger of dictatorship.”¹⁵⁵ Consequently they conceived of the future of Germany as a “federation of independent states” where the specifics of educational policy and educational structure would vary from state to state, but where there would be enough communication and coordination between them that their

¹⁵³ Wolf-Arno Kropat, “Hessens Weg zu einer sozialen Demokratie,” in *Entnazifizierung, Mitbestimmung, Schulgeldfreiheit: Hessische Landtagsdebatten 1947-1950: Eine Dokumentation*, Wolf-Arno Kropat, ed., (Wiesbaden: Historische Kommission für Nassau, 2004): 5-8

¹⁵⁴ “Long-range policy statement for German re-education with referral note and memorandum by State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee” 2/27/46 (originally authored 5/28/45), document 1-A-17, *The U.S. Occupation of Germany: Educational Reform, 1945-1949 Microfiche Collection*, Congressional Information Service, Inc., 1991

¹⁵⁵ “Speech before Hessian Ministers” author unknown, February 1947, Abt. 1178 (Nachlass Stein) Nr. 67a Korrespondenz mit der Militärregierung, HHStAW

programs would be broadly comparable. This would enable states to tailor policies and curricula to meet local needs, while ensuring inter-operability across the system. The latter was necessary so that employers and higher educational institutions could be able to distinguish between prospective students and employees without being intimately familiar with every nuance in the educational agendas of individual states. Unsurprisingly this model bore significant resemblance to American education.

This mix of weakly articulated wartime policies, a lack of recent experience in conducting non-imperial occupations, structural problems within the command hierarchy of the occupation, the rush for a speedy democratization of German life, the rapid development of German institutions, and lingering respect in some corners for pre-Nazi German educational achievements left American occupation forces in a relatively weak position to reform German education. If blame must be assigned, much of it lies with inter-departmental rivalries within the US government and a subsequent lack of systematic, coordinated planning. However it came to be, that lack of a clearly articulated and specific plan for rebuilding Germany's educational system in peacetime left the first occupiers to make many ad hoc decisions based on little more than immediate need and their own educational philosophies and experiences with education in the United States. As military men, their rush to put civil administration - a task with which they had little practical experience and little training - back into civilian hands ultimately created significant space for Hessian educational administrators to push back against reforms that they did not want to carry out.

Planning for peace: the Soviets

While less open in expressing admiration for the 19th century accomplishments of their recently defeated fascist nemesis than many Americans, Soviet planners also recognized the need to include Germans in the post-war reconstruction effort. During the war small but significant numbers of German intellectuals and communists lived in exile in the Soviet Union, most having fled there before 1941. Although somewhat influential in the years before the war, their status as foreigners left them highly exposed during the purges. Their ranks were further depleted by Stalin's decision to hand significant numbers of them over to the German government upon the completion of the Molotov-von Ribbentrop pact.¹⁵⁶ Alongside them there existed a body of captured soldiers and officers who went through Soviet 'anti-fascism' courses of study in captivity and founded organizations such as the Bund Deutscher Offiziere (BDO). These two groups together formed the core of the Nationalkomitee Freies Deutschland (NKFD). While the NKFD was initially organized for purely propaganda purposes, under constant threat of being shut down by suspicious Communist Party officials who routinely vacillated on its worth, and at its very best only advisory in nature, in the aftermath of the war it was seen by some as a potential source of capable, trustworthy politicians and administrators who it was hoped would have some legitimacy in the eyes of their fellow countrymen.¹⁵⁷ In the end many of the positions within the SBZ would be filled by men and women who either survived the war in Western exile

¹⁵⁶ For more on the lives and fates of these pre-war German émigrés to the USSR, see David Pike, *German Writers in Soviet Exile, 1933-1945*: (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press)

¹⁵⁷ Jan Foitzik *Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland (SMAD) 1945-1949: Struktur und Funktion*, (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999): 38-40; Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*: 41-47

or inside Germany despite leftist political affinities. Ex-officers were often politically unacceptable and conditions in the Soviet Union had drastically reduced the numbers of the pre-war émigrés. Even so, those who survived a decade of life as suspect foreigners in Stalinist Russia had many valuable contacts and understood how to operate within in that system. This, coupled with their immediate availability led to a handful of the highest positions being filled by members of the NKFD. It is also an indication that on some level the Soviets were aware that it was ultimately Germans who would have to lead, teach, and administer other Germans for any kind of long-term solution and peace to be possible.

Soviet policy was predicated on a historical view of Nazism that was fundamentally different from the Western Allies'. Contemporaries on both sides of the Elbe saw Germany's recent past as a symptom of a culture that was somehow malformed as a result of the abnormal role played by militaristic, antidemocratic military elites who had never been supplanted during the 19th century as they were in other nations. The Soviets, however, saw this as an acute form of the problems plaguing industrially advanced bourgeois societies in general, not a specifically German tragedy that needed to be corrected to put them back on a path of normal development.¹⁵⁸ They also differed on what the eventual solution should be. They diverged strongly from American and British views that there existed a positive, older form of German identity that could be salvaged and incorporated into a new German nation. For the Soviets this older identity was a manifestation of antiquated aristocratic and bourgeois values that deserved to be swept away almost as much as the more recently tragic Prussian militarism. While a form of reeducation was still seen as a key to moving German society forward, it was not a rehabilitative type that would correct a diversion from the normative historical development of

¹⁵⁸ Timothy R. Vogt, *Denazification in Soviet-Occupied Germany: Brandenburg 1945-1948*: 8

other Western nations, but one aimed at educating Germany's workers and farmers to assume political power on their own and supplant the previously ruling classes. The need for 'democratic' government in Germany was constantly evoked, although the Soviet understanding of the term bore little resemblance to that of the Western Allied powers.

Early Soviet policy was predicated upon putting known opponents of Nazism into power in the hopes that they would have more legitimacy in the eyes of the population than the Soviet military that they were answerable to. SMAD believed that once the administrative apparatus had been secured and placed in the hands of trustworthy anti-fascists, drawn from what remained of the pre-war KPD and the ranks of the NKFD, a new generation of socialist youth could be raised who would reject the problematic views and traditions of their forefathers.¹⁵⁹ Rather than attempt to rehabilitate society at large and resurrect older, untainted models for what it meant to be German, they intended to raise up an immediately trustworthy leadership cadre which could, within a generation or two, define a new model for German society and culture that would represent a clean break with a troubled past and a stark alternative to what was offered under the Western Allies. In this view denazification meant getting rid of the structural and cultural underpinnings of the fascist movement, rather than guilt as embodied by specific criminal individuals, so it had to be revolutionary. This aspect of the occupation was taken seriously as both a challenge and an opportunity by the Soviet occupation authorities. Lieutenant-General I.S. Kolesnichenko, commander of the Soviet Military administration for Thuringia in (SMA-Th.) in 1945 wrote that the Soviet occupiers had a more challenging task ahead of them than

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*: 9-10

their Western counterparts, as they had the duty to install a new, progressive ideology while the Western powers could simply promote a return of inter-war bourgeois culture.¹⁶⁰

Unlike the Americans, the Soviets desired from the outset a strong centralized educational authority from which general policies could emanate. Initially this was done by the simple expedient of issuing identical occupation orders throughout the assorted states and provinces that made up the Soviet Zone. For example, the Law for the Democratization of the German School of May/June 1946 consisted of five separate but largely identical laws under the same title that were promulgated almost simultaneously: in the province of Saxony on 22. May 1946, in the state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern on 23. May 1946, in the state of Saxony on 31. May 1946, in the province of Mark Brandenburg on 31. May 1946, and in the state of Thuringia on 2. June, 1946.¹⁶¹ This drive towards centralization was further aided by the installment, almost immediately upon the cessation of hostilities, of Paul Wandel as head of the new German Education Administration in Berlin. This central authority remained quite weak during the occupation period, however, partially due to the strong state-level administrations that were able to successfully fend off many of the initiatives emanating from Berlin and partially due to Wandel's own inexperience in educational matters; his chief qualifications were political and stemmed from his active participation in the KPD during the 20s and early 30s and his continued political activity in Moscow after emigrating in 1933.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ cited in Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*: 399

¹⁶¹ "Gesetz zur Demokratisierung der deutschen Schule vom Mai/Juni 1946" in *Brandenburgische Gesetzsammlung, 1945/47*, (Potsdam: Märkische Druck- und Verlags-GmbH. 1948)

¹⁶² Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*: 452-453

As with the Americans, the Soviet Union published no concrete plans for reforming German education until the occupation began. The first major statement to outline an educational policy that went beyond the broadest generalities of reestablishing education under non-Nazi auspices was the Law for the Democratization of the German Schools, which was not enacted in Thuringia until June 2, 1946. Also similar to their American co-belligerents, wartime planning for the post-war era was significantly hampered by both politics and the pressing need - felt more acutely by the Russians than by the Americans - to militarily defeat the Germans in the field before worrying about what to do with them afterwards. Where the Soviets and the Americans fundamentally differed, however, was in their historical understanding of National Socialism and the relative value of the non-Nazi cultural heritage that Germans could draw on. There are many potential explanations for this. The most obvious lies in the migrant background of most American families, the high proportion of those that came from Western Europe, and the large number of those who could trace their family trees at least partially back to Germany itself. Even those who claimed no German ancestry recognized its contributions to a Western European cultural and religious tradition that many in America felt a strong affinity for. It is much more difficult to advocate the complete overturning of a culture and society that one is at least partially invested in. Russia had a long history of contact with German culture, one that was especially important for the elites of Tsarist society in the 18th and 19th century, in the form of both imported high culture and day to day contact with groups such as the Baltic German minorities. At the same time they had also suffered much more directly at the hands of National Socialism and were for this reason perhaps less amenable to seeking out the more noble aspects of German culture and traditions for rehabilitation. This combined with a Marxist historical understanding of fascism to promote much more radical solutions to the 20th century problem of militaristic,

aggressive German nationalism. For German education this meant that the immediate bar for restructuring was set much higher than in the west, and the space left for negotiation much more narrow.

German contributions from exile

Some German politicians and educators operating from foreign exile during the war also participated in the planning of Germany's educational future, frequently on an independent or informal basis. While their work was fragmented, ad hoc, and frequently restricted to insular expatriate communities, it was nonetheless of significant importance in the post-war era. The exact forms that these proposals, planning committees, and correspondence groups took are diverse enough to defy generalization. They ranged from informal study groups led by expatriate school teachers,¹⁶³ to think-tanks organized among educated POWs under military auspices,¹⁶⁴ to articles and books written for non-German wartime public consumption,¹⁶⁵ to secret committees formed by political prisoners in concentration camps as the war ground to its inevitable conclusion.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ Hans Siebert, "German Educational Reconstruction (G.E.R.)," Nachlass Hans Siebert, Folio 14, BBF-DIPF

¹⁶⁴ Foitzik, *Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland (SMAD) 1945-1949*: 41-47

¹⁶⁵ See, among others: Mann, *School for Barbarians*, Richter, *Re-Educating Germany*; Lowenstein, *Hitler's Germany*; Kandel, *The Making of Nazis*; Guillebaud, *The Social Policy of Nazi Germany*; Ziemer: *Education for Death*.

¹⁶⁶ Hans Brumme, "Über die Tätigkeit der Erziehungskommission des illegalen Volksfrontkomitees im Konzentrationslager Buchenwald im Jahre 1944," in *Monumenta paedagogica*. (Berlin: Volk und Wissen Verlag, 1974): 377-395

It is also difficult to generalize about their reception, other than to say that it was usually more dependent upon the relative openness of their host society than any particulars of what they had to say. At one extreme sits the relatively privileged existence of Erika Mann. She not only published an expose on Nazi education during her exile¹⁶⁷ but operated a cabaret in New York City that housed many other exiled German artists and operated as a journalist in England during the war. At the other extreme one finds the fates of many who fled to the Soviet Union in the thirties only to fall victim to claims of being foreign spies during Stalin's purges.¹⁶⁸

As fragmentary and difficult to generalize as these experiences were, they remain important due largely to the perceived reliability on the part of the occupying powers of the men and women who wrote them. Many of the most active members in these wartime discussions were the same men and women who, whether living as exiles abroad or suffering extreme persecution inside Germany, had the impeccably anti-Nazi political pedigrees that were a *sine qua non* for influential, high-level administrative postings after the war.

One theme in the writings of these men and women that was fully compatible with the wartime views of both the Western Allies and the Soviets was the idea that the direct involvement of Germans in the moral and political rehabilitation of the nation was vital. Wilhelm Sollmann was a Weimar-era Social Democratic member of the Reichstag and twice Secretary of the Interior under Stresemann who fled the country in 1933 after suffering beatings and arrest. He observed in 1944 that, "the one absolute political necessity clearly predictable for postwar Germany is broad cooperation of all social groups, political philosophies, and religious

¹⁶⁷ Mann, *School for Barbarians*

¹⁶⁸ Pike, *German Writers in Soviet Exile*: 156-198

creeds, the Nazis and their fellow-travelers, of course, excluded.¹⁶⁹” He advocated applying these principles to educational planning and emphasized the legitimacy that German professional certification granted local educators in the eyes of their fellow countrymen. Foreign experts, no matter how well trained or accomplished in their own countries, would have a harder time ensuring that re-established institutions were seen as legitimate and long-term solutions by the general population. In early 1945 Sollmann wrote in a report on educational reconstruction that, “Education must be handled by national professional groups and leaders, if it is to be acceptable to the students. However, native teachers will badly need international assistance, advice and help, criticism and encouragement.¹⁷⁰” Reconstruction would need foreign aid, and would need to be directed by foreign oversight, but it would ultimately need to be conducted by the Germans themselves if it were to be durable.

When it came to the question of the value of pre-existing German culture, German authors tended to be more ambivalent than either their American or Soviet counterparts. Many of them had a natural appreciation for their own culture and the good parts of what had come before, but most were self-critical enough to acknowledge that something was amiss. Regardless of the depth of the rot that they perceived in German society and politics there were two fundamental points of agreement within most of the expatriate community: the German people were neither completely lost, monsters incapable of meaningful rehabilitation nor were they

¹⁶⁹ William F. Sollmann, “Military Occupation and German Revolution,” *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 38, No. 5 (Oct., 1944) p. 979. Sollmann was born Friedrich Wilhelm Sollmann, but went by William F. Sollmann from his emigration to the US in 1937 until his death in 1951

¹⁷⁰ “Educational reconstruction in Germany, By William F. Sollmann and acknowledgment from State Department.” 4/25/45, document 1-A-6, *The U.S. Occupation of Germany: Educational Reform, 1945-1949 Microfiche Collection*, Congressional Information Service, Inc., 1991

purely lambs astray, closet democrats incapable of rising up and freeing themselves purely on account of the state terror apparatus.¹⁷¹

The more negative assessments emphasized the deeply problematic aspects of German political, cultural, and educational traditions and envisioned a great nation-building project. The ultimate goal would be re-education along more constructively democratic lines – however those were defined – than had previously existed. Many of these criticisms came from German communists and socialists who accepted Marxist historical critiques and who emphasized the danger of reading too much into the cultural “giants” of the German past. Hans Siebert was a pre-war teacher in Kassel who was both persecuted professionally and prosecuted criminally for his activism in the KPD, eventually emigrating to England in 1936. While abroad he wrote prolifically about German education, both in German and English language presses, and headed many lectures, seminars, clubs, and other social organizations for the German expatriate community in England. In 1942 he wrote that, “There are not a few German opponents of Hitler who restrict themselves to uncritically setting the ‘great’ German spiritual heritage against the current barbarity of Nazism. However, one can also discern in this ‘great’ German past many of the roots and causes of Germany’s later collapse into barbarity.”¹⁷² Hitler was not Germany’s first brush with authoritarianism nor with violent political repression. For many among the German left the 18th and 19th centuries provided not just cultural alternatives to Prussian militarism, but a time when there was a broad consensus among the middle class and elite that working class political activism and regional identities should be repressed in the name of national unity.

¹⁷¹ Hans Siebert, “The Future of Germany,” manuscript, June 4, 1944, Nachlass Hans Siebert, Folio 1131, BBF-DIPF

¹⁷² Hans Siebert, “Vorbemerkung,” Nachlass Hans Siebert, Folio 10, BBF-DIPF

Siebert also held that the question of German culpability for the crimes of the Third Reich could not be reduced to the question of Nazis and anti-Nazis, those who stood with the regime or against it. He claimed that the great difference between the German nation and other nations of Western Europe was that this “middle bulk” had been systematically trained “to believe in slogans which promise national grandeur at the cost of other nations,” and laid the blame solely at the feet of a German educational system that “since Bismarck . . . has gradually and systematically weakened whatever other more European, liberal, democratic traditions may have existed before that time.”¹⁷³ In essence, he held that the Germany of Fichte and Hegel, of Goethe and Humboldt was an unrecoverable past destroyed by the disastrous legacies of 1870 and half a century of Prussian rule and administration. In his view Germany had indeed walked a ‘special path’ to the disastrous policies of the Third Reich, but it was one that was rooted neither in the mists of antiquity nor in any particular character flaw unique to the German people, but a specific political disaster and ruinous policies that had taken half a century to reach full fruition.

A more moderate sentiment was expressed by Werner Richter, a one-time undersecretary in the Prussian Ministry of Education during the Weimar Republic who relocated to the United States following the rise to prominence of the Nazi Party. He emphasized the importance of education as a tool for the eventual rehabilitation of German society, but warned against an over-reliance on it. He spoke out against what he saw as a contemporary literature that, in lamenting the damage caused by the Nazi educational system, simultaneously blackened the reputation and called into question the motivation of the Weimar-era educators who had preceded it. He cautioned that “matters in the field of education are. . . not so simple as to justify appraising the

¹⁷³ Hans Siebert “Broadcasts to German Youth and its Educators,” Nachlass Hans Siebert, Folio 11, BBF-DIPF

results of an educational philosophy with a political yardstick” and went so far as to highlight the political failings of the Western Allies to prove his point: “Surely, no one would hold American education responsible for the emergence of a Huey Long; the two Napoleons did not come to power because the French educational system had failed. The future of education is not served by making the educational efforts of the first German Republic responsible for the coming of Hitler.¹⁷⁴” If German reconstruction was to depend on using education to reshape society, it did no one any good to use it as a scapegoat for the tragedies of the recent past.

In most cases opinions on the precise level of cultural and pedagogical renewal that was required and the thornier issue of how much of previous traditions could be salvaged broke down along political lines. Communist or strongly socialist individuals valued older traditions less and preferred more radical programs of cultural rebuilding rather than rehabilitation. Those with conservative or centrist affinities tended to value certain middle class and non-Prussian aristocratic legacies, especially those that could be portrayed as being cultural, rather than political, in nature. This did not always hold true in a formulaic sense, of course. Richter, for example, strongly felt that previous educational models had to be taken seriously as a source of inspiration and a model for what was to come, and dismissed out of hand the more extreme calls for German dismemberment, cautioning against even separating traditionally Prussian territories lest they provide a rallying cause for reactionary forces.¹⁷⁵ This is unsurprising coming from a man who served extensively in the Imperial and Weimar-era educational systems and sought his exile in America. On the other hand, he also recognized that the world had changed profoundly, both politically and economically, since the 19th century and that educational technique must

¹⁷⁴ Richter, *Re-Educating Germany*: xx-xxi

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*: 130-148

evolve along with it. Unlike many of his peers who wanted to maintain German educational traditions, he felt that “the Oberschule did not justify its existence” and that in light of the “brutal realities of the machine age . . . the humanistic Gymnasium can only be a side issue in the educational system of the future.¹⁷⁶” In favoring a much expanded, general secondary school and an intermediate tier of general college studies before any consideration of university studies he sounded much closer to staunchly Marxist proponents of the *Einheitsschule* model than to most of his western colleagues. He also echoed the sentiments of many younger educators who were generally more willing to engage in radical reformation than men of his generation.

Even so, these broad differences did lead to a form of self-sorting, with many of those critical of the older systems and ready to embrace new models settling in the Soviet Zone due to their political convictions, and those more invested in older models and willing to attempt to salvage pre-existing structures settling in areas controlled by the Western Allies. This had concrete and long-lasting consequences for the reconstruction of German education, as these men and women provided the initial group of educators from whom post-war administrators were drawn.

Dr. Marie Torhorst was one such educator, a prominent pre-war proponent of experimental and reformist educational models and politically active member of first the SPD and later the KPD. Dismissed in 1933 on political grounds, she would later serve in posts of increasing responsibility until eventually becoming Minister of Education for Thuringia in 1947. Writing in the 1970s she recounted the splintering of the old *Reformpädagogiker* movement after the war and in particular her strained, and eventually broken, relations with Fritz Karsen, an old colleague and friend who chose to work with the American authorities in Berlin. Karsen was

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*: 195

himself a well known reformist educator who had founded experimental schools in Berlin during the Weimar period aimed at developing a single track *Einheitsschule* that could be used as a model for wider educational reform. A pre-war socialist and member of the SPD, he was not as radical as Torhorst and they had numerous disagreements in the 30s over the issue of communism, both as manifested in the KPD and in the Soviet Union. Upon Torhorst's return in 1932 from a period of study and research in Moscow Karsten commented that in light of recent political events she appeared to have backed the wrong horse at the worst time.¹⁷⁷

Their difficulties stemmed not only from political differences, but also his continued insistence on the validity of the educational models they had worked on before the war, while Torhorst believed that Soviet models had much more to offer in the post-war circumstances. At one early meeting, shortly after the end of the war, she wrote that he greeted her with the question: "Isn't it abysmal, having to work under the constant pressure of the Russians?" Much to his surprise she responded that she had "never in my life been able to work so free and happily."¹⁷⁸ Not everyone had positive memories of the way things were before the Nazis. It does not take much in the way of a historical imagination to understand how Torhorst, a highly educated woman with socialist leanings who was very active in pressing for educational reform before the Nazis, would have very different memories of the old establishment than her male peers, even those with whom she had previously found much common ground.

Self-sorting of skilled professionals based on individual ideologies would have long term consequences for the levels of acquiescence or resistance offered by German administrators to

¹⁷⁷ Marie Torhorst, "Einige Erinnerungen an meine Studien (von Mai bis Oktober 1932 in Moskau) über die Liquidierung reformerischer Tendenzen in sowjetischen Schulen und an unsere Auseinandersetzungen mit der Reformpädagogik nach 1945." ALT 124. Teil I, BBF-DIPF

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

the demands of occupation authorities, and the specific policies and structural reforms pushed forward within the two zones. At its simplest, it meant that military authorities in the Soviet Zone - already predisposed to press for more far-reaching reforms than their American counterparts - generally had to contend with German educational administrators who were far more sympathetic to their goals and core ideologies. It also meant that the Germans working in government and administrative posts in the east were somewhat more politically coordinated from the outset than their western counterparts. Barring family concerns, the basic political reasons why someone might choose to go live among the Soviets was a general agreement with their political and social philosophies. Those who objected to those same philosophies enough to flee westwards were a far more diverse group, who could be expected to have less common ground from which to work once they established themselves among the Western Allies.

It should also be observed that the German educators who were writing from exile were among the most privileged intellectuals in the German speaking world at this time. They were not faced with the reality of living as dissidents under Hitler's regime, nor were they subjected to the hardships of the war years. While they wrote eloquently and with undoubtedly genuine passion about educational subjects that concerned them deeply when they fled abroad, they were not there to witness the final extremes that the militarization of German childhood reached nor were they immediately aware of plight of the millions of children who lived among the rubble of the cities as the war drew to a close. Often with fathers who were absent or worse, and with mothers who spent the days working, these *Schlüsselkinder* were the original latch-key children and themselves posed a major obstacle to reconstruction.

Rubble and hunger: the condition of schools and students in 1945

Writing a retrospective on the progress made in the two years after the war for a pedagogical conference in the Soviet Zone in 1948, Max Kreuziger recalled the challenges of the immediate post-war era. He broke the efforts of the past two years into three phases and defined the first, earliest phase as the “resumption of school activities in their simplest form, the reacclimatization of both children and parents to regular school attendance and to regular school work.¹⁷⁹” Such a seemingly simple task as reopening school buildings and placing teachers in front of children was no mean feat in the Summer of 1945. Many of the administrators attempting to organize this undertaking were themselves only recently thrust into their positions by Allied occupation authorities who were scrambling to fill such roles with politically reliable, technically competent professionals in the wake of broad purges of Nazi officials. Once installed they had to face chronic classroom shortages, an utter lack of teaching materials, traumatized students, and a profession that itself was deeply scarred by the effects of 12 years of National Socialism.

The shortage of classrooms was largely the result of the war. Germany’s urban centers had been hit especially hard by years of areal bombardment and the final months of street fighting, but rural districts had suffered considerable damage as well. School buildings were just as likely to have been damaged or destroyed as the rest of the nation’s architectural infrastructure, and what had not been directly damaged or destroyed by bombing had frequently been re-purposed during the war for other, more immediate needs. This was a long-term

¹⁷⁹ Max Kreuziger, *Rechenschaftsbericht über das zweite Jahr der demokratischen Einheitsschule*, Volk und Wissen Verlags, Berlin, 1948: 36, in Nachlass Hans Siebert Folio 879, BBF-DIPF

problem that plagued German administrators and the occupation forces they worked with throughout the 1940s. Some short term solutions were attempted, such as housing students in temporary classrooms in non-school buildings and shift-based teaching that let multiple classes share the same space, however none of these proved sufficient to the problem at hand. As late as 1948 the Hessian Minister of Education, Erwin Stein, complained to Vaughn R. Delong, the Deputy Director of the US Army's Education & Cultural Relations Division (E&CR) within Hesse about the slowness with which his classrooms were returning to service. In Bensheim, a town in Hesse that suffered relatively mild yet still significant physical damage during the war, that only 11 rooms were available for 34 classes and only four of those could be described as 'true classrooms.'¹⁸⁰ A report published for the 3rd Pedagogical Congress for the Soviet Zone in 1949 gives an idea of the extent of the over-all damage suffered, and how extreme the devastation was in some of the more intensely bombed or fought-over areas. Four years after the end of the war the report lauded the progress that had been made in repairing school facilities and boasted that only 30% of the estimated 11,000 school buildings in the Soviet sector remained damaged or destroyed.¹⁸¹ That nearly a third of all school buildings remained significantly damaged almost half a decade after the war ended speaks volumes to the extent of the problem in the first days of peace.

The facilities crisis was intensified by the ongoing need of both the occupation forces and local German civilian authorities for administrative offices of their own, as well as the ongoing

¹⁸⁰ "Besprechung zwischen Mr. V.R. Delong, Deputy Director E & CR Division, OMG for Hesse und Minister Dr. E. Stein, Ministry for Culture, Land Hesse", 16. August 1948, Abt. 1178 Nr. 67a, Nachlass Stein, HHStAW

¹⁸¹ "Statistik des Schulwesens der Sowjetischen Besatzungszone," *Die Deutsche Demokratische Schule im Aufbau: Veröffentlicht zum Pädagogischen Kongreß 1949* (Berlin: Volk und Wissen Verlag GMBH, 1949): 31, in Nachlass Hans Siebert, Folio 881, BBF-DIPF

need for undamaged buildings to house make-shift hospitals, provide refugee housing, or to conduct any other activity that required an indoor space covered by an intact roof. The few classrooms that remained were, as property of the German state, prime candidates for temporary expropriation. The problem was wide-spread enough that as early as March 1946 the Hessian state government, still in its infancy, issued a general order for all non-educational activity in school buildings to cease in preparation for the new school year.¹⁸² Despite this order problems of this nature persisted. More than two years later, as the Hessian Ministry of Education prepared for the fall opening of the 1948/49 school year 950 Polish Jews remained housed in one of the few standing school buildings in Bensheim - the same Bensheim earlier noted for suffering a shortage of appropriate teaching space.¹⁸³

Difficulties such as these were exacerbated by the lack of care for remaining facilities often exhibited by the military authorities that had occupied them. At the same time as his colleagues in Hesse were attempting to evict interlopers from their classrooms, the Minister for Education in Thuringia, Walter Wolf, was attempting similar measures in a more direct fashion. On March 20 he wrote to the Mayor of Greiz to relate a visit he had made to the city's teaching academy. To his dismay he found that it was completely occupied by units of the notorious Soviet secret police (NKVD). Worse, the invaluable - and at this stage utterly irreplaceable - teaching libraries were in immediate danger of destruction as the soldiers were burning books for heating fuel. By the time he had succeeded in relocating them the damage had been done: most

¹⁸² "31. Sitzung des Kabinetts, Donnerstag, den 28 März 1946," in *Die Kabinettsprotokolle der Hessischen Landesregierung: Kabinett Geiler 1945-1946*, Andreas Hedwig, hrsg. (Wiesbaden: Historische Kommission für Nassau, 2000): 605

¹⁸³ "Besprechung zwischen Mr. V.R. Delong, Deputy Director E & CR Division, OMG for Hesse und Minister Dr. E. Stein, Ministry for Culture, Land Hesse", 16. August 1948, Abt. 1178 Nr. 67a, Nachlass Stein, HHStAW

of the windows were broken, metal hardware had been removed from the doors, many lamps and fixtures had been taken from the rooms, and the central heating system was so damaged that repairs were estimated to cost over 40,000RM, a very significant expense for the Ministry at that time.¹⁸⁴

The classroom shortage had other causes besides the destruction or appropriation of facilities. The major population shifts that took place during the war and the ongoing postwar refugee crisis combined to sharply increase the raw numbers of pupils attempting to attend German schools. What was worse, these populations were not evenly distributed and were frequently concentrated in areas that had seen fairly low student densities before the war. A number of factors contributed to this: the wartime evacuations of urban children to the countryside to escape allied bombing, the mass flight of German civilians out of Eastern Prussia and Silesia as the Red Army conducted its final campaigns of the war, and the continuing deportations of ethnic Germans from territories that would ultimately be annexed by Germany's neighbors. The situation was not improved by the general refugee crisis provoked by Germany's wartime forced labor policies and the liberation of the concentration camps. The Soviet Zone, situated furthest to the east, was the hardest hit by these recurring waves of refugees. At the time of the surrender in 1945 it had half a million more school aged children in it than in 1939 and an additional 319,000 poured into it throughout 1946.¹⁸⁵ The refugee crisis was not restricted to the eastern half of the country; by the end of 1946 7.3 million of the 11.6 million refugees were present in one of the Western Zones. These refugee numbers presented an enormous burden for

¹⁸⁴ "An den Herrn Oberbürgermeister der Stadt Greiz von Landesamt für Volksbildung", 20. März 1946, LT-MfV Nr. 51, THStAW and "Der Oberbürgermeister in Griez an das Landesamt für Volksbildung," 1. April 1946, LT-MfV Nr. 51, THStAW

¹⁸⁵ John Rodden, *Repainting the Little Red Schoolhouse: A History of Eastern German Education, 1945-1995*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002): 30, 385.

non-urban school districts that often had pre-war infrastructures that were designed for a number of pupils commensurate with the local population. In some cities the devastation was so severe that a widespread return of displaced people was not feasible until some level of rebuilding had occurred. As an example, the center of Hessen's largest city, Frankfurt am Main, housed only 350,000 in December of 1945 and did not return to its pre-war population of 550,000 until 1951.¹⁸⁶

The classroom shortage was not only a product of the war, but regional imbalances and structural problems that had existed long before the Nazis took power. While in the largest cities the pre-war schools had been among the best in the world, the story in the countryside was often less rosy. In some rural areas the educational apparatus was effectively still that of the early Kaiserreich. It is telling that one of the key triumphs of the new *Einheitschule* trumpeted at the 3rd Pedagogical Congress in Leipzig in 1949 was the radical reduction in the number of single-room schoolhouses, the significant reduction in the number of two- or three-class schoolhouses, and the enormous build-up of modern eight-year primary schools in the rural districts of the Soviet Sector. Sachsen and Mecklenburg were held up as key examples of this triumph. In Sachsen the percentage of 8-year primary schools had risen by 45.6%, two- and three-class primary schools made up only 9.6% of the total schools, and single-classroom schools had been eliminated altogether. In Mecklenburg, an area described as having been “particularly backwards in public education,” it was proudly reported that only 146 single-classroom schools remained where earlier they had comprised 60-70% of the schools in the region.¹⁸⁷ It is worth

¹⁸⁶ *Statistische Beirichte: Die Zivilbevölkerung des Deutschen Reiches 1940-1945. Ergebnisse der Verbrauchergruppen-Statistik.* (Wiesbaden: Statistisches Bundesamt, 1953): 30

¹⁸⁷ Max Kreuziger, *Rechenschaftsbericht über das zweite Jahr der demokratischen Einheitsschule*, (Volk und Wissen Verlags, Berlin, 1948) in Nachlass Hans Siebert, Folio 879, BBF-DIPF

noting that the very fact that these districts were so rural and relatively underdeveloped economically also meant that these were the areas of the country that were the most likely to have survived the final years of conflict with their physical infrastructure relatively intact. Consequently they were also some of those most heavily hit by the refugee crisis, especially the masses of urban school children who had been evacuated from the cities in the face of the allied bombing campaigns.

These factors combined with a general shortage in qualified and politically acceptable teachers to create a chronic over-crowding of classrooms in both the Western and the Soviet zones. In Hesse the average class size at the end of the first year of renewed schooling was about 50 students with some peaking at over 70,¹⁸⁸ while the average age of the remaining teachers was 52 years old.¹⁸⁹ Similar figures were reported in Thuringia, where class sizes of 50-60 students were considered normal, if regrettable,¹⁹⁰ and almost a fifth of the currently serving teachers were over the official retirement age of 65.¹⁹¹ High turnover and dropout rates among newly trained teachers exacerbated the teacher shortage. Low pay, rushed or incomplete training, and a chronic shortage of housing were all common complaints among those who left their positions. The ongoing effects of denazification further undercut the ability of education ministries to staff

¹⁸⁸ “Die Neuorientierung der deutschen Erziehung” Transcription of a lecture by Burr. W. Philips, University of Wisconsin - Madison, November 1947, Abt. 1178 Nr. 68 – Vorstellungen der Militärregierung zur Schulreform, HHStAW

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ “Bericht zum Artikel der Abendpost vom 1. März 1947 „76 Fehler““, LT-MfV Nr. 22, THStAW

¹⁹¹ Personal Akten Nr. 14882 - Erich Knippel, THStAW

their schools.¹⁹² In one particular example, the regional offices for the Thuringian Kreis of Altenburg noted in December 1945 by that out of a required 457 positions within their primary schools only 308 were filled and of the teachers they had 165 were known to have problematic connections with National Socialism. They had additional difficulties recruiting replacement teachers; only 65 people had applied for teacher training up to that point.¹⁹³ This was a major problem from both educational and organizational standpoints, and one that continued to be a thorn in the side of educational administrators for years to come.

The physical devastation of the war was not the only wartime legacy that the German schools had to contend with. The students who sat in the all too frequently bombed-out classrooms also bore the scars of the recent fighting. An entire generation of school children had recent experiences and memories of bombing, evacuation, physical hardship, dead or missing relatives, and sometimes worse that today would be constitute a mental health crisis among returning combat veterans. Even those who were either too young to have fully appreciated the events going on around them or lived someplace out of the way enough that they escaped the harshest realities of the war lived in families that were inevitably impacted somehow. Brothers, fathers, or other immediate male relatives were frequently absent, and the remaining family members often struggled to make ends meet in a completely shattered economy, and food shortages abounded. From an educational standpoint many of them had the additional

¹⁹² Walter Wolf, "An das Kriesbildungsamt Eisenach z. Hd. Herrn Schulrat Ortband, Eisenach" 13. August 1946, LT-MfV Nr. 22, THStAW; "Schulreform," Nachlass Karl Trinks, Folio 105, BBF-DIPF

¹⁹³ Clemens Gerth, "Der Landrat des Kreises Altenburg an das Thür. Landesamt für Volksbildung Betr.: Bericht über die Entbindung des Schulrates Gerth vom Amte des Kreisschulrats," 14.12.45, Personalakten Nr. 7978 - Clemens Gerth, THStAW

disadvantage of having missed out on a year or more of school attendance due to the chaotic conditions of the late-war period.

A 1947 survey of the social standings and material needs of first graders in a school in Erfurt, a city in eastern Germany, gives some idea of the larger pattern of problems faced in the nation at large. The school was located in the city center and it was noted in the survey that the social standings of this class were representative of the conditions in the school as a whole and of other schools in the city. Erfurt had been damaged during the war through bombing and some scattered fighting in the last days of the war, but it was neither exceptional for having escaped relatively unscathed nor for having been devastated to an unusual degree.

Of the 51 pupils in the class only 27 had a father at home. Of the students without fathers over half were dead or missing from the war, and an additional quarter were registered POWs. Of the fathers who remained, half had their professions listed as “worker,” with an additional tenth being categorized as invalids. The children without fathers in the household tended to have working mothers, with only two listed as unemployed. 36 of the 51 students had siblings, and 20 of those had two or more. 12 were refugees from territories Germany lost at the end of the war, six were refugees who were bombed out of other cities still in Germany, and seven lived in houses in Erfurt that had sustained significant bomb damage but remained at least minimally habitable. Only eight of the children had their own bedroom, and the others were almost equally split between sharing with siblings, with their parents, or with both parents and siblings. 14 students were recorded as having no leather footwear, and two-thirds of the remainder had only one pair of shoes. 36 of the 51 students spent the winter of 1946/47 in a house with either no heating at all or heat provided only by the kitchen oven. All but four of the students were

reported as eating a warm supper either at home or in one of the local soup kitchens, however all but five ate no breakfast.¹⁹⁴

The general picture presented by this survey is one of a classroom where the majority of the students were living with significant day-to-day material needs that were going unfulfilled. The lack of proper heating during the winter was particularly troubling, however the majority were at least having basic clothing needs met. Their families were large, but a great number of them lacked a primary breadwinner in a well-paid occupation and those with single, working mothers were at significant risk for being un- or under-supervised during much of their time outside school. It is equally important to remember that this was the condition of the students a full two years after the war had ended. By 1947 few of them seem to have been going hungry, however food does not yet seem to have been in good enough supply that any of them are truly getting enough to eat. In the first months after the war even basic nutritional needs could not be dependably met, the other observed problems would have been even more pronounced, and many students simply did not attend in order to aid their families in meeting their daily needs in whatever ways possible. Many of the students in this sample came from refugee backgrounds that included a psychologically traumatic mixture of violence, flight, loss of family and possessions, and displacement. Many of the others lived in houses that still bore scars from the war. While the children examined in this survey were too young to have seen any kind of active service in the war, older pupils in other classes would have potentially been caught up in the final battles for the Reich, either as members of the *Volkssturm*, a late-war citizen militia, or crewing anti-aircraft guns. Still others, irrespective of age, would have been caught up in the final weeks

¹⁹⁴ „Sozialstatistische Erhebung über die häuslichen Verhältnisse der Schüler einer Knabenklasse der Grundschule 12 in Erfurt,” July, 1947, LT-MfV Nr. 22, THStAW

and months of combat as civilian onlookers and bear the same physical and mental scars as the older children who were forced to directly participate.¹⁹⁵

Regardless of their wartime experiences or post-war circumstances all of them would have had their education disrupted by the final months of the war and the interruption of the 1944/1945 school year in much of the country. This was considered such a problem that one of the earliest articulated goals for schools in the Soviet sector was the “resumption of school operations in their simplest form, [and] the re-habituating of children and parents to routine school attendance and routine schoolwork.”¹⁹⁶ Finally, it is important to remember that this survey was conducted over two years after the end of the war. In the first days following the surrender the problems outlined by it would have been much more acute. Problems such as these contributed to ongoing difficulties in both attracting and retaining students. Many children in the post-war era simply did not have the luxury of regular school attendance as their families struggled to meet the most basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing. None of these factors can be claimed to contribute to a healthy learning environment.

¹⁹⁵ For an instructive first hand account of child-soldier participation in Nazi Germany’s final battles and the immediate aftermath of the war see Alfons Heck, *A Child of Hitler: Germany in the Days when God Wore a Swastika*, (Frederick: Renaissance House, 1985). While no single memoir may be considered fully representative, this account does a remarkable job of showcasing many of the issues - both personal and material - that German children struggled with from 1945-1946.

¹⁹⁶ Max Kreuziger, *Rechenschaftsbericht über das zweite Jahr der demokratischen Einheitsschule*, (Berlin: Volk und Wissen Verlags, 1948) in Nachlass Hans Siebert, Folio 879, BBF-DIPF

Conclusion

Even when a suitable classroom could be found and the students coaxed into attending there remained the question of what to teach them and what materials were to be used. Irrespective of the desires for specific curricular reforms on the part of the Occupation Authorities, there was simply a lack of politically acceptable textbooks. Classroom instruction had been highly politicized in the Third Reich. Subjects such as biology and history had been consciously adapted to instill National Socialist ideologies and views on race, German culture, foreign nations, and an omnipresent glorification of the Nazi Party and Adolph Hitler. Even textbooks for seemingly innocuous subjects such as physics and mathematics were in many cases tainted, containing militaristic lessons that involved students solving problems such as the comparative flying ranges of loaded and unloaded bombers or artillery shell trajectories. Weimar-era textbooks were frequently difficult to find as they had been retired from classroom use for well over a decade, and when they were available were often in poor condition from years of careless storage. Decent quality paper for printing was almost impossible to come by, and what little there was tended to be earmarked for government or occupation use. Frequently individual schools and districts were left to adapt simple expedients to re-use politically questionable texts. These included ripping out the least offensive pages from Nazi textbooks for classroom use, gluing together the most problematic pages in books that were otherwise acceptable, and simply blacking out offending passages and images with marker.

Eventually the worst of the material shortages were overcome through ad-hoc solutions and the eventual introduction by the occupation authorities of short, basic pamphlets printed outside Germany that could be used to begin basic instruction. Even with these gradual

improvements, however, material need was a constant theme in German classrooms throughout this period. With the destruction of centralized governmental authority there was also the question of who, precisely, was responsible for developing new courses and their content. Military authorities, regional ministries, and even individual schools all participated in some manner and all were potential authors of new material or custodians of older works. Furthermore there was always the question of who was responsible for any given task and under who's authority a project fell. This was not only a question of allocating responsibility; it was also a matter of ensuring that people with enough authority to get results were the ones pressing for needed resources.

While writing to the Thuringian Ministry of Education for clarification on these matters one local administrator noted that one of his schools was still teaching according to guidelines published in 1926. He blamed the generally slow pace of improvement on the lack of clarity concerning who was responsible for what tasks, and where ultimate authority lay. "Is the district school board independent, is it subordinate to the district, or is it directly subordinate to Weimar? A legal ruling has, in spite of my suggestions and my insistence, not yet occurred to this day. Because of this it is also not possible to have the necessary office workers immediately brought here."¹⁹⁷ He insisted that the state must be responsible for the development of new courses and material and emphasized that the local authorities were far too over-burdened to take on this duty. "The district council must focus on the fundamental questions: the cleanup of the teaching staff, training new teachers, reorganization of course books, school reform, the introduction of Russian language instruction, the political deprogramming of the teachers. Therefore there is no

¹⁹⁷ Clemens Gerth, "Der Landrat des Kreises Altenburg an das Thür. Landesamt für Volksbildung Betr.: Bericht über die Entbindung des Schulrates Gerth vom Amte des Kreisschulrats," 14.12.45, Personalakten Nr. 7978 - Clemens Gerth, THStAW

time to continuously fret with and urge the district office to action.”¹⁹⁸ He claimed that his office was already working 13-14 hours a day and that this would worsen in the fall when some office staff would be needed for school inspections.

Finally, the scope of the political reorientation necessary was a major concern for the occupying powers. In the final years of the war it was widely assumed that the children of Germany would be heavily indoctrinated by years of exposure to National Socialist propaganda, the influence of state run youth organization, and politically compromised classroom instruction. A survey conducted of Hessian school children between 12 and 18 years old in 1946 indicates that these concerns were well founded, but that the influence was not as deeply rooted as had been feared, especially among the younger children.¹⁹⁹ When asked their opinion of National Socialism only 3.5% responded that they felt it had been a bad idea, 51% that it was a good idea carried out poorly, and 45% declined to answer. 50% felt that German Jews should not have the right to return to Germany and 30% responded that they should. “A little more than 50%” of the 15-18 year old children believed that unconditional obedience was an important goal of education, while “about 70%” of the younger children did. When asked who they felt was responsible for the current state of affairs in Germany 59% of the older children and 66% of the younger children responded “Hitler”; 48% of the older boys, 25% of the older girls, 22% of the younger boys, and 30% of the younger girls responded “the occupation forces”; and 40% of the older boys, 45% of the younger boys, 33% of the older girls, and 23% of the younger girls

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ Vaughan R. DeLong, “Brief an den Herrn Minister für Kultus und Unterricht, Betr: Prüfung der Gedankengänge von Schulkindern,” 18 November 1946, Abt. 1178 Nr. 67a - Nachlass Stein, HHStAW

responded “the Nazis.” About 15% of all those polled lay the blame at the feet of “the German people.”

The survey and the manner in which it was conducted were not without their critics. Commenting on it a year and a half later, Education Minister Erwin Stein wrote that he believed that the survey had been fundamentally flawed in its approach.²⁰⁰ He stated that German children were not accustomed to answering questionnaires like this and that, especially given their recent experiences under National Socialism, one would expect that they tailored their answers to fit what they thought the questioners wanted to hear. He also questioned how much of what they said reflected their own beliefs and how much of it was just parroting the attitudes exhibited by their parents. However, even the critical Minister Stein noted that the answers were in many ways at least suggestive of the influences that the schools, Nazi propaganda, their families, and society in general had had upon the children during the Hitler period. While they should not be overly relied upon as firm evidence of the specific breakdown of beliefs among school children, they convey the scale of the job faced by post-War educators seeking to instill democratic and non-militaristic virtues into a generation that had already been partially raised on the opposite.

In many ways this was the most shocking discovery made by American and Soviet soldiers as they advanced into Germany in 1945. Based on reports from inside the country, the accounts of expatriates living abroad, pre-war observations of Nazi classrooms, and the all-too frequent discovery of armed, uniformed children among military units in the apocalyptic final days of the conflict, nearly all wartime planners had expected to find a thoroughly indoctrinated,

²⁰⁰ Erwin Stein, “Der Minister für Kultus und Unterricht an die Militärregierung E&RA, Wiesbaden Betr: Survey of Childrens Ideas,” 28 April 1947, Abt. 1178 Nr. 67a - Nachlass Stein, HHStAW

militantly National Socialist youth once peace came. Many writing about the prospects for the post-war era had assumed that at least one generation of German children would be completely unsalvageable, a generation educated entirely under Nazi auspices. Some lamented them as Hitler's final victims, while others feared their potential for criminal or even organized military mischief. American officers in charge of the occupation issued non-fraternization orders that specifically addressed the threat offered by boys steeped in the traditions of the Hitler Youth and radicalized by their schools into a blind devotion to their Führer.²⁰¹ Instead they found an age cohort that had certainly absorbed some unfortunate views and beliefs, but which showed every sign of being open to rehabilitation and continued, normal education.

For that to happen, though, education would need to be restarted. Schools would have to be reopened. Teachers would have to be found, texts would have to be published, and eventually some long-term vision for institutional reformation would need to be articulated. While both the American and the Soviet sectors would need to abide by the broad guidelines published by the joint Allied Occupation Council, within each sector the specifics of how those guidelines were interpreted were entirely up to local authorities. As pre-war suspicions and ideological differences reemerged to sour post-war relations those interpretations became ever more divergent, culminating in two radically different visions for German education. In the Soviet sector it became increasingly clear that the occupiers were in favor of radically rebuilding education from the ground up, while in the West more sympathy existed for those who would attempt to salvage elements of the existing system.

²⁰¹ Ziemer, *Education for Death; Hitler Lives*, Film, directed by Don Siegel. Hollywood: Warner Bros., 1945

All of that, however, lay in the future. Before any serious reconstruction could begin a political reckoning needed to take place and civil life at least minimally restored on an anti-fascist footing. It was time to begin the denazification of Germany's educational administration.

CHAPTER 4: ESTABLISHING A FRAMEWORK: DENAZIFICATION AND INITIAL POLICIES

Your way [in building a new German society] is not that of the restoration or the revolution. Your way lies in the middle, in the joining of the uncorrupted old with the good new.

-Erwin Stein, CDU politician and Hessian
Minister of Education and Culture, 1948²⁰²

The pedagogue is lucky to not only contend with the “it is” of the moral economy (*seelischen Haushalt*) of humanity, instead the main focus of his work lies in the domain of the “it should be.”

-Karl Trinks, Professor of Theoretical
Pedagogy, 1946²⁰³

The summer and fall of 1945 was a period of extremely rapid change inside Germany.

The political order established by the Nazi Party collapsed along with its armies, government

²⁰² Erwin Stein, “Über die Kulturpolitik der CDU,” Abt. 1178, Folio Nr. 191 – Kulturpolitische Leitsätze der CDU, HHStAW

²⁰³ Karl Trinks, „Schluß der Rede über die Demokratisierung der Erziehung auf dem Pädagogischen Kongreß Sachsen am 5.8.1946,“ 5.8.1946, Nachlass Karl Trinks, Folio 104, BBF-DIPF

functions almost completely ceased, and what little remained was usually stopped by Allied militaries that were themselves in a transitional phase between being field armies and occupation forces. New civil infrastructures were very quickly put in place on an ad hoc basis. Politics and the demands of wartime had severely limited the planning for a post-war order while the fighting was still underway. Unfortunately, the questions that presented themselves as peace once again settled over Europe demanded immediate answers. In addition to the looming economic, humanitarian, judicial, and political crises presented by the need to sort out the chaos bequeathed by Hitler's Reich, every profession in Germany required some way to take stock, pick up the pieces, and resume some form of daily civic life. These were not issues that would stand still while a perfect accord was negotiated among the victorious allies. One way or another they would sort themselves out, and inaction could prove to be just as decisive a choice as action.

The rapid reorganization of German government, education, and the physical boundaries the states themselves that followed set the mold for what was to come in the next four years. Many critics of this period in German history have observed the subsequent re-emergence of ex-Nazis into public life and condemned the post-war reforms as failures. But this viewpoint unfairly measures the actions of the occupation forces against the longings of a later generation for justice on the behalf of Germany's victims and a sense of emotional closure with a troubled past. The immediate need of the occupation powers was to remove adherents of political Nazism - in the summer of 1945 not as safely discredited and disposed of as it would be even a couple of years later - from German government and civic life in order to create the space necessary for a coalition of anti-fascists to construct the rudiments of a new state. Judged by this standard the efforts of the occupation forces and German anti-fascists immediately after the war were

remarkably effective, and all the more impressive for the improvisation required by the relative neglect post-war planning suffered during the war.

Following the immediate post-war meetings of the Allied powers at Potsdam, the initial priorities heavily emphasized denazification, with the specific shape of what was to follow left to be defined in the future. In the case of education what transpired was a rapid initial denazification process, first of the administrative layers and later of the rank-and-file teachers, followed by an equally fast filling of the vacated positions as best as possible. In the specific case of the administrators, this process was fairly successful. The number of people involved was relatively low compared to other professional groups and the positions deemed important enough to prioritize the remaining politically reliable Germans for them. By the end of the initial post-war purges the ranks of the administrators could be said to be largely free of ex-Nazis. For working teachers the story proved to be somewhat different, with denazification and the hiring of replacements both stretching out into the early years of the two Cold War German states. In both systems the conclusions were much more ambivalent because their numbers were vastly greater and there was a pressing need to fill classrooms at any cost, if only to keep children off the streets and re-acustom them to the habit of regular school attendance.

The initial policies of the occupying allied powers themselves proved a further obstacle. Wartime pressures might excuse the lack of priority and planning given to developing a single, coherent plan for the future of German education, but they did nothing to mitigate the immediate need for some form of policy. The cooling ardor of wartime bonds and rapidly developing Cold War tensions made the development of a unified policy for all of Germany increasingly unlikely, devolving the issue onto the level of the individual occupation zones and, frequently, states.

This was problematic as the Nazis had highly centralized what was once a federal administrative system, and significantly confused the issue of local authority through their introduction of a new internal framework for organizing German territories. Before administrative tasks could be handed over to more flexible and responsive local governments the physical boundaries of the territories that they oversaw needed to be established. The decision to revive German federalism as a barrier to dictatorship required the restoration of the Länder, albeit in significantly altered form to take into account the effects of the defeat and political collapse.

Federalizing educational policy

Before any significant movement could be made on the issue of how to restructure German government and civil society - including the educational system - a number of far more elementary tasks had to be addressed. Among these was the issue of how to draw the internal territorial boundaries within Germany. This reorganization was important to the educational landscape that eventually emerged because it ultimately determined the geographical reach of numerous measures taken by the occupation authorities. The requirement that all four of the occupying powers agree to reforms affecting the entirety of Germany left many of the nation-wide measures vague, watered down, and frequently affirming a status quo years after they had been established at the level of the occupation zones or individual states. It was far easier for the occupying powers to make unilateral decisions that affected only the territories under their jurisdiction, or to affirm measures originating from state-level occupational authorities or the incipient state governments. The reach of these governments was determined by this very early

restructuring of the German interior. There were similar implications for the uneven topography of denazification once it was turned over to the nascent state governments in the years preceding the establishment of the two Cold War era German states.²⁰⁴

The regional governance of Germany in the immediate post-war era was complicated by the incomplete and partial Nazi-era suppression of the German states (*Länder*) and Prussian provinces as the regional basis for administrative organization. The provinces and *Länder* were organizational relics of Imperial Germany's fragmented legacy and torturous route to statehood. Their boundaries were a tapestry of old provincial and territorial borders that were shifted, consolidated, and renegotiated nearly every generation between the Napoleonic wars and German unification. After World War I and the abdication of the Hohenzollern monarchy they were once again reorganized and consolidated and formed the basis for regional governance during the Weimar Republic.

The situation at the end of the Second World War was complicated by the introduction of yet another set of regional sub-divisions during the Nazi years. Beginning in the 1920s, as the Nazi Party began to spread from a local to a national phenomenon it formed regional party districts, or *Gaue*, to streamline local political organization. After the NSDAP assumed political control of Germany these unofficial party boundaries increasingly became incorporated into the day-to-day administrative life of the German state. Beginning with The Enabling Act in 1933

²⁰⁴ For in-depth examinations of the structure of American and Russian occupation see Tent, James F. *Mission on the Rhine: Reeducation and denazification in American-occupied Germany*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982) and Jan Foitzik, *Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland (SMAD) 1945-1949: Struktur und Funktion*. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999) respectively

the regional governmental administration shifted ever more power and authority from provincial- or *Land*-based institutions to Party authorities that were organized within the *Gau* framework. The provinces and *Länder* continued to exist, but were sidelined to a large degree. After the war the *Gau*, with its Nazi origins and political connections, was abandoned almost immediately as an administrative sub-division and the organization of the German interior devolved again upon *Länder* and provinces, sometimes after the consolidation and rationalization of local territorial borders. In many cases this had the happy side effect of functioning as a first step in institutional denazification. Many political and party offices established by the NSDAP ceased to be as the *Gaue* that they were attached to were administratively dissolved.

In the Soviet Zone these internal territories were established on July 9, 1945 by Order Number 5 of the Supreme Headquarters of the Soviet Military Administration in Germany (SMAD).²⁰⁵ The local military commander determined the specific details of each state's government. In Thuringia this job fell to General Vasily Chuikov, who issued Order Number of 16. July 1945 under his authority as chief of Soviet Military Administration in Thuringia (SMA-T). Ultimate authority in the Soviet Zone lay with SMAD, which liaised closely with zonal-level central authorities responsible for various aspects of governance and public life. These offices were roughly analogous to national-level ministerial offices. The German Central Administration for Education, dominated by the SED, was intended to be the central national authority on all educational policy. In practice this central administration was relatively weak, especially in matters of civil administration. Many of the major policy directives came from the military government, both at the zonal and regional level, and the bulk of the day to day administration and implementation of these directives was carried out at the level of the

²⁰⁵ Foitzik, *Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland (SMAD) 1945-1949*: 149

Länder.²⁰⁶ This was a relatively unique administrative structure for this region of Germany, as both the National Socialist organization that preceded it and the structures that developed under the DDR in the 50s were much more centralized.

The relationship between the *Länder* and Zonal administrative organs is well illustrated by the way in which the *Law for the Democratization of the German School* was promulgated in May and June of 1946. This was the key document of early educational reform in the SBZ and firmly established by SMAD-backed fiat the polytechnic *Einheitsschule* as the basic model for education. All subsequent measures would be taken with this as an assumed reality and steps towards transitioning from the older organizational scheme began immediately. Rather than issuing it as a single directive via the authority of the Central Administration for Education, however, it was mandated in the form of five different provincial- or Land based laws with nearly identical texts. In Thuringia this was the *Law of the State of Thuringia of 2 June, 1946 for the Democratization of the German School*.²⁰⁷ The ultimate legal responsibility for the sweeping changes being made lay therefore with state governments, and it is largely there that any concerns or issues arising from the reforms would be addressed.

A similar pattern of local administration existed in the American Zone, although with different causes. Military Government Proclamation Number 2 issued by OMGUS on 19 September, 1945 defined the borders of the new “administrative territories” (*Verwaltungsgebiete*) that would eventually become the *Länder* of Hessen, Baden-Württemberg,

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*: 150

²⁰⁷ “Gesetz zur Demokratisierung der deutschen Schule vom Mai/Juni 1946” in *Brandenburgische Gesetzsammlung, 1945/47*, (Potsdam: Märkische Druck- und Verlags-GmbH, 1948)

and Bavaria.²⁰⁸ The city of Bremen was still under British administration at this time. It would be organized under similar principles as a state of its own in 1947 when it became an enclave of the American Zone of Occupation within the British Zone. A very short, basic constitution was provided for Hessen on the 22nd of November, 1945 that served to establish a provisional civilian government, one that was staffed with carefully selected and politically vetted local citizens.²⁰⁹ This government was established to organize elections for representatives who in turn debated and wrote a much more comprehensive constitution. This constitution came into power on the 1st of December, 1946 and served as the ongoing basis for the first freely elected German government since 1933.²¹⁰

This push to rapidly establish local democratic governments had two major effects inside the American zones. It provided a German face for subsequent measures and reforms and aided in generating a local level of acceptance for them. At the same time it gave Hessian citizens and politicians much more room to push back against American demands, as they could legitimately claim to be enacting the democratically voiced will of the population. Furthermore, once the second constitution was enacted, Hessian citizens were once again living under a government that had a German, rather than foreign, origin. This difference in governmental organization was partially responsible for the moderate success enjoyed by Hessian educational administrators who sought to maintain some aspects of traditional German education. The space that this structure provided for resisting Allied demands ultimately led to a Hessian educational system

²⁰⁸ “Proclamation No. 2,” *Military Government Gazette, Germany, United States Zone*, Issue A, 1. June, 1946:

²⁰⁹ “Staatsgrundgesetz des Staates Groß-Hessen vom 22. November 1945,” in *Deutsche Verfassungen*, Holger Bussek and Martin Regenbrecht, eds., (Berlin: Heptagon Verlag, 2004)

²¹⁰ “Vergassung des Landes Hessen vom 1. Dezember 1946,” in *Deutsche Verfassungen*, Holger Bussek and Martin Regenbrecht, eds., (Berlin: Heptagon Verlag, 2004)

that, while still very significantly reformed, never underwent the profound and rapid transition to an entirely new system experienced within the Soviet Zone.

As the first state to establish itself after the war Hesse also served as an example for German politicians and administrators in other areas under Western occupation. While West Germany would eventually emerge as a federal government with federalized education based on relatively autonomous but coordinated state systems, its rapid emergence meant that Hesse provided a working model with which all others had to contend and a concrete example of what was and wasn't possible in a post-war, democratizing German political landscape.

Initial educational policies: joint measures

As with many other aspects of the post-war occupation, the specific details of a joint educational policy were neither adequately prepared before the war ended nor definitively agreed upon in its immediate aftermath. The earliest policies were determined independently by each occupying power and implemented on the local level. As with many other occupation regulations, they were focused mainly on eliminating obvious sources of Nazi influence and shutting down the most egregiously National Socialistic bodies and agencies. As an example, the War Department published a guide in 1945 that listed the Nazi public agencies that would be immediately shut down once occupation began. Among the bodies targeted for “complete abolition” were the various organizations associated with promoting sports among the German

youth, the office of the Reich Youth Leader, agencies associated with the mandatory year of post-secondary manual farm labor, and the German College for Politics.²¹¹

The first, and for a significant amount of time only, joint statement on the matter can be found in the Potsdam Agreement, which simply noted that “German education shall be so controlled as to completely eliminate Nazi and militarist doctrines and to make possible the successful development of democratic ideas.”²¹² There were additional ordinances that touched on education tangentially due to their subject matter. For example, proclamations were made regarding the removal of inflammatory, nationalist, or militaristic literature from public and school libraries. With that caveat, however, the full Allied Control Council did not directly address the fundamental question of how German education should be reformed until the middle of 1947. In the early summer of that year Control Council Directive No. 54, “Basic Principles for Democratization of Education in Germany,” was issued.

Many of the immediate postwar problems had to be addressed on the state level before this policy was decided upon. Pressing issues that required immediate action ranged from what the continuing status of religious education would be to the particulars of how institutions and curricula would be restructured. If national policy was not to be dictated, or at least significantly constrained, by the earlier adaptation of a patchwork of local policies a strong, mutually agreed upon framework was required. What emerged was a relatively weak statement that plotted safe middle courses between existing practices and did far more to signal a modern variation of *cuius*

²¹¹ *War Department Pamphlet No. 31-133: Elimination of Nazi Public Agencies in Germany*, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1945).

²¹² “Potsdam Agreement: Protocol of the Proceedings, August 1, 1945” in *A Decade of American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents 1941-1949 Prepared at the request of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations by the Staff of the Committee and the Department of State* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1950).

regio eius religio for the occupation zones than establish the framework for a unified German school system in the future.

The principles laid out in Directive No. 54 were fairly straight forward. The most groundbreaking, and the single major reform that would take place in both Soviet and American zones, was the strong emphasis on equal educational opportunity for all students in Germany. The first principle of the directive stated simply “There should be equal educational opportunity for all.” While this left a large degree of room for interpretation, later principles narrowed the understanding of this somewhat. In addition other points addressed the issue indirectly. It was, for example, explicitly stated that terms like “elementary education” and “secondary education” must refer to consecutive levels of instruction rather than separate, overlapping forms or qualities of instruction.²¹³ This specific point was made even clearer in the official German translation of the order, which used the terms *Volksschule* and *Gymnasium* in place of ‘elementary’ or ‘secondary’ education.²¹⁴ This was a direct move against the tiered nature of German education, something that had come under attack from all quarters following the war as a major means through which a militaristic, Prussian elite had maintained political control over the nation since its initial unification. Other measures aimed at making education as inclusive as possible. These included free tuition and textbooks for school aged children, compulsory education for school aged children, and the provision of free educational and vocational guidance.

²¹³ “Basic principles for reorganization of education in Germany. Control Council Directive No. 54,” in *Enactments and Approved Papers of the Control Council and Coordinating Committee* (Washington: Legal Division, Office of Military Government for Germany, 1947), Volume VII: 153

²¹⁴ The directive was translated to German by OMG-H and forwarded to the Hessian government as a courtesy. This German translation can be found as “Übersetzung, Alliierte Kontrollbehörde, Kontrollrat, Anweisung Nr. 54, Hauptgrundsätze für die Demokratisierung der Erziehung in Deutschland,” June 25, 1947 in Abt. 1178 Nr. 67a - Korrespondenz mit der Militärregierung, HHStAW.

The rest of the document avoided such strong assaults on traditional structures and methods without asserting their immutability and guaranteeing their future well being. Education was made compulsory for all children between six and fifteen and part-time compulsory up to eighteen years. The supervision of students' health and universal instruction in basic hygiene were also mandated. These requirements, however, largely reproduced measures that had been taken by most German states decades earlier. Directive 54 also demanded that 'all schools . . . lay emphasis upon education for civic responsibility and a democratic way of life,' and that the curricula 'promote understanding of and respect for other nations and . . . the study of modern languages without prejudice to any,' while leaving the critical terms undefined. For example, the clause demanding that all teacher education 'take place in a university or in a pedagogical institution of university rank' had the potential to end a centuries-old divide within the German teaching profession and significantly open up administrative positions to people with a background in elementary school teaching. But the lack of any clear definition of what constituted 'university rank' opened up significant space for interpretation.²¹⁵

Finally, it is worth noting what was not included. No mention was made of religious education. The relationship between church and state in the upbringing of Germany's children was a highly contentious issue that had been fought over in one form or another since before unification. The resulting history of settlements and compromises created an atmosphere where citizens were wary of any change as an attack not only on the educational status quo but on their spiritual lives and cultural identities as well. It also so entwined school and religion that they were impossible to address in isolation. By not mentioning religious education at all, Control

²¹⁵ "Basic principles for reorganization of education in Germany. Control Council Directive No. 54," in *Enactments and Approved Papers of the Control Council and Coordinating Committee Vol VII*: 153

Council Directive 54 essentially let the issue of religious education devolve to local authorities, and with that the initiative on other key educational issues.

Initial educational policies: Soviet measures

In the Soviet Zone many of these issues had already been approached directly and authoritatively from the outset. SMAD Order Number 40, which mandated the reopening of the schools in the fall of 1945, simultaneously forbade private instruction of any kind, including religious schools. While mostly done to combat the perceived elitist nature of private education, it had the additional effect of cutting parochial education off at the knees.²¹⁶ Early measures like this were noted and enforced by the local administrators. Similar to the pattern seen in areas under American occupation they were recently selected by the Soviet authorities largely on the basis of their political reliability and immediate availability. This combination of relatively robust early directives and quick establishment of local, loyal German authority meant that even controversial reforms were implemented. In late November of 1945, for example, the Thuringian Ministry of Education received notice that a parochial kindergarten in Eisenach was continuing to provide both regular classes as well as religious instruction. They quickly moved to shut it down, ruling that any education conducted outside of the framework of the state school system constituted private education and was therefore illegal.²¹⁷

²¹⁶ Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten der DDR [und] Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten der UdSSR. *Um ein antifaschistisch-demokratisches Deutschland; Dokumente aus den Jahren 1945-1949*. (Berlin: Staatsverlag Der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1965)

²¹⁷ Walter Wolf, "An das Kriesbildungsamt in Eisenach," 24. November 1945, LT-MfV Nr. 22, THStAW

Initial measures such as these were soon consolidated and superseded by the *Law for the Democratization of the German Schools*, a package of state- and provincial-level decrees with nearly identical texts that were promulgated within two weeks at the end of May and beginning of June, 1946. Unlike earlier SMAD proclamations that forbade certain practices and ordered the short term resumption of education within some bounds without commenting on the nature of the system itself, the new law clearly and concisely dismissed earlier practices as inherently flawed, and presented the case for an entirely new school system. It began with a brief historical analysis of German education, clearly stating that it, “was - despite its respectable quality before 1933 - never a place for the truly democratic education of children into responsible and self-consciously free citizens. It was a social class-based school [*Standesschule*] . . . [wherein] not the competency of the children, but the financial status of the parents determined admittance.”²¹⁸ This structural deficiency, alleged to have been abused by everyone from petty lords to Prussian emperors to the most recent Nazi dictatorship, was cited as driving logic for the establishment of an entirely new, democratic school.

This new school would be a radical departure from what had come before. It would be purely the domain of the state, freed from any influence by religious organizations. In turn, religious education was remanded to religious orders to conduct as they saw fit for their own needs,. It would be a single, unified system (*Einheitsschule*) from Kindergarten through secondary education. While it did eventually differentiate into three separate tracks consisting of practical, technical, and higher education it provided much more room for transitioning between the tracks, split students off later, and differentiated based on academic performance rather than social position. Furthermore, both the technical and higher tracks had provisions for students to

²¹⁸ “Gesetz zur Demokratisierung der deutschen Schule vom Mai/Juni 1946” in *Brandenburgische Gesetzsammlung, 1945/47*

continue on to a university if they so wished. Attendance at primary and technical schools was guaranteed free of cost to all and the law contained provisions for providing the children of economically disadvantaged parents with various forms of financial aid should they wish to attend the *Oberschule* or continue on to a university.²¹⁹

American observers paid close attention to these early Soviet educational measures. In September 1946 the weekly OMGUS Information Control Intelligence Summary (ICIS) noted both the ambitious scope of the laws and the pattern of local implementation of common measures.²²⁰ Of particular interest for the Americans was the way that these Soviet decrees quickly “decide[d] three interdependent, controversial political issues which have often occurred as the result of liberal and socialist reform demands in the German political scene.²²¹” These three issues were: the core clauses reserving general education as the responsibility of the state, the delegation of religious instruction purely to religious groups, and restructuring public education as a unified system open to all.

The Americans saw this as a profoundly political move. Writing about the *Einheitsschule* in particular they noted that “the political significance of this decision can hardly be overestimated, since the educational program of the *Einheitsschule*, if carried out over a number of years, would operate so as to change the whole structure of German society.²²²” The report specifically claimed that the school system as now arranged would destroy the uneven social

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ “School reform in Soviet and US Zones, Intelligence Summary with transmittal letter from Donald R. Heath,” 10/7/46, document 1-A-65, in *The U.S. Occupation of Germany: Educational Reform, 1945-1949 Microfiche Collection*, Congressional Information Service, Inc., 1991

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² *Ibid.*

structures that had previously dominated in Germany, radically changing the social and cultural landscape of the country. The notion of a single, universal educational system struck at the heart of both the notion of *Bildung* as a measure of social distinction and the privileged *Gymnasium* as its means of reproduction. The ICIS report broadly lauded this goal, while developing a more concerned tone about what the exact nature of the newly homogenized education would be.

In all, it may be said that the machinery set up under the new school law is technically suited to the democratization of education and the selection of students and of educational material is so designed as to bring wider knowledge to a greater number of German youth than ever before. But the nature of this knowledge, particularly its political slant, depends on the degree of political control which the SMA will be able to exert through the SED on schools and teachers. While the elections have shown that the SED will not be able to impose its will without a continuing fight and inevitable compromises, the character of the SED school leadership will serve to keep these compromises to a minimum.²²³

The reforms being pushed by the Soviets did not necessarily represent the state of the art in contemporary teaching within the USSR. Beginning with Stalin's consolidation of power in the mid 30s Soviet education had steadily moved away from many of the more experimental methods it had embraced in the 1920s, concentrating instead on polytechnical education to meet specific economic goals. It also rapidly politicized as increasing emphasis was placed on indoctrination at all levels of society. Following the shocks and privations of wartime, in 1945 it

²²³ *Ibid.*

was in the midst of rapid and substantial change, including a relatively short-lived flirtation with gender-segregated education. Soviet occupation authorities never attempted to pursue similar measures in Germany, and most of the administrators with whom they worked based their knowledge of Soviet education on what they had observed in the 30s and, in some cases, during the war.²²⁴ It was this inter-war educational model that was most influential to educational planners in the Soviet Zone, and these pedagogical models continued to have major influence in the years to come. As late as the 1960s translations of the major works of influential interwar Soviet pedagogues were published under state auspices as a means of exploring the intellectual roots of the *Einheitsschule*.²²⁵

The Soviets faced a secondary problem in their attempts to reestablish education in their occupation sector, namely widespread anti-Russian prejudices present within the German population. Partially a result of Nazi wartime propaganda and partially a result of the near legendary status of the backwardness and general lack of development in the Imperial Russian countryside, many Germans had grave reservations about both the effectiveness and political grounding of Soviet education. Many assumed that at best it was sub-standard compared to the educational techniques employed in German schools and at worst a tool for propagandizing to children that rivaled anything the Nazis had ever developed. Those Germans who had some pre-

²²⁴ For more on this see: E. Thomas Ewing, *Separate Schools: Gender, Policy, and Practice in Postwar Soviet Education*, (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010); Shelia Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union: 1921-1934*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); and Nicholas Hans and Sergius Hessen, *Educational Policy in Soviet Russia*, (London: P.S. King & Son, Ltd., 1930)

²²⁵ For an example of this kind of state publication see *Deutschsprachige Publikationen sowjetischer Pädagogen in der Weimarer Zeit*, Herbert Flach, ed., (Berlin: Volk und Wissen Volkseigener Verlag, 1962).

war connection to Soviet education as it stood in the 20s and 30s faced the additional hurdle of convincing their fellow countrymen that Soviet reformers had ideas worth paying attention to.

Dr. Marie Torhorst, a Weimar-era campaigner for educational reform who traveled to the USSR in 1932 to study Soviet education, is an example of this. After the war she initially taught in Berlin but by 1947 was the Minister of Education in Thuringia, replacing Walter Wolf. Writing retrospectively in the late 40s about the trials of the immediate post-war period, she noted how much initial professional resistance there was to adopting Soviet techniques. “German pedagogues,” she wrote, “and especially the ‘School Reformers,’ were skeptical of Soviet educational developments.” In particular she criticized a view of Soviet education that equated it to the earliest forms of public schooling under the Prussian kings; a primitive program designed to teach peasants the most basic rudiments of literacy required for military service. She held that the Soviets had in many ways already advanced beyond the simple reforms that she and her compatriots had advocated in the 1930s and insisted that it was necessary to rebuild German education along the lines of the *Einheitsschule*. Even as late as 1948 this was a message that had to be strongly articulated. Part of the purpose behind her efforts to trace the pedagogical lineage of the Soviet reforms was to defuse those prejudices and reassure the reluctant that rather than aping a system designed for teaching farmers to read and write that was far behind pre-war German standards they were adopting a revolutionary new type of education that was pedagogically superior to what had been done previously.²²⁶

This tension can be seen in the introduction of a volume published for attendees of a pedagogical conference held in Leipzig in 1947 titled *One Year of Democratic Einheitsschule: review and forecast*. Its purpose was to describe both the progress that had been made in

²²⁶ Marie Torhorst, “Die Sowjetschule und die deutschen Schulreformer,” Nachlass Marie Torhorst, Folio 157, BBF-DIPF

rebuilding German education, as well as outline the measures that still needed to be taken. While the specific authorship of the introduction was unclaimed, the report as a whole was attributed to the Berlin-based German Office of People's Education in the Soviet Zone and can be safely taken to represent the views of the Soviet occupation forces and those Germans working most closely with them. The language within the document itself already has a vocabulary and tone that reads very similarly to documents and publications published by the SED in coming decades, after they took over leadership of an independent East German state. In the introduction they speak of the necessity to not only avoid the pitfalls of recent German history, but also to avoid the earlier failures of the Weimar and Imperial periods. "The realization of this educational ideal forbade both the continuation of the educational ideals and methods based on the "leadership principle" of the schools of the Hitler years as well as the resumption of the exaggeratedly individualistic methods of school reform of the Weimar Republic or even the methods of the even older "Learning Schools.""²²⁷ From the point of view of those attempting to reshape education in the east, the proclivity of educators who had been active in reforming German education before Hitler to want to fall back on the methods they advocated in the 20s was just as problematic as the specific fascist ideologies that needed immediate quashing. The new wave of reformers did not want to revive the compromise half-measures that had been attempted before but to use the opportunities provided by Soviet occupation to establish an entirely new way of structuring and conceptualizing German education.

The Soviets and their German supporters also operated under a very different definition of 'democratic' reform from that envisioned by most of the Western Allies. "It [education]

²²⁷ *Ein Jahr Demokratische Einheitschule: Rückblick und Ausblick: Bericht der Schulabteilung der Deutschen Verwaltung für Volksbildung in der Sowjetischen Besatzungszone* (Berlin: Volk und Wissen Verlag, 1947): 5

should,” in the words of the prominent pre-war pedagogue and notable Social Democrat Karl Trinks, “be democratic, in the original sense of democracy as our great fathers Marx and Engels gave us: leadership of the people, the working, the active components of the population.”²²⁸ In this socialist interpretation of democracy the fact that society is led by representatives of and for the benefit of the working class majority of the population is more important than the specific means by which that leadership is selected. Definitions and interpretations such as this left those in political and institutional power in the east free to follow a more Leninist approach to leadership and act in a far more authoritarian and decisive manner in implementing the various structural reforms that they felt were necessary. Much as Lenin saw no inherent contradiction in promoting a small leadership cadre to work on behalf of the workers and peasants and hold the nation in trust until control could be passed onto them as a group, so too “democratic reform” could remain “democratic” while being unilaterally carried through by a narrow band of elites so long as they worked on behalf of the people as a whole and for the benefit of all. They were far from bashful when it came to promoting the interests of political groups that were sympathetic to them and enlisted their aid to ensure the relatively smooth transition to some radically different systems. In the specific case of education they simply solved via decree long-standing issues that would continue to be highly fraught points of contention within the Western zones for decades to come.

²²⁸ Karl Trinks, “Schulreform,” Nachlass Karl Trinks, Folio 105, BBF-DIPF

Initial educational policies: American measures

American efforts to reform German education began in the final stages of the war with the Joint Chiefs of Staff Directive 1067. This was a wartime document aimed specifically at outlining how the US Army would administer captured German territory as it was overrun. Among other topics it ordered the immediate closure of German schools in any occupied territory. Crucially, it also permitted first the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) under Eisenhower and later OMGUS to reestablish educational institutions on a piecemeal basis once Nazi educators and teaching materials had been eliminated. The directive was relatively open ended and left much to the discretion of the senior officer on the scene.²²⁹

The first steps towards reopening German schools in areas under American occupation took place before the war finished. The fall campaigns of 1944 brought a strip of German territory west of the Rhine into American hands, including the city of Aachen. Despite the relatively low population - most residents had obeyed evacuation orders ahead of the fighting - local civilian government was reestablished as quickly as possible and provisions made to begin purging and reopening schools along provisional lines. Although shortages of qualified, non-Nazi teachers and an almost complete lack of suitable textbooks delayed the onset of instruction until shortly after the general surrender, this relatively rapid and localized approach signaled the general way in which the Educational and Religious Authority (E&RA) Division of the American Occupation Government would handle similar matters in other parts of the country.

In August of 1946 the State Department sent an educational mission to Germany in order to evaluate the progress that had been made on reform and to issue specific suggestions. Due

²²⁹ Trent, *Mission on the Rhine*: 40-41

largely to internal conflicts between the Department of State and the Department of War the military, which at that point had complete control over the civil administration of the occupation, was reluctant to permit any civilian oversight of their efforts. As a result of the success of a similar educational mission to Japan and the warm reception that it received from General Douglas MacArthur, General Lucius Clay was eventually persuaded to allow a delegation to observe, evaluate, and recommend improvements to American efforts to rehabilitate German education.²³⁰

The mission was comprised of 9 men and women, all of who were accomplished educators, administrators, and educational theorists: George F. Zook, President of the American Council on Education; Bess Goodykoontz, Director of the Division of Elementary Education within the US Office of Education; Henry H. Hill, President of Peabody College; Paul Limbert, President of Springfield College; Earl J McGrath, Dean of the University of Iowa; Reinhold Niebuhr, Professor at Union Theological Seminary; Reverend Felix Newton Pitt, Secretary of the Catholic School Board of Louisville, Kentucky; Lawrence Rogin, Director of Education for the Textile Workers Union of America; T.V. Smith, Professor from the University of Chicago; and Helen C. White, Professor from the University of Wisconsin. They all shared common assumptions about the capabilities of education to uplift both individuals and societies through personal growth and curricula oriented on civic improvement that grew out of the Progressive movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Their views on pre-Nazi German education, as revealed in the background section of the final report, were almost as negative as those expressed by the Soviets. The report was highly critical of the harsh nature of early denazification proceedings, arguing that such high attrition rates made the reestablishment of any

²³⁰ Charles Dorn, "Evaluating Democracy," *American Journal of Evaluation*, (June 2005 vol. 26 no. 2): 270

kind of meaningful education impossible from the outset. Based largely on their extremely critical evaluation of pre-war German education and the ways in which it fostered inequality between students they advocated an almost complete rebuilding of German education into a single, comprehensive system modeled on that in the United States.²³¹

The report was particularly harsh in its evaluation of the administrative structure present in the educational systems that they inspected, calling the allocation of administrative duties “traditional and haphazard.” It recommended extending cooperation and coordination between the three Länder in the American zone of occupation, while maintaining the federal structure and avoiding any single, central authority that would dictate policy. The report also emphasized the need to simplify the existing patchwork of locally responsible offices, officials, and inspectors into a more consistent and universal pattern based around the office of the district superintendent. Finally, it recommended a considerable expansion of the number of personnel employed in administrative capacities, noting that the current administrators “both in the larger cities and in the country districts, have at present almost no assistance to enable them to provide the professional leadership now so much needed.”²³² Along with this expansion of the ranks of German administrators it recommended a broad increase in the number of Americans assigned to the E&RA, both in terms of military personnel and American civilians employed on a contract basis by it.

A comparison of the recommendations of the State Department educational mission and the policies that were already being implemented within the Soviet Occupation Zone gives some indication of the attitudes and assumptions about the future of German education that

²³¹ *Report of the United States Education Mission to Germany*, (Washington DC: Department of State, 1946)

²³² *Ibid.*: 40-42

culminated in Control Council Directive No. 54. There was a fair degree of agreement about the fundamental inequality of German education extending far back before the Nazis. There was an equally strong assumption that education was a powerful and effective tool for social engineering that would be vital to building a future German state that could avoid the militaristic excesses of the early twentieth century. Finally, there was a general agreement that it was desirable to restructure German education along much more equitable lines in order to maximize its potential for realizing this desired change.

Denazification

One of the earliest effects of the Allied occupation on German education was the sweeping initial wave of denazification that took place throughout the summer of 1945. This was initially experienced at all levels as a massive purge as people were dismissed based on any tangible connection to the Nazi Party. Paragraphs 6 and 7 of Section 2 of the Potsdam Accords both directly affected German education, as they demanded that it “be so controlled as to completely eliminate Nazi and militarist doctrines and to make possible the successful development of democratic ideas,” and that “all members of the Nazi Party who have been more than nominal participants in its activities and all other persons hostile to Allied purposes . . . [should] be removed from public and semi-public office. . .”²³³ One of the reasons for the teacher purge in particular was the wide-spread belief that party organizations such as the Hitler Youth had contaminated German schoolchildren ideologically and that the schools had been

²³³ “Potsdam Agreement: Protocol of the Proceedings, August 1, 1945” in *A Decade of American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents 1941-1949 Prepared at the request of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations by the Staff of the Committee and the Department of State*

deeply complicit in it. This was particularly problematic, as the Accords never defined what “nominal” meant, leading to standards for dismissal and hiring that changed both across time as general policies shifted and regionally depending on local courts and officers. This was exacerbated by the lack of initial guidance as to how various levels of culpability were to be defined or measured.

Within the administrative layers of the educational system denazification proceeded relatively quickly and thoroughly. While the specific numbers of administrators, ranging from local school principals on up through the highest ranks of the educational ministry, who were removed in 1945 remains to be determined, a detailed examination of the personnel files from both Thuringia and Hesse indicates that nobody appears have successfully negotiated some form of continued employment from 1945 through 1946. While far from a comprehensive study, an examination of the files of 40 mid-level administrators in Thuringia and 63 in Hesse shows only one case that was employed in an administrative capacity during the war years. That single individual was at the age of retirement in 1945 and took his pension before the beginning of the new year. Of those who were employed in an educational capacity under the Third Reich most were classroom instructors with a few school rectors represented as well. Of those with a Nazi past, none had risen to an administrative rank higher than local school inspector through 1950; even a more limited National Socialist taint affected an individual’s ability to secure subsequent promotion and increased authority. All instances of more senior inspectors and ministerial staff had exceptionally clean wartime records, frequently including exile, imprisonment, or some

other form of obvious antipathy for National Socialism. Denazification, both in the East and in the West, was thorough, quick and effective within the ranks of the administrative corps.²³⁴

The case of Dr. Bernhard Krumm illustrates the immediate needs of the occupation authorities regarding whom they chose as administrators, the grounds that someone could be immediately dismissed upon once hired, and the brusqueness with which early denazification was carried out. Immediately following the surrender of Germany in 1945, Dr. Krumm was elevated to a position as Schulrat in Wiesbaden. Although he had just turned 65, the age at which teachers and regional administrators were normally pensioned off, he was considered an exceptional candidate for the position. This was due to his previous experience teaching in schools throughout the area and a political pedigree that initially allowed him to be categorized as un-implicated in any Nazi activities or organizations. Alongside his professional credentials and long-time familiarity with the region, his mastery of English was considered a significant advantage in his installation, due to the necessity of working closely with American forces. Shortly after being hired, however, it came out that he had a wartime affiliation with the Orient-Institut in Frankfurt, a division of Frankfurt's Goethe University devoted to Islamic and middle eastern studies. Somehow the occupation authorities had mistakenly listed it among Nazi Party-affiliated academies. While he eventually succeeded in legally clearing his professional name and obtaining a pension befitting a Schulrat, this did not happen until 1949. In the meantime he was completely unemployable within the Hessian educational system.²³⁵

²³⁴ The personnel files in question are all held in their respective state archives. The Hessian records can be found in Abt. 650/B - Personalakten, while the Thuringian records are filed in the collection "Personalakten aus dem Bereich Volksbildung"

²³⁵ Personal Akte – Dr. Bernhard Krumm, Abt. 650b, Nr. 723, HHStAW

Despite pressure to remove administrators with troubled histories or insufficient professional credentials, it was not always feasible to do so and in some individual cases men remained on the books who probably should have been replaced. As late as 1948 a report on the Schulräte in Hessen, for example, noted that provisional Schulrat Georg Volkenand was recommended for replacement. In addition to being politically unsuitable due to a history of writing poetry praising Hitler, he was professionally unsuited to an administrative post as he had never taken his second teaching exam, despite numerous opportunities to do so. On the whole he was noted as having “extremely modest” qualifications. The local government recommended his immediate dismissal and requested his replacement with an elderly Schulrat who had been pensioned off due to his age fifteen years earlier.²³⁶ Despite this active attempt to unseat him he reappears in a summary report of Schulräte a year later. Not only was he still in his position, his status was no longer provisional but had been confirmed as permanent.²³⁷ Not even physical infirmities that impeded day-to-day administrative duties guaranteed replacement. The same two reports list a Schulrat Philipp Müller who was recommended for replacement in 1948 due to extreme hearing deficiencies that presented daily professional difficulties. Mr. Müller, however, remained in his position a year later with no indication of impending retirement or transfer. Cases such as these, however, remained the exceptions rather than the norm. On the whole the period between 1945 and 1949 is notable because of the amount and speed of change in the ranks of local administrators, positions that under less extraordinary circumstances were normally quite stable.

²³⁶ “Die Schulräte im Land Hessen – Stand 1. Mai 1948,” Abt. 1178 - Nachlass Stein - Nr. 138, HHStAW

²³⁷ Abt. 1178, Nr. 181 - Vorgaben der Militärregierung zur Schulreform, HHStAW

The reason for these successes, especially in the light of the more ambivalent denazification of the teaching corps that they oversaw, was a simple matter of numbers and scale. While it was impossible to replace every trained teacher in Germany overnight due to the large number of people involved and the vital necessity of having some kind of trained adult in the classrooms, there were few enough administrators which meant they could be fired and replaced en masse without undue hardship. Furthermore, it was easier to over-burden the administrative layer of an organization without seeing a catastrophic decline in its effectiveness than it was the productive layer. Between 1946 and 1948 the numbers of administrators overseeing both Hessian and Thuringian education multiplied, with some cities having three or four instructors by 1949 where one had to make do immediately after the war.

In the short term the first order of business for this rapidly denazified administrative corps was to oversee the general denazification of the educational system. The results of these initial efforts were generally uneven due to shifting interpretations of “nominal” Party membership, both locally and nationally, and local pressures. On the national level this was the result of differing understandings of German fascism and its root causes among the Allies, while on the local level the varying zeal of individual officers and tribunals responding to unique conditions complicated the issue.²³⁸

In the longer term it was unclear whether the end goal was a complete and permanent purge of Nazi Party members and influences from public life, or if rehabilitation and reintegration of these men and women into German society was a component as well. The most extreme possible reading of the Potsdam Agreement would render it difficult for Germans to

²³⁸ Armin Schuster, *Die Entnazifizierung in Hessen, 1945-1954: Vergangenheitspolitik in der Nachkriegszeit* (Wiesbaden: Historische Kommission für Nassau, 1999); Timothy R. Vogt, *Denazification in Soviet-Occupied Germany: Brandenburg 1945-1948*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000)

provide themselves with even the most basic public services through the exclusion of individuals with necessary professional and technical expertise. There was also the danger of alienating even those Germans who were not politically compromised by destroying what civic life and structures that remained following the war, an issue that endangered a peaceful reconstruction. At the other extreme, an overly generous understanding of how extensive “nominal” participation would contain danger of leaving many with truly criminal pasts in positions of respect and authority. Many within the occupation feared that this approach would challenge not only any notion of justice or retribution, but also sow the seeds of a future political revival of German fascism or expansionist militarism.

Initial instructions were clear that denazification was to be a high priority, but far less clear on how it was to happen or what the specific criteria were to be. In Hesse, for example, the cabinet of the fledgling state government complained in the fall of 1945 of an almost complete lack of instruction from OMG-H on how they should proceed. They expressed concern over the lack of clarity on issues as basic as who, specifically, was responsible for distributing and collecting denazification questionnaires and what was to be done with them once they were gathered. Some ministers believed that administering them was the direct responsibility of the military authorities themselves, others that local civilian authorities were responsible, while others opined that it should probably be left up to the immediate supervisors of the affected individuals.²³⁹ Despite this confusion the military made starting the process a priority, even if only on an *ad hoc* basis using the best judgment of local authorities. By the spring of the following year they expressed concern that denazification was being hampered by a lack of

²³⁹ “3. Sitzung vom 30. Oktober 1945,” in *Die Kabinettsprotokolle der Hessischen Landesregierung: Kabinett Geiler 1945-1946*, Andreas Hedwig, ed. (Wiesbaden: Historische Kommission für Nassau, 2000): 34

previously vetted German personnel to aid in the tribunals.²⁴⁰ These initial tribunals were quick to judgment and preferred to err on the side of making a clean break with the Nazi past rather than retaining skilled workers. As a result many of those fired in this period would later sit before additional denazification boards that would reverse the earlier findings and re-categorize them as fit for employment by the state. In the first year following the surrender, however, the effects were keenly felt.

The Nazi Party had proven very skillful over the preceding decade at penetrating the associational lives of various professions and usurping this framework for its own goals. By the later years of the Third Reich membership in Party-affiliated professional organizations such as the NSLB was mandatory for employment, and active party membership was highly encouraged for anyone who hoped to advance his career in a meaningful fashion. Consequentially, the first denazification tribunals did not lack targets. The resulting reduction in the numbers of available staff was quick and devastating. By the beginning of 1946 50-55% of all German teachers had been removed from classrooms in the American Occupation Zone.²⁴¹ Similar percentages were removed from schools in Soviet territory, with estimates for first-wave firings ranging from 50% to 75%.²⁴² In some instances the dismissals were done without even the courtesy of a review board, much less a serious trial or inquiry. In the American Zone one of the first published policies demanded that all previous members of the NSDAP or affiliated organizations be summarily dismissed and re-hired only pending the completion of denazification proceedings,

²⁴⁰ “21. Sitzung” in *Die Kabinettsprotokolle der Hessischen Landesregierung*: 432

²⁴¹ “Die Neuorientierung der deutschen Erziehung,” in Abt 1178, Nr. 68, HHStAW

²⁴² Charles B. Lansing, *From Nazism to Communism: German Schoolteachers under two dictatorships* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press: 2010): 140-143 and John Rodden, *Repainting the Little Red Schoolhouse: A history of Eastern German education, 1945-1995*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002): 31

rather than waiting for a court decision before terminating them.²⁴³ This essentially placed denazification in the position of considering all accused guilty and demanding that they prove their innocence before a court, reversing normal legal procedure.

In the months that followed more comprehensive investigations were undertaken by local military authorities, and more dismissals handed out. Both the military authorities who demanded these professional purges and the administrators who oversaw them understood this to be a process that would require radical restructuring of the teaching corps, regardless of any discomfort that might arise or the short term chaos that the changes would create. Writing in retrospectively in 1948 Max Kreuziger stated that after the earliest tasks of resuming regularly scheduled classes had been achieved there remained a second phase that he described as the “restructuring” (*Umbau*) of the pre-existing system, both ideologically and from a staffing standpoint. He emphasized that it would not have been possible without a solid administrative corps that had been ideologically dedicated to seeing the task through to completion.²⁴⁴ The men and women who oversaw the process understood that staff dismissals were a key component of the ideological house cleaning and low rates of dismissal were simply not accepted. In one instance in late 1945 the Minister of Education in Thuringia, Walter Wolf, wrote to a regional office complaining that only 16% of their staff had been dismissed. He described this rate as “completely unsatisfactory” and threatened to replace the local district officials unless they immediately expressed a greater willingness to “clean more thoroughly.”²⁴⁵

²⁴³ “1. Sitzung vom 19. Oktober 1945,” *Die Kabinettsprotokolle der Hessischen Landesregierung*: 17-18

²⁴⁴ Max Kreuziger, *Rechenschaftsbericht über das zweite Jahr der demokratischen Einheitsschule*, (Berlin: Volk und Wissen Verlags: 1948): 3

²⁴⁵ Walter Wolf, “Brief an das Kreisbildungsamt Erfurt,” 29.10.45, LT-MfV, Nr. 22 THStAW

The immediate post-war experiences of Felix Conrad illustrate how quickly these early proceedings progressed and what the immediate concerns of the occupation forces were. A resident of a small town in Hesse at the end of the war, Conrad was appointed to be the local Schulrat on August 28th, 1945 by order of the local Bürgermeister. This appointment was made primarily due to his pre-war political activities. During the 20s and 30s he had been an active member of the SPD and as a result was dismissed from his teaching position during the *Gleichschaltung*. For Conrad the appointment represented a significant professional advancement over his old position. In October 1945 the local military authorities performed an audit of the teachers and officials in the school system and, based only on their wartime political histories, conducted a wave of firings that resulted in the termination of more than half of all educational staff at all levels. Seven were fired and six retained. Conrad was retained as Schulrat along with one rector, two primary teachers, a kindergarten teacher, and a classroom aid. Within little more than a month he had gone from long term unemployment to a locally powerful administrator, only in turn to become responsible for finding replacements for the majority of his staff.²⁴⁶ For those who had refused to join Nazi political organizations to save their careers and endured the subsequent twelve years of harassment, termination, and persecution this was a relatively common outcome.

The levels of resentment that the denazification proceedings engendered in the local populations further complicated matters. In many cases the individuals being replaced were people who had served in the community for years. Their friends, colleagues, and neighbors all remembered the reality of life under Nazism far too well and understood that party affiliation did not necessarily imply deep political conviction. There was also a general awareness that few

²⁴⁶ Abt 650/B Nr. 2898, Personal Akten - Felix Conrad, HHStAW

people could claim to have escaped the past twelve years of rule by the NSDAP completely free of anything that could prove embarrassing in a post-war context. Furthermore, while the war had done much to discredit National Socialism in the eyes of many, it was not yet the completely bankrupt ideology that it would become in following years. Many of the men and women facing dismissal had worked under extremely hard circumstances to both protect and provide some level of education for the community's children under the harshest of conditions. Consequently many of them still enjoyed quite a bit of local favor and support. They could not easily be accused and targeted for removal with impunity, since they were members of communities who had frequently been held in high respect due to their positions within them.²⁴⁷

Ernst Halberstadt is an example of one such case, a man who was unfortunate enough to be caught on the wrong side of both the Nazi Party's *Gleichschaltung* and post-war denazification. He taught in the Hessian town of Hachenburg, eventually achieved the post of rector, served and was wounded in World War 1, and returned to briefly become the town's mayor in the 20s before becoming a teacher again. He was highly active in the Center Party and publicly clashed with local Nazis to such a degree that National Socialist agitators led demonstrations against him, personally. Unsurprisingly he was among the first people in the town to be dismissed from his public positions in 1933. But he later successfully petitioned to be rehired, claiming that he had been drawn to the Center Party only through his religious convictions as a Catholic. In letters written to the school authorities he expressed deep personal admiration for Adolph Hitler as both a leader and a man, statements that would haunt him in later

²⁴⁷ "Das Kreisbildungsamt Eisenach an das Ministerium für Volksbildung, Betr: Neulehrerinsatz in den Schulen der Rhön," LT-MfV Nr. 22, THStAW

court proceedings. Following this narrow escape he obtained a Nazi Party membership at the behest of the local magistrate who had been assigned his case.²⁴⁸

After the war he was initially retained as the middle school rector. Unfortunately for him discrepancies were soon discovered between the political questionnaires that he filled out in 1933 and the denazification paperwork that he filled out in 1945. The courts presumed that he must have been speaking truthfully in 1933 rather than attempting to save his career in the light of the disastrous shift in German politics, which in turn called into question the veracity of his most recent answers. He was accused of falsifying documents and prosecuted. In the end he served a short jail sentence, paid a hefty fine, and was judged ineligible for employment above manual labor. He appealed this harsh judgment, and the process dragged through 1947 and into 1948. Eventually he successfully presented evidence and testimony that showed he was a non-active party member who only joined to protect himself and his family from persecution due to his previously strong opposition. The court eventually cleared him of both the earlier charges of falsifying documents as well as the Nazi Party connection that had rendered him unemployable. It reclassified him as a member of Group 5 in the categorization scheme used by denazification courts at this time - those “unaffected by Nazism.” Soon after he was rehired into the local system and eventually earned a promotion to Schulrat in 1950.²⁴⁹

In both Hesse and Thuringia cases such as Halberstadt’s inflamed public opinion and led to claims that the denazification process was simply a political witch hunt with no more legitimacy or moral standing than the National Socialist *Gleichschaltung* of the 30s. Rather than finding acceptance as a necessary step forward in rehabilitating German society, it was in danger

²⁴⁸ Abt. 650/B, Nr. 2901 – Personal Akte – Ernst Halberstadt, HHStAW

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

of being publicly perceived as the crudest form of victor's justice, indiscriminately targeting both deeply implicated Nazis and relatively innocent political bystanders. In the early Spring of 1947, for example, numerous towns in Thuringia saw protests, assemblies of parents and concerned citizens, and even strikes organized by students and teachers against local schools to protest a recent wave of firings that targeted educators who had been 'nominal Party Members' under the Nazis. In the cases of the student-organized strikes the local rectors and principals reported that they had been organized along democratic lines, following votes within the student body.²⁵⁰ These were not isolated incidents or the spontaneous results of individual cases. The problem had been simmering for the better part of the year, and there are indications that at least some level of organization was present. As early as February of 1946 the Thuringian Ministry of Education dispatched investigators to look into reports of "illegally organized parents' advisory councils" within schools that had allegedly organized resistance to the further firings of teachers with Nazi backgrounds.²⁵¹

This resentment was not restricted to the grass roots activism of citizens, parents, and children. It could also be found in the highest levels of the state governments. At one meeting of the Hessian cabinet in early 1946 Georg Häring, the Minister for Nutrition and Agriculture, remarked that it was a shame that denazification and the prosecution of German war criminals were being carried out by the Americans, because "[we the Germans] should have put our house

²⁵⁰ "Das Kreisbildungsamt Eisenach an das Ministerium für Volksbildung, Betr: Neulehrerinsatz in den Schulen der Rhön," LT-MfV Nr. 22, THStAW; "Ein wildgewordner Schulrat - Abschrift aus dem Würzberger Bistumsblatt Nr. 7 16. Feb 1947," LT-MfV Nr. 22, THStAW; "Christlich-Demokratische Union Deutschlands Landesverband Thüringen an das Landesamt für Volksbildung z.Hd. d. Herrn Landesdirektor Wolf," 19. November 1946, LT-MfV Nr. 22, THStAW

²⁵¹ "Land Thüringen, Landesamt für Volksbildung an Herrn Schulrat Linde, Eisenach" 21. February 1946, LT-MfV Nr. 22, THStAW

in order ourselves.²⁵² Wounded Teutonic pride was not the only issue at stake. The compulsory approval of all administrative postings by local military authorities was also questioned, due to the way that they slowed the hiring necessitated by the large purges and added another point of friction with local populations and administrators.²⁵³ As thorough as it was, early denazification could also be hindered by the simple necessity that some level of professional continuity exist in the earliest transitional phases, and the incredible need for competent staff and educators. For example, in the summer of 1946, a year after the first proclamations demanding the immediate termination of all state employees with strong NSDAP affiliations, it was brought to the attention of the Ministry of Education in Weimar that two senior instructors with Nazi Party histories were still employed in the town of Vacha. The Minister wrote to the local *Landesdirektor des Kreisbildungsamts* to bring this matter to his attention and question why they still held their positions. It came to light that the earliest denazification regulations, under which the instructors had initially been processed, allowed for the reclassification of politically tainted individuals to a status that permitted their employment if they were deemed critical employees and could gain membership in one of the four approved postwar political parties. This regulation had, in the intervening year, changed and the grounds upon which ex-Nazis could be retained further restricted. The two instructors were duly fired.²⁵⁴

²⁵² “23. Sitzung vom 25. Februar 1946,” *Die Kabinettsprotokolle der Hessischen Landesregierung: Kabinett Geiler 1945-1946*, Andreas Hedwig, ed. (Wiesbaden: Historische Kommission für Nassau, 2000): 474

²⁵³ Abt. 650/B, Nr. 2923 - Personalakten Karl Schwarz, HHStAW

²⁵⁴ “Land Thüringen, Landesamt für Volksbildung an Herrn Schulrat Linde, Eisenach” 21. February 1946, LT-MfV Nr. 22, THStAW; “Land Thüringen, Landesamt für Volksbildung an Herrn Schulrat Linde, Eisenach” 24. July, 1946, LT-MfV Nr. 22, THStAW

The unevenness, resistance, and at times imprecision in early denazification proceedings should not be taken as an indication that the ultimate goal of a German political system cleansed of Nazi influences was taken lightly by either regional authorities or German administrators. Despite whatever misgivings they may have had about the more obvious injustices, they understood its necessity and were generally willing to fire those obviously connected to the previous regime. One clear example of this can be seen in the correspondence only months after the war's end between Dr. Walter Wolf, the recently appointed Minister of Education in Thuringia, and Dr. Karl Friel, the *Oberstudiendirektor* in Jena. Friel, a highly active Nazi Party member, was among the very first Nazi era administrators fired from their positions, dismissed even before the American soldiers who initially occupied Thuringia turned the region over to the Russians. He complained bitterly that he had only joined the Nazi Party out of concern for his career [*Selbsterhaltungstrieb*], that he was highly respected by his peers, and that he had been his whole life a socialist at heart. He further stated that as a recently released prisoner of war he should be given his position back out of recognition for his patriotic service.²⁵⁵

Wolf's response was both unambiguous and uncharacteristically combative for the usually professional and even tempered bureaucrat. He began with the less than polite observation that "this letter should reach you, unless you have already fled from the Russians," and from there continued to dismiss Friel's every complaint in progressively harsher and more impolite language. Friel was held in contempt not only for his service to the Nazis, but also his willingness to switch political masters so quickly. His supposed sufferings over a couple of weeks in an American POW camp were dismissed by a particularly pointed reference to Wolf's

²⁵⁵ Dr. Karl Friel, "Brief an den Vorstand des Landesamtes für Volksbildung," 21.6.45, LT-MfV Nr. 51, THStAW

own history of internment at the concentration camp at Buchenwald. By the end of the letter the final judgment was as harsh as it was inevitable:

Through a criminal policy you have significantly helped throw the entire German people into the abyss. And now, when there are no laurels to be won [*kein Blumentopf mehr zu gewinn ist*] with Hitler's bandits, now you attempt with the help of the "enemy" (for me as a Buchenwalder as for all German antifascists the Russians, Americans, and the English are friends of the German people as they militarily eradicated the Nazi tyranny - but they were no doubt your enemy -) to secure a new position for yourself . . . It is probably superfluous for me to further clarify to you that as an early Party member [*Altparteigenosse*] I would not leave you in the teaching profession and it goes without saying that I do not intend to use you "in the reconstruction of the German school system."²⁵⁶

To say that Minister Wolf appreciated the need for a thorough cleansing of the existing administrative order would be a gross understatement.

At the same time, allowances could be and were made for cases where officials felt that justice had been miscarried. The same Minister Wolf who responded with so much vitriol to Friel's request for employment intervened a little over a year later on behalf of an old colleague and friend who had fallen afoul of the ongoing denazification process. Wolf wrote that Max Riedel, a principal in Zechau-Leesen, had been personally responsible for his evading arrest by the Gestapo in 1933. He attributed Riedel's joining the Nazi Party in that same year to justified

²⁵⁶ Dr. Walter Wolf, "Brief an Herrn Oberstudiendirektor Dr. Karl Friel," 4.7.45, LT-MfV Nr. 51, THStAW

fears for his personal safety rising out of previous membership in and activism on behalf of the SPD. There are notable parallels between the political history so openly mocked by Wolf in his correspondence with Friel and the grounds on which he petitioned that an exception be granted for Riedel. Whether this instance represents a case simple cronyism or the use of relevant personal insight to spare a valuable state employee is a matter of interpretation, but it does indicate the level to which early denazification was contingent on personal networks and other less tangible aspects of a subject's history.²⁵⁷

The net effects of early denazification can at best be described as ambivalent. They were not wholly successful, and men and women with deeply troublesome wartime histories would continue to be uncovered both in the East and the West well into the next few decades. These failures were not, however, due to any ingrained apathy or antipathy towards the process on the part of those charged with carrying it forward. It was also not the resounding failure that subsequent generations, particularly in the West, later charged it to have been. While some of its later critics would later charge that denazification whitewashed culpable Nazis into “fellow travelers” with the aim of speedily reintroducing them as productive members of German society, the view from the occupation period is significantly more complicated than that.²⁵⁸ Massive numbers of Germans lost their positions within both the educational system and the broader government. Even if many of them later came back into the system this initial purge provided the space necessary to rid German education of the worst excesses of National Socialism and reestablish some level of respectability to German civil authority in general.

²⁵⁷ Dr. Walter Wolf, “Brief an Herrn Schulrat Tauscher in Gera” 6.9.1946, LT-MfV Nr. 51, THStAW

²⁵⁸ See Lutz Niethammer, *Entnazifizierung in Bayern; Säuberung und Rehabilitierung unter amerikanischer Besatzung* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1972) for one of the early critical evaluations of denazification

Furthermore, the higher the position, the more political the appointment, and the further removed from the possibility of an upsurge of grassroots support, the more likely it was that an individual would not only lose his position but that the loss would prove long term. While it may be possible to find teachers who regained their positions in the months, years, and decades to come, few who served as administrators under National Socialism managed to regain their erstwhile positions. Even if the success and ultimate legacy of denazification remains problematic from the perspective of later generations that desired some sense of justice and closure with a troubled past, in the immediate aftermath of the war it adequately performed the task that was required of it: men and women with Nazi pasts were removed from public life long enough so that others could build the framework for post-fascist governments and societies that could begin the much longer, much more complicated task of coming to terms with the events of the past twelve years.

Rehiring

Many of the earliest denazification proceedings used the broadest definitions for what could suffice as active support of Nazi Party goals or participation in the Party itself. As a result the only locally available candidates for filling vacated government jobs were frequently those who had suffered directly from Nazi persecution, particularly those who had been members of political parties that had been targeted for retaliation after 1933. Even relatively ancient allegations or rumors of pro-Nazi sympathies could derail a candidate's hiring process, and frequently had to be counter-balanced by even more solid evidence of strong antifascist convictions.

Philipp Müller, for example, was provisionally promoted from rector of a school in Obertaunus in Hesse to his region's Schulrat immediately after Germany's military collapse. During the post-appointment inquiry into his political life after 1933 an incident from 1937 came to light that nearly cost him both his promotion to Schulrat and his current position as rector. In 1937, while searching for a replacement knob for a household drawer, Mr. Müller inadvertently entered a Jewish owned store. He was denounced for this and was investigated by the police and local Nazi Party leaders. When questioned he was recorded as emphatically asserting his "complete agreement [with the Party] on the Jewish Question," a statement that proved highly problematic eight years later. In the end it was determined that despite his attempts to placate the investigators in 1937 his career had been materially damaged by his "failure to conform to Nazi methods and standards." This was considered evidence enough to enter a finding that there was significant proof of anti-Nazi activity on the part of Mr. Müller and the investigating US Army Captain recommended his confirmation as Schulrat.²⁵⁹

The career of Dr. Karl Höfer is fairly typical of the men who were hired, and in many cases re-hired, to serve as administrators during this period. He was born in March of 1886 and sat for his first teaching certification exam in April of 1906. That same year he began teaching at a school in Frankfurt. Two years later he took the second level of teaching certification exams. He fought in World War 1, entering military service on March 19, 1915 and was discharged in August of the same year. In 1928 he earned his doctorate and on August 1, 1932 he was promoted to be the rector of the school that he taught at. This promotion did not last long. In 1933 he was demoted back to being a classroom instructor due to his membership in the SPD. He continued teaching throughout the war. He never joined the Nazi Party, although he did join

²⁵⁹ Abt. 650/B, Nr 2910, Personal Akten Philipp Müller, HHStAW

the NSLB after membership became compulsory for state employed educators. In the Spring of 1944 he was evacuated to the countryside with his class. After the war ended he was promoted to rector once again by the Oberbürgermeister of Frankfurt, on August 21, 1945. In September he and the children under his care returned to the city. The American Military Government retroactively approved him for service in the school system on March 8, 1946 and six months later on November 1 he was promoted to Schulrat. He remained in this position until he reached the retirement age of 65, with an effective date of retirement of January 1, 1951. After his retirement Dr. Höffer was recognized for what his contemporaries saw as exceptional service in helping to rebuild Hessian education after the war. He was nominated for the *Bundesverdienstkreuz*, an order of merit established in 1951 to recognize notable service to the Federal Republic, although it is not recorded whether or not he received it. It is a notable achievement but not exceptionally so; annually 2,000-4,000 of these decorations are awarded of varying degrees and classes.²⁶⁰

While the particulars of his service may have been impressive, the general path that Dr. Hoffer's career took was fairly typical. He was a member of the generation born in the mid to late 1880s that began their professional lives in the early 20th century but was still young enough to have their careers interrupted by the First World War. Those who survived that experience generally continued their normal professional development until the social upheavals of the early 1930s abruptly divided them based on their political convictions. Many had their careers damaged or put on hold, and those who managed to stay employed had to find some accommodation with the Nazi state. How skillfully they negotiated Hitler's rise to power largely determined whether they would be fit to continue service after the war; for every man like Dr.

²⁶⁰ Abt. 650 Nr. 2902, Personal Akten Dr. Karl Höffer, HHStAW

Höffer there was a handful of others who were deemed unsuitable for teaching positions due to their Nazi past, at least in the short term. Those who could demonstrate a lack of overt Nazi sympathies and, ideally, some level of verifiable antipathy towards the NSDAP or professional harm caused by the *Gleichschaltung* were generally quickly moved into positions of greater authority. Whatever their Nazi-era pasts they tended not to stay in office long enough to face serious criticism. Most of them reached retirement age in the late 40s or early 50s.

The most important criterion for hiring new administrators after the war was lack of any major Nazi affiliation. Pragmatic exceptions were made for people who only belonged to professional organizations such as the National Socialist Teachers League (NSLB) that were mandatory for employment under the Third Reich, but actual Party membership would almost always result in automatic dismissal. Distinctions were also drawn between those who had only the minor affiliations that accrued, barnacle like, as a result of living within the National Socialist state and those who held leadership positions or could otherwise be shown to be ‘active participants.’ The second major criterion, which could at times even atone for earlier Party membership, was some level of verifiable persecution at the hands of National Socialism.²⁶¹ While this severely restricted the number of available teachers and administrators after the war, it was not always read as a disadvantage. The fact that the Nazis had been so thorough in their own political purges and had targeted so many of their own citizens for abuse guaranteed that some minimum number of politically palatable professionals would be available. This was the assessment made by William Sollmann, a pre-Nazi Social Democrat and Secretary of the Interior under Stresemann forced into exile in 1933, when he wrote that, “The number of educators

²⁶¹ For two fairly typical examples of this see Abt. 650/B Nr. 2904 - Personal Akte Wilhelm Krebs, HHStAW and Abt. 650/B Nr. 2923 - Personal Akte Karl Schwarz, HHStAW. Both were dismissed in the Third Reich “due to political unsuitability.”

dismissed or demoted or exiled by the Hitler government is not known, but it must amount to many thousands. This is a reserve which can be used immediately after Hitler's downfall. These German teachers know age-old German habits of thought and feeling better than any foreigner.²⁶² The second characteristic mentioned by Sollmann, the familiarity of Germans with their own countrymen and their habits, would prove invaluable in helping the occupation authorities to smoothly transition from a combat footing to occupation duties and eventually to rebuilding German civil society.

Preference in hiring was also shown for those who had previous experience as administrators, or at the very least as teachers.²⁶³ Age also became a factor, both because of laws regarding mandatory retirement ages and the general view that older administrators were seen as undesirable due to their "undemocratic upbringings."²⁶⁴ There was also the desire to repair at least some of the damage done to individuals professional lives by the 1933 political purges. While not as firm a priority as other considerations, there is direct evidence in at least one case that this kind of professional reparation (*Wiedergutmachung*) was a firm secondary concern. In this instance a pre-1933 Schulrat who lost his job under the Nazis due to his political beliefs was re-hired very close to retirement age in a higher capacity specifically so that he would eventually

²⁶² "Educational reconstruction in Germany, By William F. Sollmann and acknowledgment from State Department." 4/25/45 document 1-A-6 in *The U.S. Occupation of Germany: Educational Reform, 1945-1949 Microfiche Collection*, Congressional Information Service, Inc., 1991

²⁶³ Regierungspräsident Darmstadt Abteilung V, Erziehungswesen, "Brief an den Herrn Minister für Kultus und Unterricht Betr: Organisation der Schulaufsicht, 5.8.1946," Abt. 504, Nr. 848 Besetzung von Schulratsstellen, HHStAW

²⁶⁴ Abt. 650/B Nr. 2922, Personal Akte – Robert Deiss, HHStAW

be able to draw a state pension that reflected what he should have obtained had his career not been disrupted.²⁶⁵

Finally, local sensibilities were also assessed, although these considerations were distinctly secondary to the others. They came into question when multiple candidates were available or a pool of recently vetted candidates was being assigned to new postings. Issues considered included the political leanings of the candidate, their confessional status, and the general makeup of the populations of the district they would be assigned to. In both Hesse and Thuringia, for example, there were prominent pockets of Catholic communities where it was considered highly preferable to have a Catholic school inspector, if possible, and in areas where two inspectors covered the same territory it was desirable to have both a catholic and a protestant.²⁶⁶ When considering the possibilities for shuffling personnel during a minor reorganization of positions near Darmstadt in 1948, one sub-director in the Ministry of Education specifically noted that “Herr Köth is assigned to the district of Friedberg; he is catholic. The second position must therefore go to an evangelical [*evangelisch*]. [Schulrat] Mayer is evangelic.²⁶⁷” Similar allowances were made for political leanings in Hesse, while in Thuringia a strong Socialist or Communist background was a virtual requirement for administrative employment.

²⁶⁵ Karl Friedrich, “Brief an den Herrn Minister für Kultus und Unterricht, Darmstadt, den 26. April 1948, Betr: Besetzung der im Regierungsbezirk Darmstadt noch offenen Kreisschulratsstellen.” Abt 504 Nr. 848 Besetzung von Schulratsstellen, HHStAW

²⁶⁶ “Allg. Deutscher Lehrer- und Lehrerinnenverband Landesverband Hessen an das Ministerium für Kultus und Unterricht” 13.4.1949, Abt. 504 Nr. 848 - Besetzung von Schulratsstellen, HHStAW

²⁶⁷ Karl Friedrich, “Brief an Herrn Ministerialdirektor Viehweg Betr: Lösungsmöglichkeit für Schulrat Meyer zu Alsfeld,” Abt. 504 Nr. 848, HHStAW

Conclusion

The eventual divergence of education in the west in the east wasn't a result of fundamentally different understandings of the role of education in a modern nation or of different assessments of the needs of German society as it rebuilt. The roots of that divergence lie in the paradoxes of post-war occupation government and in the fundamental ideological differences and different understandings of history that separated the Cold War superpowers. While an exceedingly complex topic in its own right, many of the key aspects of this divide can be seen in the differing understandings of the term 'democratic,' a word that was key to defining the end goal of German education.

For the Americans 'democracy' was a specific type of political organization based on the will of a majority of the people as expressed at the ballot box. A 'democratic education' was one that properly prepared students for participation in this society and instructed them in their rights and responsibilities as citizens. For the Soviets, 'democracy' represented the rule of the nation by the majority of the citizens. This was not a democratic ideal so strongly tied to notions such as free speech or political agency via the vote, but on the ideal that the working classes would lead the nation, rather than a hereditary or political elite. A 'democratic education' was one that was equally available to all regardless of their origin or background.

The paradox of occupation government was the attempt to implement democratic rule via what amounted to a short-term military dictatorship. This was a problem much more acutely felt in the west, where that the early establishment of relatively strong civilian rule under the aegis of politically vetted Germans provided a plausible means for resisting the demands of the occupation authorities. Educational administrators in Hesse who opposed some of the structural

changes to German education that American planners thought were necessary could argue that they, as members of a duly elected government, were representing the will of the German people. This is a problem that persists to this day for those who would seek to spread democracy through military force: what do you do when the people you are occupying elect leaders who oppose your occupation goals or strategies?

The Soviets, on the other hand, had no such worries about establishing democratic governmental structures within their occupation zone. As a defeated enemy state under military occupation, Germany was subject to rule by fiat and any measures that they felt were necessary were simply enacted. Educational administrators under the Soviets tended to be firm believers in these new models and promoted them from within over any objections from the local citizenry.

In both cases the important contributions made by German administrators were only possible because of a denazification process that, while imperfect and perhaps even rather flawed when viewed from a long-term perspective, did its job in the short term. It successfully managed to purge the ranks of civil administration of the worst adherents to political Nazism create the space needed to enact necessary reforms and build the foundations of institutions to come.

CHAPTER 5: ADMINISTRATORS AS INTERMEDIARIES

The district education office is not a self-contained bureaucratic authority, but a living member of the democratic administration of the country.

- Walter Wolf, Thuringian Minister of Education, 1945²⁶⁸

The reconstruction [of the schools] in the new spirit demands ever more extensive and responsible work of the school inspectors, [including] negotiations with the occupation authorities.

- Georg Krücke, Mayor of Wiesbaden, 1945²⁶⁹

Whether under Soviet or American occupation, German educational administrators after the war found themselves caught between the metaphorical rock and hard place. The major restructuring of an essential civil service would be a daunting task under ideal circumstances, but

²⁶⁸ „Entwurf Betr.: Kriesbildungsausschüsse,” December 1945, LT-MfV Nr. 22, THStAW

²⁶⁹ „Der Oberbürgermeister der Stadt Wiesbaden an den Herrn Regierungspräsidenten, Abteilung II; Betr: Berufung eines zweiten Schulrats für die Volksschulen in Wiesbaden,“ 19. October, 1945, Abt. 650 B Nr. 2920 – Personal Akte – Heinrich Schaab, HHStAW

conditions in post-war Germany were far from ideal. National government was in a state of total collapse, physical infrastructure lay in ruin, and the citizens struggled with profound personal hardship. Foreign militaries dominated the landscape, both conceptually and literally, and state level governance was almost entirely in their hands.

The realities of foreign occupation complicated rebuilding efforts at every level. The military authorities were generally eager to establish some degree of German civil administration if only to relieve themselves of a burden that they were culturally and institutionally ill-suited for. At the same time, they were reluctant to hand any degree of meaningful executive authority over to German leaders. This was due in part to a combination of short-term security fears regarding the threat of armed resistance and long term concerns about the rebirth of German militarism. Occupation authorities retained ultimate control over all major policy decisions and oversight, direction, and approval was the order of the day for the Germans they worked with.²⁷⁰

This was true regardless of the rank or office that an administrator might hold. Within the educational systems, even the ministers for education of the re-established governments of the *Länder* found themselves subject to the requirements of military occupation authorities, in effect functioning as subordinates rather than semi-autonomous leaders. They had little direct say in the general policies that were decreed, but were nonetheless responsible for their implementation. In the areas under Soviet occupation, these demands came quickly and decisively. By the first anniversary of the peace Soviet authorities had proclaimed nothing less than the wholesale restructuring of the educational system with the broader goal of transforming

²⁷⁰ For two excellent overviews of the occupation in East and West Germany see respectively Norman Naimark, . *The Russians in Germany: A history of the Soviet zone of occupation, 1945-1949*. (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1995) and James Tent, *Mission on the Rhine: Reeducation and denazification in American-occupied Germany*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982)

German society from the ground up. While the Western Allies were far less decisive in their reform efforts, when they did come they were equally dedicated to seeing them through.

If the dictates of the occupation authorities were the rock, then their public reception by the German population was the hard place. Major changes to as basic a public service as education directly affected the lives of many, and they were not shy about voicing their opinions. In both the east and the west there was significant pushback against educational reforms for a variety of reasons. An example of this is a fairly typical letter sent by a concerned mother to the Thuringian Ministry of Education at the beginning of 1947. She complained bitterly about the rapid pace of change. She claimed that it exposed children who had experienced nothing but political upheaval, war, and the uncertain lives of refugees to yet more turmoil. Despite all of the hardships of post war schooling, she said that with the simple resumption of classes “We parents exhaled, as this seemed to finally initiate a calm development for the children, at least in this area.” This hoped for calming influence and stability proved illusory, however. “Since the school reform was carried out in November, it is completely over: teachers change almost daily, in four weeks seven schedules, instead of the instruction in Russian begun in August now classes in English because there are no teachers available for Russian, and lessons in 4 (FOUR!) different schools, and inevitable wasted hours in which card games prevail.” Under these circumstances she found it absurd to reform the schools, the one bastion of normality for Germany’s children. She also complained of what she perceived as an “at any price” ethos to the drive for specific reforms.²⁷¹ In another contemporary instance residents of a town threatened to

²⁷¹ Imgard Kleinert, “Brief An das Landesamt für Volksbildung herrn Minister Dr. Wolf,” 26. January 1947, LT-MfV Nr. 22, THStAW

strike in protest over the dismissal of locally popular teachers with prior Nazi Party ties.²⁷² The discontent with attempts to de-couple religious and secular education was widespread and troubled reform efforts in both the east and west.

Not all communications, however, were so uniformly negative, and some did express approval for what was happening. A letter from a retired school teacher promised “flowers from the hands of children . . . [as thanks for] the gift of the new *Einheitsschule*.²⁷³” As refreshing as correspondence like this must have been it was, however, distinctly in the minority.

This combination of pressures placed German educational administrators in the role of “transactional intermediaries” between the military occupation authorities and German civilians, two groups that were heavily invested in post-war education. Transactional intermediaries are those individuals who enable communication between dissimilar peoples, cultures, or organizations. The men and women who weathered early denazification to either retain or, far more commonly, newly acquire positions under the occupation tended to be well positioned to serve in this intermediary role. Frequently they were selected because of pre-existing international connections or political ideologies that had placed them at odds with National Socialism but which now facilitated, both linguistically and culturally, their work as intermediaries.²⁷⁴

²⁷² Schulrat Linde, “An das Ministerium für Volksbildung Herr Minister Dr. Wolf, Betr: Neulehrereinsatz in den Schulen der Rhön” 22. March 1947, LT-MfV Nr. 22, THStAW

²⁷³ Karl Hohenner, “Karl Hohenner an Dr. Wolf,” 14.6.1946, LT-MfV, Nr. 51, THStAW

²⁷⁴ My theoretical framework for understanding the roles played by intermediaries draws heavily from work done on the function of native intermediaries in colonial governments. See Alida C. Metcalf, *Go-betweens and the Colonization of Brazil: 1500-1600*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005) and others discussed in Chapter 1 for a more detailed accounting of this. I am particularly indebted to Metcalf for her model of the three different sorts of intermediaries and understanding of how each functioned. Arnd Bauerkämper, Konrad H. Jarausch, and Marcus M. Payk have used a similar but somewhat different model of go-betweens in their work

German educational administrators provided a bridge across which communication between the occupiers and occupied was possible, while simultaneously dampening the intensity of that communication for the betterment of everyone. Direct communication between the occupation authorities and the civilian population was hampered by a number of fundamental difficulties. These included linguistic and cultural differences, basic security concerns, wartime prejudices and animosities, and the inevitable remoteness of policy-level governmental structures from the daily lives of individual citizens. This was especially important in an occupation system that was designed from the outset to minimize fraternization between foreign military forces and German civilians, although this particular feature was relaxed as years went by.

Administrators also mediated between traditionally antagonistic groups within the German educational system itself. These internal tensions took two basic forms. The first was the opportunity provided by reconstruction to re-fight old battles and attempt to protect pre-existing goals. The renewal of debate over what the educational relationship between church and state should be and the future of religious instruction in public schools stands as a highly visible example of this. The second was the necessity, born of the specific nature of the Allied reforms, for previously antagonistic groups to work together or cross previously sacrosanct professional boundaries. This can be seen in the attempts to move away from the heavily tracked, tiered nature of pre-war German education and the resultant blurring of professional distinctions between primary and secondary school teachers.

Essentially, administrators were expected to help ensure that all of the various parts of the community could work together to make “democratically” - however one chose to define it - reformed school systems a reality. As expressed at the 2nd Pedagogical Congress in the Soviet

Transatlantische Mittler und die kulturelle Öffnung Westdeutschlands 1945-1970. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005).

Sector, educational administrators were expected to encourage a “. . . growing cooperation between school board, school leaders, and local authorities, [and an] increasing interest of the public in the development of the school.²⁷⁵” How well did they meet these expectations and what was the cost for the Allies of earning their cooperation?

Interactions with the occupiers

As was previously discussed, the Allied Occupation Authorities entered the occupation period with some level of agreement on the broadest, most basic reforms necessary within German education. Denazification, of both curricula and personnel, was a fairly consistent, albeit extremely broad and vague, set of priorities for restructuring the German educational system at the outset of the occupation. These included practical measures that were applied across the entire civil administration, such as the general denazification of its personnel, and more education-specific measures such as cleansing curricula of pro-Nazi materials and lessons. There was also a broad agreement that German education needed to be reformed to make it equally accessible to all members of society and a vehicle for social change and mobility. Towards this end a comprehensive, unified educational institution for all students - an *Einheitsschule* - was proposed as the basic framework for reconstruction across all of Germany. The variations in how this was carried out and the different types of reforms that ultimately resulted underscore a number of key differences in the relationships between educational administrations in Hesse and Thuringia and their respective occupation authorities.

²⁷⁵ Max Kreuziger, *Rechenschaftsbericht über das zweite Jahr der demokratischen Einheitsschule*, (Volk und Wissen Verlags, Berlin, 1948): 4 located in Nachlass Siebert, Folio 879, BBF-DIPF

One key to the differences in how educational administrators interacted with the Russians and the Americans was the latter's relatively quick re-establishment of civilian civil administration and the high degree of interaction that they had with local military authorities on a day to day basis. This created opportunities for significant resistance on the part of German administrators to unpopular policies and demands. With the relatively early reestablishment of civilian government in areas under American control, their own stated emphasis upon democratizing both German society and education could be used to delay or alter controversial changes. Reluctance to engage in mandated reforms was often represented as the democratically voiced will of the German people. Tardiness in meeting deadlines for the implementation of measures about which there could be no negotiation was often defended as the result of time spent convincing a skeptical public, a necessary pre-requisite if the reforms were to be democratic in anything more than name only.

The relationship between Erwin Stein, the first Minister of Culture in the re-constituted *Land* of Hesse, and Vaughn R. DeLong, the chief of the Education and Religious Affairs (E&RA) division in Hesse, provides numerous examples of this tension. Even though Hesse had organized an elected civilian government, the United States Army still held ultimate authority in the region and, as such, DeLong had the not unreasonable expectation that the reforms that had been ordered would be carried out in a timely fashion. The reception that their reform efforts met in Hesse, however, was not uniformly positive. Rather than simply follow through on the changes demanded by the Americans, Hessian educators convened their own committees to evaluate those proposals and put forward their own counter-proposals. On a few of issues there was a broad consensus. For example, the need to improve the training of the new teachers who

were being brought into the schools to replace the large numbers removed through denazification was entirely uncontroversial.²⁷⁶

On the other hand, there was a fundamental reluctance to undertake structural reforms of the proposed new school system and an attempt to preserve some of the familiar structures and divisions of the old one. For example, there was strong resistance to the expansion of primary education from four to six years, on the basis that maintaining the four year schedule would allow them to preserve the current level of achievement and concentrate on promoting gifted students. The Americans strongly objected to this both on the grounds that it went against the basic principles of having a comprehensive institution and that it was far too early to distinguish ‘gifted’ from ‘normal’ students. They castigated this as the “undemocratic giving of the best advantages to those who can best help themselves.” In a similar manner they were harshly critical of the continued German emphasis on retaining the *Gymnasium* as an independent, parallel school system, calling such a move “exactly contrary to the basic philosophy of the *Einheitsschule*.” They were reluctant to even consider retaining the name ‘*Gymnasium*’ for any level of the reformed schools, claiming that “*Gymnasium, Studienschule*, or any other name which denotes a parallelism is contrary to point 4 [of Allied Control Council Directive Number 54: Basic principles for the democratization of education in Germany].”²⁷⁷

Stein, however, was not solely responsible to the United States Army; he had to answer to the Minister-President, the other members of his cabinet, the state assembly, his own political party, and ultimately to the people of Hesse as a whole. In Stein’s case, he used the demands of

²⁷⁶ OMG-H, E&RA Division “To the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs Land Hesse Subject: Comments and Criticisms on Report of Committee on Studienschule,” 18. September 1947, Abt 1178, Nr. 68, HHStAW

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

this democratic framework to enable himself to push back against American demands and create the time and space needed to make educational reform a more German affair. In doing so he was able to slow down and even reverse Allied efforts at reform to the extent that even educational officials in areas under Soviet control took notice.

Some of the points of contention between the Americans and the Hessian educational authorities were due to the realities of education in Germany at this time. For example, DeLong complained of the lack of progress in starting instruction in English for all schoolchildren in the state. He observed at a meeting in July of 1948 that two years had passed since the subject was ordered to be mandatory in all schools, yet it was still only sporadically taught. Even the optimistic progress reports from the Hessian Ministry of Culture and Education only predicted full participation by 1949 or 1950, a lapse of nearly four years. Stein maintained that his ministry had worked as hard as possible to speedily implement English instruction, however they had been hampered by a lack of textbooks and, above all, qualified teachers. Not only was the general denazification-related shortage to blame, but English had up until then always been an elective subject, resulting in a far shallower pool of potential teachers than would otherwise be the case.²⁷⁸

German administrators also used American priorities regarding the democratization of German government, education, and culture to gain leverage with the occupation authorities. They claimed that the support of the public and of their democratically elected representatives was not only necessary to avoid public relations blunders that could discredit the ongoing reconstruction efforts in the public eye, but as was necessary in and of itself if the notion of a democratic Germany was to have any legitimacy at all. For example, in August of 1948 DeLong

²⁷⁸ “Abschrift: Besprechung zw. Mr. V.R. DeLong und Minister Dr. E. Stein” 26. July 1948, Abt. 1178, Nr. 67a., HHStAW

was engaged in discussions about founding a new educational institute for Central European studies. The American occupation authorities hoped that such an institute would attract foreign scholars to Germany and help foster the re-integration of German academia into a broader international framework. Stein, meanwhile, was faced with ongoing budgetary chaos, partially due to continued demands from both the public and the state government to reduce classroom sizes. In order to do so his ministry was attempting to funnel all available funds into teacher recruitment and training, constructing new school facilities, and contracting for the publication of new teaching materials. Numerous unpopular cuts had already been made in other areas, including the postponement of the beginning of the next school year by a few months and deep cuts into state funding for theaters and other cultural outlets.²⁷⁹ Stein refused to sign the charter for the institute on the grounds that a project with such heavy budgetary implications needed to go before the entire cabinet, and might need approval from the state assembly. As a temporary work around, he suggested founding the institute as an appendage of a pre-existing institution and funding it through private donations, should those be available. While it is clear that his primary concern was preserving the integrity of his ministerial budget, he appealed to the necessities of the democratic apparatus within which it operated in order to steer matters towards a privately funded resolution.²⁸⁰

It is important to note, however, that the dialogue over these issues was not the simple imposition of Allied will over German objections. The Americans pressured, cajoled, and objected but ultimately negotiated timetables, accepted delays, and assented to some moderation

²⁷⁹ “Besprechung zw. Mr. V.R. DeLong und Minister Dr. E. Stein,” 16. August 1948, Abt. 1178, Nr. 67a., HHStAW

²⁸⁰ “Wöchentliche Sitzung Mr. DeLong/Min Stein,” 20. September 1948, Abt. 1178, Nr. 67a., HHStAW

of the initially proposed reforms. Whether or not these sorts of delaying tactics had a long term future remains open to speculation. Although the behavior was more organized than simple foot dragging of individuals and institutions that were reluctant to pursue change, it was not orchestrated enough to describe as a fully realized campaign with well articulated goals. The historical realities of the emerging Cold War, however, and the subsequent rush for West German statehood meant that many delayed demands ultimately became moot as military occupation transitioned to political partnership. More importantly, the Germans who were in charge of overseeing these changes were not politically naïve, and perhaps most importantly they generally came from a generation that had experienced a chain of revolutionary moments and transitions in government during their adult lives. Indeed, if there is any single constant in German political life between 1900 and 1945, it is the short-lived nature of governments and the vigor with which their successors set about ‘reforming’ the nation. Regardless of whether it was part of a conscious plan to resist American demands, they would have had an intuitive grasp of the notion that political realities might change in the near future and postponed changes could quickly become abandoned ones.

In areas under Soviet occupation, such as Thuringia, the relationship between regional administrative authorities and the military government was simultaneously more direct and also more tenuous than in the Western zones. Unlike the Länder under American occupation, areas under Soviet control had a central educational authority that was nominally in charge of coordinating a common educational policy. The German Central Administration for Education was based in the Soviet controlled parts of Berlin, and was staffed by Germans - albeit men and women selected more for their political loyalty than their pedagogical acumen. Like the other branches of the Central Administration, it was explicitly designed for the outward transmission

of Soviet orders rather than any kind of independent leadership. After the establishment of the SED it also functioned more as a party apparatus than a state one, with a subsequent shift in its attentions and priorities.²⁸¹

Further complicating matters, Soviet officials at all levels paid far more attention to matters involving the German economy, reparations, and demilitarization than they did to managing aspects of civil society. Additionally, SMAD undercut what little authority the Central Administration had by issuing many of its edicts and orders directly to the Länder via its various regional branches (e.g. SMA-Th.) rather than through the central authority. Within the lower-order military governments of the Länder there were sections directly responsible for public education, however these offices were likewise tasked first and foremost with carrying out the general orders promulgated by the central military authorities in SMAD.²⁸² Similar to the staffing neglect faced by the E&RA division in the American zones, the Soviets tended to fill these specialized military offices with either civilians or very junior officers.²⁸³ In the case of Thuringia, Dr. Nikolai Bogatyrov, the man in charge of the Section for Education, held no military rank at all and intervened relatively minimally in the affairs of the Thuringian Ministry of Education.²⁸⁴

The results of this unusual arrangement were that, compared to their colleagues in the American zones, those in the east had simultaneously more freedom to do as they chose due to a

²⁸¹ Jan Foitzik. *Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland (SMAD) 1945-1949: Struktur und Funktion*. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999): 404-410

²⁸² *Ibid.*: 342-344, p. 342-344

²⁸³ For an overview of the military hierarchy of some typical state occupation governments, see Foitzik, *Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland*: 455-450

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*: 456

relative lack of systematic, regular oversight but also less room to oppose measures that they objected to. Unlike the robust relationship between Stein and DeLong and the frequent communication, both in correspondence and in person, there is relatively little record of routine interactions between the Thuringian Ministry of Education and Bogatyrov, and what there is consists mainly of simple requisitions for resources or personnel. One typical communiqué dated 22. August 1947, for example, was a simple request for permission to reopen the Natural History Museum in Saalfeld and the installation of the necessary staff to oversee it. There was no debate, discussion, or any sort of dialogue outside of the terse few lines of text required to make the request itself.²⁸⁵ The resulting lack of a discourse robbed administrators of a venue within which they could oppose against unwanted reforms. Rather than the give-and-take of proposals and counter-proposals, demands and delays observed in Hesse, in Thuringia there was more room for German administrators to take the initiative in solving specific problems, but much less ability to do so in a way that challenged the broad instructions issued by SMAD and the Allied Control Council.

Officials in the Thuringian Ministry of Education are frequently recorded as issuing reminders to recalcitrant local organizations about specific orders and regulations emanating from the Soviet military authorities and demanding the cessation of transgressive activities. A sampling of the correspondence with the district office in the town of Eisenach from late 1945 to early 1946 yields some typical examples. Some of the issues were shifts in policy that were opposed by skeptics as contrary to traditional values, and were in turn re-framed as being a necessary part of the post-war antifascist struggle. For example, in mid-October, 1945 Minister Wolf wrote to Eisenach to remind them that “the Nazis were against double-income households.

²⁸⁵ “An die Sowjetische Militär-Administration Abteilung Volksbildung zu. Hd. von Herrn Prof Bogatyrew von Minister Torhorst,” 22. August, 1947, LT-MfV, Nr. 77, THStAW

We are in favor of women working as well.²⁸⁶ In other instances it was to ensure compliance with specific military directives that they anticipated would be locally unpopular, as when Marshal Zhukov banned private schools in the Soviet Zone. Wolf wrote to Eisenach in order to ensure complete compliance, even regarding private religious education: “You are advised, that the Kindergarten in the deacon’s house in Eisenach must cease not only the prohibited instruction, but also religious instruction.”²⁸⁷ Finally there are instances where local officials were dragging their feet on needed changes and had to be prodded along into action. On July 24, 1946 Wolf wrote to the Eisenach office and noted that two school inspectors named Schottsky and Puda were still employed, despite being former Nazi Party members and ineligible for government office. He demanded their immediate termination and asked to be notified of such before the first of the following month.²⁸⁸

Similar to their counterparts in Hesse, Thuringian administrators were also at least nominally responsible to the state government and, in particular, the *Landespräsident*. While little in terms of concrete educational policy emanated from this direction, they were sensitive to the complaints of the broader public and, when those concerns were addressed to them personally, would often forward them to the educational ministry and ask for some kind of explanation or clarification of the matter. A typical example of this is a letter from *Landespräsident* Dr. Rudolf Paul to Minister Dr. Wolf in July of 1946. President Paul had been made aware of a *Schulrat* Ortband in Eisenach who was recorded to have said that “for myself,

²⁸⁶ “Land Th. Landesamt für Volksbildung an das Kreisbildungsamt Eisenach,” 17. October 1945, LT-MfV, Nr. 22, THStAW

²⁸⁷ “Landesdirektor Wolf an das Kreisbildungsamt in Eisenach,” 24. November 1945, LT-MfV, Nr. 22, THStAW

²⁸⁸ “Landesdirektor Wolf an Herrn Schulrat Linde, Kreisbildungsamt Eisenach,” 24. Juli 1946, LT-MfV, Nr. 22, THStAW

the most hated people are the religion teachers. These are the biggest criminals in my eyes, yes it may be said that they are the greatest criminals of our people.”²⁸⁹ He demanded to know what kind of actions would be taken against the *Schulrat* and pressured for his immediate termination.²⁹⁰ Unlike their colleagues in the west, however, the educational ministry in Thuringia was primarily staffed with men and women who broadly approved of the changes being proposed by the Soviets and who labored to see them through, rather than delay or alter them. They worked closely with local representatives of the SED, which itself had an understanding with SMA-D and SMA-Th. In the specific instance of *Schulrat* Ortband the Ministry of Education worked directly contrary to the expressed wishes of the *Landespräsident* and, after consulting with local SED leadership placed him on administrative leave until the issue blew over.²⁹¹ As an interesting coda to this incident, it is worth noting that *Landespräsident* Dr. Paul’s tenure in office ended one month later when he fled to the American occupation zone via West Berlin.

Ultimately in the West there was more debate about reform, what the content of it would be, and to what extent it would reach. This was due at least in part to the way that American occupation government was structured to involve more interaction between German government officials and occupation officers. The push for democratic self-governance also opened up more debates about reform. The key questions involved were about the content of the reform and the extent to which the reforms should reach. In the East, however, there was far less disagreement

²⁸⁹ “Der Präsident des Landes Thüringen an herrn Landesdirektor Dr. Wolf Landesamt für Volksbildung,” 29. July, 1946, LT-MfV, Nr. 22, THStAW

²⁹⁰ “Der Präsident des Landes Thüringen an das Landesamt für Volksbildung Betr: Schulrat Ortband in Eisenach,” 24. July 1946, LT-MfV, Nr. 22, THStAW

²⁹¹ “Land Thüringen Landesamt für Volksbildung an das Kriesbildungsamt Eisenach z. Hd. Herrn Schulrat Ortband, Eisenach,” 13. August 1946, LT-MfV, Nr. 22, THStAW

between the military government and their chosen civilian administrators about whether or not reform should take place. The major concerns surrounded how sweeping reforms should be made and, occasionally, how fast they should be implemented. If the basic question under examination in the West is how much reform should be attempted, while the basic question in the East is how it should be executed.

Interactions with the occupied

Public concern about the reforms that were being carried out was a fairly common and widespread issue across both the American and Soviet Zones after the war, and many of the written expressions found their way to the desks of officials in local educational ministries. Some commentary came directly, often addressed to men and women of high political rank. It also came in the form of correspondence forwarded by ministers, politicians, city officials, and other public notables who wanted to bring the issues to the attention of those who they felt would be in the best position to respond to them.

In general the concerned citizens, parents, and parents' councils of the various affected schools voiced broad support for some restructuring and reforming of German education. In particular they approved of the broadening of opportunities for children to embark on academic career paths and the general goal of increasing the accessibility of higher education. In their letters they "welcomed school reform in principle" and agreed that "a unified educational ideal for all types of schools from the *Volksschule* to the university is necessary, in order to bridge the spiritual divide between the primary- and higher schools."²⁹² There was, however, continued

²⁹² "1. Anlage Betr.:Gesetz über den Aufbau des Schulwesens," Abt. 1178, Nr. 189, HHStAW

alarm at the relatively unstructured nature of the reforms, especially within the American Zone. Some were troubled by the manner in which each *Land* was responsible for reforms within its own borders and the unevenness that would inevitably result. There was a general fear of a splintering of German education, and the potential difficulty of using educational credentials from one part of Germany in another. In general they argue for a continuation of German education as it had been practiced before, emphasizing the value of stability and a system understandable to those who must use it, even if that meant “avoiding experimentation” until the system was fully established.²⁹³ Tellingly, many of the arguments for a “nationally unified school reform” added caveats such as “at least for West Germany” or “in any case for the three Western Zones.” By 1948 the growing divide between the Allied and Soviet Zones of occupation was increasingly an accepted, if not embraced, political reality.²⁹⁴

Such worries were not restricted to the level of the primary schools. Many were equally concerned about what effect this would have on professional education and in particular the means by which tradesmen were certified. In one case a CDU representative in the Hessian Landestag included the Ministry of Education in a correspondence he was having with a constituent who, in a number of lengthy letters, expressed grave concern with the impact that the reorganization of the German school system would have on engineering schools. He further worried about the health of the engineering profession in Germany as a whole and whether or not it would even be able to function as a single entity after so many independently directed reforms. He was particularly concerned with the danger that the “equating engineers from technical schools [*Fachschulingenieure*] with scientifically educated professionals presents the danger that

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

our Hessian engineering and construction schools will no longer be recognized by the other states and the national railway.²⁹⁵”

Such concerns could even cross the boundaries of the occupation zones, and Germans in one area of the country were by no means ignorant of what was transpiring in others. As an example, a reporter for the *Hessische Nachrichten* wrote in July 1947 to the Thuringian Minister of Education, Dr. Marie Torhorst, asking for specifics of how educational reform and reconstruction was being carried out in her state. He wrote that “there have been repeated objections made, that the state now holds a monopoly over education,” and inquired how she responded to these claims. This was almost certainly a reference to the ongoing debate over what the post-war fate of parochial education would be, and what the historically complex relationship between the church and state in matters of public religious instruction would look like in the future. He also noted the Thuringian tradition of private, experimental schools, citing the specific example of the *Freie Schulgemeinde Wickersdorf*. He asked what role they would have in the future of Thuringian education. Finally, he asked about how denazification had been handled within the Thuringian educational system. These were all issues that were of contemporary concern in Hesse but which also resonated within Thuringia as well.²⁹⁶

Some members of the public resisted the proposed changes due to their prior experience with the German school system as it existed during the previous half century and their understanding of how to best negotiate their children through it. Whatever flaws someone might recognize or ambivalent memories he might have of earlier methods of instruction and the way

²⁹⁵ O.R.R. Reiser, “An den Vorsitzenden der Landtagsfraktion der CDU,” 8. April 1948, Abt. 1178, Nr. 189. HHStAW

²⁹⁶ Will Seringhaus, “Schriftleiter der Hessischen Nachrichten, Fragen an Frau Minister Dr. Torhorst” 24. July 1947, LT-MfV Nr. 76, THStAW

the schools were structured before, these were the systems that millions of Germans had personal experience with and understood broadly what they could expect for children. For example, in Hesse there was some resistance to the introduction of mandatory classes in English. There was a general fear that this would hinder the ability of children to master Latin, which had previously been one of the hallmarks of the privileged upper track of German education that led to the University. For parents preoccupied with ensuring that a pathway to a university education or a white-collar profession remained open to their children, this was a serious concern. Rather than mandate English, there were proposals to offer both English and Latin and leave it up to the parents which option their child chose.²⁹⁷

Specific, policy-oriented and -aware correspondence such as this made up a minority of the education ministries' communication with citizens, however. The vast majority of the concerns voiced by the general public were somewhat more mundane and fell into three general categories: complaints about perceived transgressions against existing regulations, especially those committed by occupation forces; complaints about denazification; and requests for clarifications about confusing orders or situations arising from new educational policies or orders from the Allied Control Council and the individual military governments within the occupation zones.

The educational administration served as an authority to which appeals could be made when citizens felt that the military authorities were over-stepping the bounds of their power or abusing their positions. In such cases the aggrieved parties could be justifiably uncomfortable appealing for redress to the same military authorities that they felt were persecuting them. A nominally neutral - and perhaps even sympathetic - German authority could be much more

²⁹⁷ Office of Military Government for Hesse, E&CR Division, "Wöchentliche Sitzung Mr. DeLong / Min. Stein," 20. September 1948, Abt. 1178, Nr. 67a, HHStAW

approachable. An example of this in action can be seen in early 1947 when a Soviet military officer observed the elections of class officers within a Thuringian branch of the Free German Youth (FDJ), a communist and socialist youth group, that was associated with a local school. He inspected the school records of the students involved and immediately insisted on the expulsion of seven of them from the public schools. His rationale was that, “In the Western Zones fascist youth groups have recently formed and worked illegally. In order to prevent such here, strict measures are necessary.”²⁹⁸

All of the affected students had been youth leaders in the League of German Girls (BDM), the Nazi youth organization for girls and young women. The Soviet officer appears to have been applying a very narrow reading of the denazification laws and procedures, and interpreting them to mean that children who were active participants in Nazi Party organizations could not participate in any public institution, including schools. It was noted by their teachers and local officials that expelling these girls would be a special hardship for them, as they were older students and there was a limited amount of time to reverse the damage caused by over ten years of politically problematic and academically shallow Nazi education. They also made it clear that the girls hadn’t shown any indication of post-war fascist activities and expressed confusion as to why the local military officer was being so zealous in the matter.²⁹⁹ Minister Wolf directly asserted his authority in this matter, asserting that final judgments about the removal of students from schools fell under the authority of the ministry and not the military occupation authorities. He later determined that all of the girls fell under an amnesty law

²⁹⁸ “Brief an den Herrn Oberbürgermeister der Stadt Apolda von Giesberts, Landesamt für Volksbildung” LT-MfV, Nr. 51, THStAW

²⁹⁹ “Der Schulausschuß der Friedrich-Engels-Schule Altenburg an den Herrn Minister für Erziehung und Volksbildung,” 3.4.1947, LT-MfV, Nr. 51, THStAW

designed specifically to protect minors from prosecution for Nazi-era activities. He also used his influence to prevent even a temporary suspension while the matter was adjudicated, ensuring that they had no needless delay or break in their ongoing education.³⁰⁰

At times the transgressions that citizens complained about were directed against members of the Ministry of Education itself. In the Summer of 1947 the recently appointed minister Dr. Marie Torhorst received complaints from local CDU officials about an inspector dispatched by the Ministry to a church-operated kindergarten. The complaints alleged that the inspector demanded that pictures of biblical events be removed from all areas where students received instruction, and that other religiously affiliated schools had suffered similar experiences. They demanded to know on whose orders the inspector was operating, whether she had the authority to mandate the removals, and whether this represented an official policy.³⁰¹ In this instance Torhorst backed the school inspector while admitting that no specific orders had been given to her to remove religious pictures, symbols, or icons. On this she was acting of her own initiative. Even so, that initiative fell within both the spirit and the letter of the published laws and guidelines as set forth by the occupation government and the Ministry of Education. She further emphasized that due to the new laws regarding schools all kindergartens, both parochial and secular, fell under the jurisdiction of state and as such the Ministry was well within its rights to step in and make changes within church-affiliated schools. These particular changes are noteworthy as these changes were not designed to right a specific Nazi-era wrong but to enact a new policy designed to determine the future shape of Thuringian education.

³⁰⁰ “Der Minister für Volksbildung W. Wolf an den Schulausschuss der Friedrich-Engels-Schule,” 18 April, 1947, LT-MfV, Nr. 51, THStAW

³⁰¹ “Große Anfrage der CDU Landstagfraktion,” 31.7.1947, LT-MfV, Nr. 76, THStAW

Denazification and its immediate results were frequent topics of correspondence as well. In the vast majority of these instances the subjects were complaints about teachers being removed from communities that they had long served. The professional purges mandated by the Allied Control Council were fairly thorough, especially in the early years, and many people were at least temporarily caught up in them who had joined the Nazi Party for professional reasons rather than deep political convictions. Even though many of these men and women would later resume their careers, in the immediate aftermath many Germans were outraged by what they perceived as the unfair persecution of beloved local educators who were no more guilty of specific crimes than anyone else who had lived through Hitler's Reich.

While most of these objections were voiced over individual cases, in some instances they could galvanize communal action. In area around Eisenach in Thuringia, for example, there was a coordinated series of strikes and protests by students in multiple grades, their parents, and concerned members of local political organizations in the opening months of 1947. This sort of direct opposition presented a three-fold challenge for educational administrators: it disrupted day to day operations of the schools, it dissuaded and discouraged new teachers who were frequently the immediate targets of this ire, and it represented a direct challenge to the state and public order that had to be addressed least the occupation authorities do so themselves.³⁰² In the specific case of the disruptions around Eisenach this challenge was made explicit by one newspaper that made pointed reference to how many teachers had only begrudgingly joined the

³⁰² "Das Kreisbildungsamt an das Ministerium für Volksbildung Betr: Neulehrerinsatz in den Schulen der Rhön," 22 March 1947, LT-MfV, Nr. 22, THStAW

“Unity Party’ [*Einheitspartei*] of that time.” Such direct comparison between the NSDAP and the SED did not go unnoticed and uncommented upon in Weimar.³⁰³

Some cases simply concerned interpreting the frequently confusing and sometimes-contradictory orders of the occupation authorities. The early vague, sweepingly general proclamations by the combined Allied Control Council were moderated or interpreted by local military authorities, leading to uneven and at times tragic applications of them. One example of this can be observed in Thuringia in the first year after the war. Early on in the occupation Soviet military authorities issued orders for the confiscation and destruction of any “militaristic literature” and any literature that was “directed against the United Nations.” This order drew the attention of Dr. Hermann Brill, who wrote directly to Minister Walter Wolf at the Ministry for Education on September 25, 1945 for clarification.

In particular, he questioned whether books that were simply of a broadly military subject fell under this order as well. The examples he cited as questionable materials were Caesar’s *Gallic Wars*, Schiller’s *History of the Thirty Years War*, and Moltke’s *History of the Wars of 1870/71*. He was of the opinion that a distinction needed to be drawn between works that were ‘militaristic’ and those that were merely on military subjects. He provided *Peter Moor’s Journey to Southwest Africa* by patriotic novelist Gustav Frenssen as an example of ‘militaristic’ literature that should be subject to the ban while suggesting that various contemporaneous books published by Social Democratic politicians about German colonial policies and the Herero Rebellion should be among those retained.³⁰⁴

³⁰³ “In Abschrift an das Ministerium für Volksbildung, Abschrift aus dem Würzberger Bistumsblatt Nr. 7 16. Feb 1947, “Ein wildgewordner Schulrat,”” 15. March 1947, LT-MfV, Nr. 22, THStAW

³⁰⁴ “Brief an Thür. Landesamt für Volksbildung von Dr. Hermann Brill,” 15.9.45, LT-MfV, Nr. 51, THStAW

The answer he received was typical of the measured responses that normally emanated from the Educational Ministry under Dr. Walter Wolf. He stated his basic agreement with the distinction that Brill had proposed, but indicated that he would soon forward a list of books that must be specifically banned by name as well as clearer guidelines for drawing up such distinctions in the future.³⁰⁵ He acted on his own judgment in supporting the somewhat moderate interpretation of the directives regarding ‘militaristic literature’ while making it clear that the ultimately such situations would have to be resolved by occupation-approved policies rather than *ad hoc* judgments made by individuals in the field.

This exchange is noteworthy for another reason as well: Brill was far from a normal citizen, and he and Minister Wolf had a relationship that went back at least to the Nazi era. Dr. Hermann Brill was a prominent pre-war socialist who had been a highly active member of the Thuringian parliament and - briefly - the national parliament. He was a staunch anti-Nazi who left the SPD over what he felt was a tepid resistance to Hitler, and was eventually imprisoned in the concentration camp at Buchenwald. While a prisoner there he remained politically active and aided in the organization of numerous clandestine resistance groups and committees. It is likely this wartime activity that led him to write directly to Minister Wolf. They were imprisoned together at Buchenwald and were both founding members of the camp’s Popular Front Committee, an underground group designed to coordinate the efforts of various political prisoners in the camp. Brill was the main representative of the prisoners who identified with the SPD as well as the group’s chairman, while Wolf represented the KPD. He was briefly appointed *Regierungspräsident* of Thuringia when the US Army liberated the region but was almost immediately removed from office by the Soviets. He aided in the re-founding of the SPD

³⁰⁵ “Brief an Dr. Brill von W. Wolf,” 17.9.1945, LT-MfV, Nr. 51, THStAW

in Thuringia but very quickly left the region to work for the Americans in Berlin in late 1945. His later political life would be no less remarkable: he had a hand in the drafting of the new Federal Republic's Basic Law and served as a representative in its parliament in the early 50s.

At the time that he wrote to Wolf regarding the Soviet orders to purge the libraries, however, his remarkable career was in a transitional period. He did not write as one government official to another, but as a politically active, highly prominent citizen reaching out to an old colleague and fellow Buchenwald survivor. Personal connections and networks such as these undoubtedly played a role, both formally and informally, in how information about the occupation mandates was transmitted and how administrative intermediaries interpreted and reacted to them. In this instance the prominence of both of the individuals involved makes these connections much easier to trace, however the nature of it is similar to many others that remain obscure to the historical record.

Whether in the east or the west, this kind of pressure from the public was taken seriously. In his dealings with the Americans Minister Stein laid a strong emphasis on the importance of maintaining public support for the general thrust of the reforms that the Allies were attempting to make. He framed the issue of the ongoing delays in introducing mandatory English instruction not only in terms of current capabilities to put together the required classes, but also with regards to maintaining public support. He warned that if quality were sacrificed to meet arbitrary deadlines "The whole school reform would be publicly discredited," with the result that "Anyone who wants to work with us today will begin to have doubts, and some would no longer participate because of the two years lost [to delays]." Stein's strategy was to keep his fellow citizens invested in the ongoing reforms by showing that they were necessary in order to produce a better, stronger post-war educational system. This was especially necessary with regard to

mandatory English instruction, which many viewed with mistrust as intended purely to make the American sector easier to govern rather than to tie it into Western Europe more broadly. Stein warned that should the introduction of mandatory English classes be rushed there was the risk that “It will be said that the American military government is only interested in reducing the overall level of education.”³⁰⁶

Stein made these views absolutely explicit during a joint meeting of the staffs of the Ministry of Education and the E&CR Division to discuss his plans to bring proposed reforms before the public for comment and criticism. He opened by responding to earlier suggestions that the reforms simply be carried through via fiat, something well within the power of the American occupation authorities. Bringing it before the public, he maintained,

is the way in which I foresee the realization of a *German* school reform. . . . There is also another way. Then, however, we don't have a *German* school reform any more; then it is an *American* school reform. . . . If we want to carry the school reform to the grave from the outset, then we should introduce it in the form of commands; then you will find no response with the general population. . . . If we do not implement a school reform that is personally affirmed by the majority of the German educators and population then we will have a school reform that is not earnestly intended and which will perish. And then all of those who disapprove of school reform today will rejoice. And a great hope will be lost once again. . . . I do not know what else to say to the public, when I hear over and over

³⁰⁶ “Abschrift, Besprechung zw. Mr. V.R. DeLong & Minister Dr. E. Stein,” 26. July 1948, Abt. 1178, Nr. 67a, HHStAW

again: “You do everything at the direction of the military government.” “How is that democracy and independent education?”³⁰⁷

Stein’s approach seems to have been to bring the public around to reconstruction more gradually and with longer periods of public comment and involvement, rather than via a single strike that would be packaged as a simple necessity of post-war reorganization.

Educational officials in Thuringia were equally cognizant of the need for direct interaction between the educational administration and the communities that they served. As early as December 1945 Minister Wolf ordered the creation of district-level advisory committees made up of prominent members of the local community. These committees were to include at least one member of each of the four ‘antifascist parties,’ one trade union representative, one representative from the local youth groups, one from the local Women’s Committee, and three parents representing the largest schools. In ordering the organization of these advisory bodies, Wolf noted that “The district education office is not a self-contained bureaucratic authority, but a living part of the democratic administration of the state.”³⁰⁸ These were not just the fleeting concerns of officials operating in the extraordinarily unstable period immediately after the war. Two years later, with the political situation in Thuringia significantly more settled, Wolf’s successor Dr. Marie Torhorst expressed frequent concerns about what “the farmers” thought of the reforms that were being implemented and their perceptions of the staff that were carrying

³⁰⁷ “Auszugsweise Abschrift aus der Niederschrift über die Sitzung vom 29.11.1948 von E&CR Div., OMG Hesse / Kultusministerium,” Abt. 1178, Nr. 67a, HHStAW

³⁰⁸ “Entwurf Betr.: Kriesbildungsausschüsse,” LT-MfV, Nr. 22, THStAW

them out.³⁰⁹ Similar to Wolf's earlier conscious inclusion of representatives from of the public via advisory committees, Torhorst made specific instructions during the preparations for the 1947 Pedagogical Congress that "approximately ten people from public life should take part, except for principals and teachers (mayors, youth and women's representatives, etc.)."³¹⁰

Mediation within the profession

The immediate post-war era was filled with many tensions that had within them the potential for a high degree of friction between various groups, if not explosive confrontation. The trauma of complete government collapse followed by the uncertainties of foreign occupation created space within which previously conflicts could be reignited and renegotiated and new ones settled. For educational administrators this posed a number of challenges and required that they mediate such conflicts within their own ranks. In some instances a degree of confrontation and resolution was required, however in others there was little to gain and much to lose if small scandals and petty differences spiraled out of control and came to the attention of the occupation authorities. By responding to these local disturbances directly and largely preventing them from coming to the attention of the occupation authorities, German administrators were able to ensure that the problems were resolved by people most familiar with the entire context from which they emerged and avoid damaging over-reactions that could result in disrupted classrooms, the loss of

³⁰⁹ Numerous instances of this can be found throughout the correspondence in LT-MfV folios Nr. 76 and 77, THStAW

³¹⁰ "Protokoll über die erweiterte Abteilungsleiterbesprechung am 22. Juli 1947," LT-MfV, Nr. 76. THStAW

badly needed educators and staff, or the loss of much needed community support for their ongoing rebuilding efforts.

One of the key areas that needed constant tending were the bruised professional egos and inter-personnel tensions that resulted from flattening what had previously been a very hierarchical school system. In the Imperial- and Weimar-era school structures within which most teachers and virtually all of the administrators had been acculturated, primary and secondary education were considered two different professional worlds. The professional certifications required for each were significantly different, as were the levels of education expected of an instructor.³¹¹ Teachers at a primary school were only expected to attend a non-university teaching academy for their professional training, while those in the secondary schools were required to have university degrees. University-trained educators who had a few decades of classroom experience and some additional training were the usual candidates for promotion to administrative positions, creating a deep professional divide based on education and credentials. This was exacerbated by the fact that university training required an *Abitur*, while entrance to a teaching academy did not. This created an additional class and economic facet to the professional divide, one created by the very tiered nature of the educational system that the reforms were attempting to eradicate.

There was a social and cultural basis for this division as well. The positions that required university training were recognized by the state as civil servants, or *Beamte*, a position that traditionally carried a degree of social cachet and respectability within German society. Primary school teachers lacked this recognition. The neohumanistic ideal of self-cultivation or *Bildung*

³¹¹ For an excellent overview of the structure of the schools of this period see Marjorie Lamberti, *State, Society, and the Elementary School in Imperial Germany*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989)

lent an additional edge to this differentiation as well. Usually translated as either “cultivation” or “education,” *Bildung* referred to both the process and the final result of intellectual development. Juxtaposed against the more utilitarian concept of practical instruction, or *Erziehung*, and the frivolity of aristocratic dilettantism, *Bildung* provided grounds on which professionals and civil servants could lay claim to a measure of social prestige above the traditional trades and commercial classes. A university-trained teacher at a secondary school would be considered a *gebildete Beamte*; a primary school teacher trained at a teacher’s academy would not. While *Erziehung* implies cognitive training, *Bildung* bore with it additional implications of social station that were vital for those who would use education as a means for social mobility - either for themselves, or to encourage it in others.³¹²

This could be problematic in a number of ways. In the East, where education was undergoing a more thorough restructuring into a unified system than the more limited reforms being undertaken in the West, there was the subsequent need to constantly remind educators that previously important professional distinctions were not nearly as important. An appointment of a highly-skilled individual to oversee a primary school need not be read as a professional slight, for example. Meanwhile in the West the more limited integration meant that regardless of what the official policy might have been, many traditional professional distinctions remained in place, but the reforms that managed to be successfully enacted meant that university and teaching academy trained educators needed to work much more closely together than they had previously.

³¹² For an in-depth examination of the exact meaning of *Bildung*, see George Mosse’s essay “The Meaning of *Bildung* – A Concept in Universality” in *Disseminating German Tradition: The Thyssen Lectures*, Dan Diner and Moshe Zimmerman, eds., (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2009), p. 15-27. For a much older, but still relevant, examination of its Enlightenment origins see Hans Weil, *Die Entstehung des deutschen Bildungsprinzip* (Bonn, 1930).

The friction resulting between these two groups was significant and an ongoing source of petty disputes and complaints. In one typical instance in late 1949 in Hesse, a routine meeting over relatively minor curricular adjustments for the coming school year degenerated into a heated argument between two committee members. One held a doctorate and represented the various *Gymnasia* in the district, while the other was named only with the title of “Lehrer” and represented the *Volksschulen*. The argument revolved around the virtues of traditional lecture based instruction as opposed to a more flexible lesson plan that allowed teachers to approach each student individually and develop instruction that originated “from the child out.” The tellingly reformist phrasing itself harkened back to the pedagogical debates of the late Imperial era and the argument, which quickly spread to include the rest of the committee, broke down over clearly professional lines. Disturbances such as this posed a direct challenge to the ongoing efforts to unify the school system. Reformers were faced with the prospect of not only merging numerous previously divergent educational tracks, but also bringing together two previously antagonistic professional groups in order to make it happen.³¹³

As challenging as these professional animosities could be, they were not nearly as fraught as the realities of denunciation and allegations of political sabotage under a military government. In both the Soviet and Western Occupation Zones the military authorities were quite sensitive to the dangers, real or imagined, of a post-Nazi resistance movement. Allied authorities were keenly vigilant against the threat of any kind of so-called ‘Werewolf’ activities, a term derived from the apocalyptic final exhortations of Nazi leaders to continue the fight after the military collapse via guerilla warfare.

³¹³ Abt. 504, Nr. 383 - Besetzung von Schulratsstellen Band 1, HHStAW

Spurred by a highly critical and pessimistic wartime analysis of Nazi education and its effects on a generation of schoolchildren, Allied occupation authorities paid special attention to the potential threat posed by the schools themselves. Instructional films for American soldiers on occupation duties exhorted them to avoid fraternization with Germans, especially children. One such film, *Your Job in Germany*, called German youth the “most dangerous” group, citing an upbringing that “poisoned their minds” and named them “[products] of the worst educational crime in the history of the world.” The fruits of this educational malpractice were claimed to “believe they were born to be masters and that we are inferiors, designed to be their slaves,” and ominously concluded that, “They may deny it now, but they believe it and will try to prove it again.”³¹⁴ Soviet military authorities were no less concerned with the threat represented by deeply indoctrinated school aged children and the opportunities that the flotsam and jetsam of war provided for either scattered mischief or organized insurrection.

This background of fear and mistrust coupled with a base assumption that some form of resistance was not only possible but also likely heightened the danger of overreaction on to any infractions or challenges to military rule. The recent experiences of the occupied Germans further complicated this explosive situation. Over the course of twelve years of totalitarian rule they had learned hard lessons about the utility of political denunciation as a tool for professional advancement and an outlet for petty personal grievances.³¹⁵ As a result, administrators had to

³¹⁴ *Your Job in Germany*, Film, directed by Frank Capra, (Washington, DC: United States War Department, 1945)

³¹⁵ For an in-depth look at the social aspects of political denunciation see Robert Gellately *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany, 1933-1945* (London: Oxford University Press, 2001). Although it deals specifically with denunciation under National Socialism many of its insights pertain to political denunciation as a general phenomenon. Furthermore, the motivations behind and expected results from similar behavior in the immediate post-war era would have likely been the same for men and women who until recently had been living under National Socialism.

not only contend with the damage that could be caused by over-zealous military officials paranoid about the possibility of armed uprisings, but Germans both within the school system and without who were willing to leverage that paranoia to further their own agendas. In this atmosphere administrators played a vital role in defusing these potentially explosive situations in order to both spare innocent victims of denunciations and prevent the widespread disruption to educational reconstruction that further purges and searches for revanchist Nazis could trigger.

The example of Dr. Theodor Frey, an elementary school principal in the Thuringian town of Apolda, illustrates both of these forms of internal tension and the troubles that could arise from them. Dr. Frey was a Baltic German resettled to the area by the German government in the first years of WW2. His actions during the war remain unclear, however at the very least he stayed politically clean enough to pass initial denazification measures. His native fluency in Russian, combined with apparent socialist or communist political affinities, quickly provided him contacts within both the local KPD as well as the Soviet military authorities in the region. He parlayed these connections into employment, first as a translator for the local occupation government and later as the principal of the town's primary school.³¹⁶

His tenure at Apolda was brief and nothing short of a disaster. He fought constantly with his teaching staff over every conceivable matter, ranging from classroom instruction to how to conduct food distribution programs overseen by the school to minor scheduling details. By all accounts he was challenging in the extreme to speak with, a problem that was alternatively blamed on his being personally antagonistic, hard of hearing, and difficult to understand due to

³¹⁶ Unless otherwise noted information on Frey's pre-1946 background is taken from a number of forms, questionnaires, and CVs that he filed later in life with various authorities. See: "Lebenslauf, 8.9.46", "Lebenslauf, 25.4.46," "Fragenbogen" and "Berufstätigkeit - Dr. Frey 19.9.1946" in Personal Akte Nr. 6956 Dr. Theodor Frey, THStAW

his Baltic dialect.³¹⁷ As someone with a doctorate he felt that his assignment to a *Volksschule* was beneath him and frequently wrote directly to the Ministry of Education seeking a better position.³¹⁸ He had significant contacts with the local office of the KPD and made frequent use of them in his attempts to secure a new job.³¹⁹ These requests were constantly rebuffed, with frequent reminders that in the new system there was nothing lesser or demeaning about being associated with the primary schools.³²⁰ This was an annoying but not irreconcilable situation. Such prejudices were still relatively wide-spread and a key component of the ongoing reconstruction process was bringing older educators around to accept that assignments that would have been interpreted as a professional rebuff a few years earlier no longer held such opprobrium.

In the spring of 1946, however, Dr. Frey escalated matters badly. He resorted to alleging that he could no longer continue on at the Apolda Volksschule because it was a nest of

³¹⁷ There is a very large number of letters to this effect in the folio Personal Akten Nr. 6953, Dr. Theodor Frey, THStAW. For a representative sampling see: Max Käbisch, “Betr: Stellungnahme zur Anschuldigung des Schulleiters der Pestalozzi-Schule Apolda vom 8. Juli 1946 Fall: Käbisch, 16.7.46” ; E. Pommernelle, “Brief an das Kreisbildungsamt Weimar Betr: Stellungnahme zur Anschuldigung des Schulleiters Dr. Frey vom 8.7.1946, 16.7.46” ; H. Wölfel, “Brief an das Kreisbildungsamt Weimar Betr: Stellungnahme zur Anschuldigung des Herrn Dr. Frey vom 8.7.1946, 16.7.46” ; Alfred Hall, “Brief an das Kreisbildungsamt Weimar Betr: Stellungnahme zu der Anschuldigung des Herrn Dr. Frey vom 8. Juli 1946, 16.7.46” ; and H. Danzlock, “Brief an das Kreisbildungsamt Weimar Betr: Stellungnahme zur Anschuldigung des Herrn Dr. Frey vom 8.7.1946, 17.7.46”

³¹⁸ Kreisbildungsamt Weimar, “Brief an das Landesamt für Volksbildung Herrn Oberregierungsamt Brumme, 6.11.45,” Personal Akten Nr. 6953 vol. 2, THStAW

³¹⁹ Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands Arbeitgebietsleitung Apolda, “Brief an die Bezirksleitung der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands Weimar, 8.2.1946,” Personal Akten Nr. 6953, THStAW

³²⁰ A. Giesberts, “Brief an den Herrn Oberbürgermeister der Stadt Apolda, 13.12.45,” Ministerium für Volksbildung Nr. 51, THStAW; Walter Wolf, “Brief an Herrn Dr. Phil Theodor Frey, 8.1.46,” LT-MfV, Nr. 51, THStAW

revanchist, fascist agitators who were plotting against both him, personally, and the government as a whole. He formally denounced virtually the entire teaching staff by name, along with a lengthy list of allegations, including very dangerous charges that they were an organized ‘Werewolf’ cell.³²¹ These allegations were not to be taken lightly; given the explosive post-war political atmosphere any one of them, investigated by a individually zealous or politically motivated Soviet officer could have been both personally and professionally disastrous for every person named.

The situation was resolved in the most expeditious manner possible: It was brought to the personal attention of the Minister of Education, Dr. Walter Wolf. After a rapid investigation Dr. Frey was quickly dismissed and one of the men whom he had denounced was promoted to take his place.³²² He was eventually given a new position as a non-academic translator at the Friedrich Schiller University in Jena, at which point he faded into historical obscurity.³²³

Frey’s example highlights the means by which potentially disastrous internal disputes could be quickly resolved such that outside authorities, who may have had other priorities than the smooth functioning of the schools, would not become involved. The invocation of the phrase ‘Werewolf action’ in particular by Fry was very precise and highly incendiary. These were not simply charges of past political affinities, but allegations of ongoing, active resistance to the military occupation in support of the renewal of German fascism. Had the allegations drawn the

³²¹ Theodor Frey, “Brief an das Kreisbildungsamt des Kreises Weimar - Z.H. des Herrn Schulrat Hohnrot, (undated),” Personal Akten Nr. 6953, THStAW

³²² Regierungsrätin Land Weimar, “Brief an Herrn Studienrat Dr. Frey, Apolda, 30.7.46,” Personal Akten Nr. 6953, THStAW

³²³ Einstellungsbescheid, 1.8.46,” Personal Akten Nr. 6953, THStAW; Regierungsrätin Land Weimar, “Brief an Herrn Studienrat Dr. Theodor Frey, 10.8.46,” Personal Akten Nr. 6953, THStAW

attention of local military authorities the subsequent investigation likely would have ruined the professional lives of many involved if only through association. It does not take much creativity to imagine the potential for personal ruin that would have attended them as well. By elevating such a sensitive issue up to the ministerial level as quickly as it was, and dealing with it almost entirely internally, many potentially disruptive political entanglements were avoided. The result was that Frey was correctly identified as the troublesome influence and removed rather than expose the Apolda primary school to the wholesale disruption that the mass censure or replacement of affected teachers would have entailed.

The incident also illustrates the ongoing importance of older tensions within the teaching profession, and the difficulties experienced by administrators who were attempting to diffuse them to more efficiently bring about the new order. In the case of Dr. Frey it was his ongoing insistence that he be placed somewhere other than the *Volksschule*. Despite the ongoing reform efforts and transitions to more egalitarian forms of education that were taking place across Germany, and the noticeably more radical transition to the *Einheitsschule* that was taking place in the Soviet Zone, Dr. Frey continued to assume that a position as principal of a primary school was beneath someone of his education. In the older system he would have been correct. In it education and class were tightly bound up and a stark professional distinction was made between the university-educated *gebildete Beamte* at the higher schools and the far less prestigious *Lehrerseminar*-educated teachers at the primary schools.

Conclusion

The work of educational administrators as institutional intermediaries between the various groups participating in and concerned with the rebuilding of German education was vital, not only to their own project but to the broader functioning of German society under military occupation. They provided an accessible touchstone across which communication could happen across cultural, political, and professional voids. Not all of this, of course, was strictly unique to the ranks of educational administrators. Administrative professionals in other fields undoubtedly played similar roles across Germany as they sought to rebuild the areas of civil society and government that lay within their own professional purview.

The specific example of educational administrators is, however, remarkable in the level of public interest generated by their efforts, the depth of importance ascribed by the occupation authorities to the reforms that they were tasked with, and the relative weakness of the branches of occupation government that they were partnered with. The resulting mixture of public interest and pressure with uneven military oversight resulted in significant opportunities to create a specifically German reconstruction effort; one that in many ways was guided more by the individual beliefs and priorities of the administrators themselves than the public that they served. This is itself part of the nature of intermediary positions: the intermediary can express a surprising amount of agency based on how they promote or hinder different activities at different times.

It is this agency that helped to magnify the differences between what would become East German and West German education, as one set of administrators chose to fight a rear guard

action against many supposedly inevitable reforms while another embraced them and pushed them through to create an almost completely new school system.

In the areas under Soviet control the 'costs' of earning the cooperation of these administrators were largely born by the German public and the educational system that was being reformed. The educational administrators in the SBZ tended to be pre-war socialists and communists who were far more open to broad, sweeping reforms of German education than their western counterparts. This was partially due to private histories that were more likely to include critical views of pre-Nazi educational structures, if not significant professional difficulties. These were not recalcitrant reformers brought only reluctantly to remodeling German education, but believers in its necessity who could be counted on to quash local opposition if necessary.

In the areas under American control, however, the administrators that the US Army was working with were significantly less eager to embrace deep, systematic change in German education. While they certainly acknowledged that some reforms had to be made in light of the disasters of National Socialism, they were far more likely to have had more positive experiences of older German educational traditions and were understandably less enthusiastic about abandoning them wholesale. Rather than aiding the Americans in winning over local populations to the reforms that they wanted to make, they were more likely to stall, support local resistance to unpopular measures, and attempt to salvage something of the previous system.

CHAPTER 6: PERSONNEL IS POLICY - THE AGENCY OF ADMINISTRATION

In politics power, not administration, is decisive; but, unless tyranny is to hold the whip hand, all questions of culture and education must be matters of administration as well as of power.

- Werner Richter, former undersecretary
in the Prussian Ministry of Education,
1945³²⁴

A public office is not a job, it is an opportunity to do something for the public.

-Franklin Knight Lane, American politician,
1902³²⁵

It is deceptively easy to underestimate the role that Germans played in the post-war reconstruction project. The immediate result of the war was a complete collapse of Germany as a political entity and the imposition of military rule by their wartime adversaries, a state of affairs that did not lend itself well to domestic political agency. The relaxation of the earliest,

³²⁴ Werner Richter, *Re-Educating Germany*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press): xix

³²⁵ Franklin Knight Lane, *The Letters of Franklin K. Lane: Personal and Political*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1922): 38

most heavy-handed forms of military rule and gradual restoration of civilian government hardly alleviated this, taking place as they did against the backdrop of the escalating political tensions between the Soviets and Western Allies that eventually culminated in Cold War. This was accompanied by the adaptation of a two state solution for the question of post-war German nationhood, a solution that inextricably linked German foreign and domestic politics with the policies and priorities of NATO and the Warsaw Pact for decades to come. While educational policies were not as heavily moderated under occupation as foreign or economic issues, many of the key agendas were set by the local occupation authorities and influenced by their policies and priorities. The idea of renewing religious education in public schools was a complete non-starter under the Soviets, for example, while the Americans were far more amenable to it.

Nonetheless there existed space within the occupation system for initiative and agency on the part of the occupied. The ultimate direction that German domestic policy took may have been dictated by the needs and priorities of the members of the Allied Control Council, but they were in large part dependent on individual Germans to implement it. German educational administrators were necessary for the smooth functioning of the educational system and as such could not readily be replaced by foreign officers, assuming the occupation forces had either the inclination or the resources to do so. As members of a German civil administration, the intermediary position that they held between the occupation forces and the general population not only allowed them to function as a bridge for communications between these groups, but as a gatekeeper as well. There was therefore a significant amount of power and agency in functioning as an intermediary, but not an unlimited amount. Generally speaking they did not set the policies and goals for educational reconstruction, but German educational administrators could use that agency to shape and nuance the policies that they were tasked with overseeing.

The way that they chose to shape and direct those policies was determined by what can be broadly categorized as three sets of general loyalties that they had above and beyond their responsibilities or even loyalties to the occupation forces and their priorities. These were: to their personal beliefs and convictions, to political parties with which they were affiliated, and to the needs and wishes of their fellow Germans. Like most attempts to categorize motivations these are imprecise and overlapping categories, but broadly speaking they describe many of the responsibilities that influenced these men and women.

The occupation administrations were not blind to the agency inherent in these positions and the potential consequences of giving the Germans some degree of power over their own fate. There was little alternative, short of making the choice to micromanage every level of the educational system. This option would have been infeasible at best and would have done little to engender enthusiasm within the local population for the major reforms that they viewed as necessary. Some degree of decision making autonomy was unavoidable, and even desired by the occupation forces. At a meeting between the Hessian Minister of Education Erwin Stein and American Deputy Director of the US Army Education & Cultural Relations Division in Hesse Vaughn R. DeLong, DeLong noted that “Educators and teachers should get accustomed to the fact that they can determine their own details on a general outline which has been agreed upon by everybody. Policies should not define too many details, as the teacher should teach upon his own, individual decision and on the individuality which population and district require.”³²⁶

This was especially true given that in both the east and the west there were attempts to convey at least the impression of renewed democratic governance, with multiple political parties pressing issues at local assemblies. This arrangement was not purely negative from the point of

³²⁶ “Minister Stein / Mr. DeLong Meeting on Monday 1 Nov 1948,” Abt. 1178, Nr. 67a, HHStAW

view of the occupation authorities. By fostering the development of a native civil administration and giving it some degree of real power it legitimated the government in the eyes of the German population in a manner that a purely foreign regime grounded in the physical might of a military occupation would find difficult.

One reform that the occupation forces were steadfast on was that educational administration be ‘democratic’ in nature, although precise understandings of that term differed. A letter from the E&RA Division of OMG-H to the Hessian Ministry of Culture concerning debates over proposed school reform legislation made the importance of this to the American forces explicitly clear. The letter began very bluntly, stating, “Democratic school administration is basic for a democratic school system. All school reform is empty and meaningless unless the administration itself is democratic. Such administration must occur on all levels.³²⁷” How, exactly, ‘democratic’ was to be understood was never defined. From context, and their constantly expressed fears of autocratic rule and despotic tendencies at any level of German government, it seems that they meant it to reflect a general dispersal of authority and the mirroring of democratic governmental structures. For the western allies it also implied political democracy and the construction of a system within which all participants had a voice in how it was run, either directly or through the election of representatives.

For the Soviets and German communists, on the other hand, ‘democratic’ wasn’t directly associated with a specific type of government but with a system that was designed for the benefit of the majority of its users. In this it stood in direct contrast not only to the obviously and egregiously exploitive schools of Nazi Germany, but also to German education as it had existed

³²⁷ “To: Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Attention: Minister Stein, Subject: Administrative Procedure,” 3. November 1947, Abt 1178, Nr. 181, HHStAW; “Office of Military Government for Hesse E&RA Division An: Kultusministerium z. Hd Herrn Minister Dr. Stein, Betr.: Verwaltung (Verwaltung-Verfahren),” Abt 1178, Nr. 181, HHStAW

under the Weimar Republic and the Kaiserreich. This is the distinction Hans Siebert made in 1950 when he described the changes of the immediate post-war period using a distinctly socialist vocabulary: “Our schools transformed themselves [with these democratic reforms] from an instrument for exploiting and dumbing down our children in the monopoly-capitalist economy into a tool of free, creative work and the improvement of the general educational level of our children in the new democratic order.³²⁸” In Siebert’s view the schools were democratic specifically because they rejected reproducing the inequalities of previous eras in favor of presenting equal opportunities for all children. Rather than focus on a definition of democratic that privileged a specific electoral methodology or government organization, the Soviets and their allies in the east articulated one that in theory emphasized equality for all. It is easy with the benefit of half a century of hindsight to be cynical about how the concept of ‘democracy’ was used and at times abused by various Eastern European single party dictatorships during the Cold War. This does not, however, mean that we must necessarily be equally skeptical of the motivations of the idealists and reformers who first adopted that language in the years after World War 2.

The notion of democratic government or democratic renewal also incorporated a sense of political aloofness that most Germans would have already been familiar with. One communication between E&RA and the Ministry of Culture emphasized that “Democratic procedure means also that extraneous factors such as political party and religious confession and other factors not of a professional nature should not enter into the selection or dismissal of

³²⁸ Hans Siebert, “Die Aufgaben der deutschen demokratischen Schule im Fünfjahrplan” 17.11.1950, *Die Neue Schule* Nr. 50, Nachlass Siebert, Folio 790, BBF-DIPF

employees.³²⁹ Similarly, the post-war loyalty oath administered to newly hired staff within the educational ministry required that they swear to serve “impartially” [*unparteiisch*] and in the “spirit of constructing a democratic state.³³⁰” What they were describing wasn’t just a necessary impartiality in laying the groundwork for a politically democratic government, but an ideal of disinterestedness in politics on both professional and administrative grounds.

This emphasis echoes the values of an earlier generation of German educational administrators. Before the political disruptions of the late Weimar era the ideal of the politically aloof civil servant held sway. In its idealized form these were people who, while not necessarily disinterested personally, professionally stayed above political disagreements and squabbles in order to best serve the interests of the state while retaining the freedom to make general decisions on their own. Inextricably linked to their identities as *Beamte*, this ideal encouraged all civil servants to behave politically such that they could “look after all levels of the population in an equally just manner.”³³¹ This model of an impartial civil service had been taken for granted by generations of German administrators and, while degraded by the actions of many under Nazi governance, remained a powerful ideal.

A return to this approach would help avoid an overly politicized teaching corps disrupting the classroom with contemporary political controversies, as well as buffer the democratic state against the potential abuse of the classroom as a tool for indoctrination by a

³²⁹ “To: Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Attention: Minister Stein, Subject: Administrative Procedure,” 3. November 1947, Abt 1178, Nr. 181, HHStAW; “Office of Military Government for Hesse E&RA Division An: Kultusministerium z. Hd Herrn Minister Dr. Stein, Betr.: Verwaltung (Verwaltung-Verfahren),” Abt 1178, Nr. 181, HHStAW

³³⁰ “Loyalty Oath,” Abt. 650/B, Nr. 2896 - Personal akten - Georg Burkhardt”

³³¹ Wilhelm Bolle, “Der Beamte als Treuhändler der Allgemeinheit,” *Deutsches Philologen-Blatt*, April 6, 1927: 211

future party-in-power, as it was under the Nazis.³³² For the men who came of age professionally within the German Civil Service when this was presented as a normative ideal, it continued to be an alluring aspiration. In 1948, in the middle of a politicized sexual scandal involving a school inspector near Kassel that had implications for an upcoming state election, the Hessian Minister of Education and Culture Erwin Stein wrote to the head of the state government that “an educational and cultural policy that is in the interest of the whole nation and not just a segment of the population or a party cannot be operated in this way. It seems necessary to me - and I must point to this time and time again - that the professional and political suitability must take priority over party considerations.³³³” The distinction being drawn between political suitability and party considerations must be considered in the context of denazification. The need to discriminate between applicants based on past political activity could not be escaped, but it was also undesirable to make contemporary political activity a primary concern in making staffing decisions. Stein himself was a prominent member of the CDU, and the head of government in Kassel that he was writing to was a fellow party member as well. That Minister Stein chose to remind him of the necessity of maintaining professional discipline even at the risk of politically inconveniencing the party to which they both belonged indicates how desirable it was to maintain some level of professional impartiality as civil servants.

³³² For more on the ideal of political neutrality within the German civil service, see Franz Hamburger, *Lehrer Zwischen Kaiser und Führer: Der Deutsche Philologenverband in der Weimarer Republik: Eine Untersuchung zur Sozialgeschichte der Lehrerorganisationen*, (Heidelberg: Ruprecht-Karl-Universität, 1974): 88-92; Karl Dietrich Bracher, *Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik: Eine Studie zum Problem des Machtverfalls in der Demokratie*, (Villingen: Ring-Verlag, 1955): 157-172; and Marjorie Lamberti, *The Politics of Education: Teachers and school reform in Weimar Germany*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002): 204-206.

³³³ “Minister Stein an Herrn Regierungspräsident Dr. Hoch,” 28. June 1948, Abt. 1178 Nr. 154 HHStAW

Personal Views

Like most ideals, this conception of bureaucratic aloofness was more valuable as a goal to be striven towards than a rigidly upheld virtue to be maintained. In practice few post-war educational administrators were capable of fully separating their convictions, ambitions, and hopes from their professional duties at all times. This would be true under the most stable and ideal of circumstances, much less amid the numerous challenges and opportunities posed by the conditions in occupied Germany. While it is difficult to answer the question of what inner, personal convictions motivated someone in the pursuit of their duties, it is not impossibly so. Some of the men and women who were put into these positions wrote about their views of recent German history, the potential for reconstruction, and the moral implications of reestablishing self-governance for a country that had so recently transgressed every imaginable civilized norm. It is logical to presume that these personal convictions were incorporated at some level into their day-to-day duties, and perhaps give some indication of the underlying attitudes and beliefs that governed the way they helped shape educational policy.

In the East, Karl Trinks was a prominent pre-war pedagogue and noted Social Democrat who was fired in 1933 for his political views during the National Socialist *Gleichschaltung*. After the war he was influential in restructuring the professional training of educators in the Soviet Zone and wrote prolifically on what the pedagogical goals of a renewed postwar Germany should be. He blamed pre-Nazi educational and political traditions for enabling the rise of the NSDAP. In his eyes decades of politicized educational policy had rendered them hopelessly intertwined and significantly contributed to generation after generation of Germans embracing militarism and undemocratic ideals. “Thus trod the German people through its two educational

institutions - the school and the barracks - and down the straight path to destruction,” he wrote. “The youth literally led a ‘dangerous’ life and ended on the bloody fields of the wars. After all, in the schools they had learned *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*. . .³³⁴” A firm Marxist, he maintained that any new law governing schools “should be a democratic one, whereby the notion of democracy will be ascribed its original meaning as it was given to you by our great fathers Marx and Engels: Dominance of the people, of the workers, of the active portion of the population. In educational efforts and endeavors the ultimate goal is also the classless society, a social body without any privileged other than those who produce the most, the most educationally ambitious (*Bildungswillen*), and the most talented.”³³⁵ Despite bearing more than a passing resemblance to the sort of language that would become commonplace in coming decades within the SED’s DDR, this was not a simple political or economic application of Marxist theory or the policy of any single political party but a broadly Marxist understanding of history and human nature, and one with which he hoped to guide Germany out of a dark past and into a better future.

In the spirit of this new classless society that Trinks wished to construct there should also be a new German, and “The new German should peace-loving, civil, have a good will, be understanding of other peoples, and bring a readiness for peaceful joint work.”³³⁶ He did not write simply of the re-education of a nation or the rehabilitation of older traditions that a post-National Socialist Germany could rightfully be proud of, but the fresh foundation of a

³³⁴ Karl Trinks “Schulreform,” 1946, Nachlass Trinks, Folio 105, BBF-DIPF

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

³³⁶ *Ibid.*

completely new society, nation, and individual free from all of the baggage of a deeply problematic educational culture and history.³³⁷

In this he was in agreement with Hans Siebert, a pre-war communist teacher who emigrated to England in 1936 and was active in western expatriate circles before returning to the Soviet Zone after the war. Siebert held that the issue of German culpability for the crimes of the Third Reich could not be reduced to the question of Nazis and anti-Nazis, those who stood with the regime or against it. He claimed that the great difference between Germany and other nations of Western Europe before the war was that the “middle bulk” of the population had been systematically trained “to believe in slogans which promise national grandeur at the cost of other nations,” and laid the blame solely at the feet of a German educational system that “since Bismarck . . . has gradually and systematically weakened whatever other more European, liberal, democratic traditions may have existed before that time.”³³⁸ In essence, he believed that the Germany of Fichte, Hegel, Goethe, and Humboldt was an unrecoverable past destroyed by what he saw as the disastrous legacies of 1870 and half a century of Prussian rule and administration dedicated to consolidating Hohenzollern dominance and establishing a military state capable of pursuing the aggressive foreign policies of its political elites.

In his view Germany had indeed walked a ‘special path’ to the disastrous policies of the Third Reich, but it was one that was not rooted in the mists of antiquity or in any particular character flaw unique to the Germans as a people. Instead he traced its origins to a specific mid-19th century political disaster and ruinous policies that had taken half a century to reach full fruition. If anything this was a relatively optimistic reading of German history for its time,

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

³³⁸ “Broadcast to the German Youth and its Educators,” Nachlass Siebert, Folio 11, BBF-DIPF

because it contained within it a logical basis for repairing or curing whatever defect one believed led to the rise of National Socialism. At a moment when many were arguing that there was some kind of inherent flaw or defect in the German national character that made the very existence of German culture or nation problematic, Siebert was pointing to specific political and administrative explanations. If these were the causes of Europe's tragic early 20th century then it stood to reason that political and bureaucratic processes could reverse them as well. If Bismark's educational system had laid the groundwork for the emergence of a Hitler, then perhaps a self-consciously anti-fascist successor could prevent the advent of another dictator.

In Hesse, Erwin Stein also held the firm conviction that the roots of recent German history lay beyond the immediate political crises of the interwar years. Like his contemporaries under Soviet occupation he also contemplated the recent history of his countrymen, its causes, and how best to move forward in the future. For him the answer was a more spiritual renewal. A noted post-war CDU politician and eventual Minister of Culture in Hesse, he had been forced from public life during the war because of his wife's Jewish ancestry. Unlike many others he did not see German culture as irreparably tainted by the years of National Socialism. He called for a moderate approach that both recognized the need for fundamental reform but did not seek a complete break with the past for its own sake. He recommended the combination of the best that pre-war Germany had to offer with an intelligent reform of the inner weaknesses that contributed to its debasement under Hitler. "Your way is not that of the restoration or the revolution. Your way lies in the middle, in the joining of the uncorrupted old with the good new."³³⁹

A staunch Catholic, Stein identified the deficiencies that had led to the depravity of the Nazi regime as a core weakness in the modern, Western way of life, a spiritual emptiness that

³³⁹ "Über die Kulturpolitik der CDU," Abt. 1178, Nr. 191, HHStAW HHStAW Abt. 1178

left citizens open to demagoguery and the appeal of secular savior figures in times of political or economic crisis. While Germany had fallen most spectacularly as a result, these were not forces or flaws that were unique to it or which it alone could have given way to. In this he was of a very different mind than most of the foreign occupation officials. While the occupiers tended to focus on what they saw as inherently German flaws and failures, Stein was constructing a narrative in which Germany fell victim to more general influences that could have plagued any modern industrial nation.

Unlike the most radical reformers he saw much that was positive in older, specifically German traditions and emphasized the role that Christianity played in that heritage. He wrote that “all that is good and great in German history comes from the ethos of Christian humanism.”³⁴⁰ This was not without political consequences. First and foremost his emphasis upon Christian humanism fell directly in line with the CDU at this time, which is unsurprising given how politically active he was with it. Stein also maintained that it was the basis of a deep cultural connection to the Western Allies, a common religious and moral tradition upon which the foundations of long-lasting political cooperation and stability could be built. “This is also the ethos that internally binds all the peoples of Western culture, among which I also count America. It alone will be able to carry the future of the democratic world.”³⁴¹ This notion of shared values of the *Abendland* stands in implicit contrast to the presumably atheistic, eastern politics of the Soviets.

For Stein, however, the answer to the specific spiritual and moral failings that led Germany down its disastrous path was not a religious revival, but ultimately an educational one.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Much like the American educators that he worked with, Stein was also a strong believer in the social engineering potential of a national educational system, and felt that it would play a key role in any true denazification of society. Despite his professional predispositions he also recognized that such a system was limited in the scope of its influence. The much-acclaimed Imperial German educational system had, after all, produced the generations that voted the Nazis into office, the engineers that designed the gas chambers, and the officers who commanded Hitler's armies. Unlike Trinks he did not find that education at fault for those later injustices, but lamented that it had fallen so pathetically short of preventing or ameliorating them. "Our old educational system and its so finely developed institutions could not render our people immune to the poison of the militaristic and nationalistic craze [*Ungeist*]. Our schools did not arouse sufficient defenses against the political radicalisms of the left and the right."³⁴²

Through reforming the pre-war school system to extend a quality education to everyone, regardless of social or economic standing, society as a whole could be uplifted and improved while still retaining the best of what remained after Hitler. "In this case, the structure of the education and training system must be determined by the requirements that the cultural and economic situation of our people demand. This means providing a comprehensive educational system for all youth based on the democratic principle: "equal educational opportunities for all."³⁴³ In contrast to more radical proposals, he did not advocate creating an entirely new system, but reforming the old, multi-tracked and -tiered system of the Empire and Weimar Republic to remove the structural inequalities while retaining the basic system that Germans citizens were familiar with and trusted.

³⁴² "CDU Hessisches Landessekretariat Frankfurt am Main an Herrn Kultus Minister Dr. Stein," 4.12.47, Abt. 1178, Nr. 191, HHStAW

³⁴³ "Über die Kulturpolitik der CDU," Abt. 1178, Nr. 191, HHStAW HHStAW Abt. 1178

In all these cases there was an emphasis on the need for some kind of national renewal following the decades of Nazi leadership. However uneven in the specifics, the common mission was to aid in the rebirth of not only the German state, but of the German people in a new and better form that runs throughout. While it would be unwise to lay too much emphasis upon this sort of inner, personal conviction and the role that it played in shaping policy and administrative direction during the post-war restructuring and rebuilding of the educational system, it also should not be completely ignored. It should be noted, for example, that throughout his tenure in office Stein maintained contact with religiously affiliated youth groups, was in favor of retaining some level of religious education in the public school system, and was politically affiliated with the CDU. Likewise both Trinks and Siebert settled in the Soviet Zone after the war and devoted themselves to an educational program that included the full remodeling of the German system as an *Einheitsschule*. While none of these were necessarily due to personal convictions regarding the root of Germany's recent failings they do help to place them in context. The same can also be said of the more tangible political connections that they and their colleagues made within their communities during the occupation period.

Responsibilities and loyalties to political parties

There is, of course, a broad distance between a person's personal philosophy and the actual political measures that he advocate and support. This gap is often the result of simple pragmatism; an individual working alone and answerable only to his own conscience can only do so much, while many working in concert can achieve much more. In order to obtain that unity, personal goals sometimes need to be sacrificed in order to achieve the larger results that the

group can compromise on and agree to pursue. This is the simple logic of party politics. The men and women in charge of educational reconstruction in Germany used the power inherent in their administrative posts to support the political parties to which they belonged, both through advancing the interests of those parties and by actively blocking those of competing parties.

The post-war restructuring that took place in most aspects of German political life affected the political landscape as well. The CDU and its Bavarian sister party the CSU were founded in 1945 under new party programs. They essentially replaced the defunct Center Party and sought to be an inter-confessional party that could use a common Christian tradition to bridge the political divides between working and capital-holding classes that they saw as leading to the political chaos of the late Weimar Republic.³⁴⁴ The 1945 Berlin Proclamation that marked the establishment of the new party also called for educational reform, albeit in a fairly general, vague sense. It demanded the protection of religious instruction, the end of all racial education, immediate action to undo the damage done by Nazi indoctrination, and a humanistic emphasis in education, emphasizing the connections between Germans and the rest of humanity in order to lay the groundwork for the moral renewal of the German people.³⁴⁵ As a new party they had no special institutional or historical affinity towards the educational structures that had existed under the Kaiserreich or Weimar Republic and were fairly open to reform, although some of their older members who were political refugees from the defunct Center Party would have had lingering loyalties and personal nostalgia for them. They were, for example, largely supportive of

³⁴⁴ Rudolf Uertz, "Von den Gründungsaufufen 1945 bis zu den Grundsatzprogrammen 1978 und 1994. Zur Programmgeschichte der CDU," *Brücke in eine Neue Zeit. 60 Jahre CDU*, Günter Buchstab, ed., (Freiburg: Herder-Verlag, 2005): 94-138

³⁴⁵ "Gründungsaufuf, Berlin 1945." Hosted online as a .PDF file by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. Accessed December 15, 2014.
http://www.kas.de/upload/ACDP/CDU/Programme_Beschluesse/1945_Gruendungsaufuf-Berlin.pdf.

reforming German education to allow students to change which track they were on later in life and of breaking down traditional professional hierarchies and distinctions between educators at different levels.³⁴⁶

This stands in contrast to the SPD, which continued to operate under its 1925 Heidelberger Program until the end of the 1950s. Officially, this limited its educational demands to the educational reform packages that it had championed before the war. These were a general disavowal of the structural inequalities in the German educational system, a call for reform to offer the same opportunities for all, the complete separation of church and state in all educational matters, equal attention to the development of educational institutions of all levels, unified teaching instruction for teachers of all institutions, and “co-education of both sexes by both sexes.”³⁴⁷ Although this was a somewhat dated program many of the reforms that were called for were broadly similar to those that had been announced by the Allied Control Commission, and there is no indication that the SPD’s supporters and members were opposed to any of the inescapable post-war measures, such as denazification. This issue is further complicated due to the way in which the SPD in the Soviet zone was incorporated into the SED, while in the Western zones it remained an independent entity.

In marked contrast to the relative political stagnation of the SPD after Hitler’s rise to power, the KPD continued to refine its political stance during and after the takeover, from exile abroad during the war, and immediately following Germany’s surrender. As early as 1930 the KPD’s Central Committee issued a “Program clarification for the national and social liberation

³⁴⁶ “Der Minister für Kultus und Unterricht an die Militärregierung abtlg. Erziehung,” 31. March 1947, Abt 1178, Nr. 191, HHStAW HHStAW

³⁴⁷ “Heidelberger Programm - 1925” in Wolf-Dieter Narr, *CDU-SPD: Programm und Praxis seit 1945*, (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1966)

of the German people,” and by 1935 it was operating from exile in Moscow where it published the so-called “Brussels Manifesto.” Understandably all of these suggestions focused on the immediate need of addressing the ongoing political and humanitarian crisis within Germany.³⁴⁸ The first major post-Nazi educational policy articulated by the KPD came in the “Declaration of the Central Committee of the KPD of 11. June 1945.” Among other important post-war issues, it called for:

Cleaning the entire educational system of fascist and reactionary garbage. The support of a truthful, democratic, progressive, and free spirit in all schools and educational establishments. The systematic clarification of the barbaric nature of Nazi racial theory, of the mendacity of the “Doctrine of Living Space,” of the catastrophic consequences of Hitler’s policies for the German people. The freedom of scholarly research and artistic design.³⁴⁹

Meanwhile, the SED, as a wholly new political party, had both the freedom to articulate an independent policy without reference to what had come before as well as the necessity to stake out an explicit educational vision. It did this in the 1946 “Principles and Objectives of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany.” It called for a wholesale reform of the entire educational system and the foundation of an *Einheitsschule* where students could be educated in the “spirit of

³⁴⁸ *Revolutionäre deutsche Parteiprogramme: vom Kommunistischen Manifest zum Programm des Sozialismus*, Lothar Berthold and Ernst Diehl, eds., (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1967): 119-190

³⁴⁹ “Aufruf des ZK der KPD vom 11. Juni 1945,” in *Revolutionäre deutsche Parteiprogramme*: 197

a progressive democracy and of friendship with other peoples and an intrinsic humanity.³⁵⁰ It also demanded a full separation of the church from state and schools as well as a general cultural renewal of Germany.

While it was not a political party or movement in its own right, the work and goals of the Popular Front Committee in Buchenwald also bear mention. A large number of the inmates at the Buchenwald concentration camp were political prisoners, or those from other prisoner categories who were politically sensitive. One of the unplanned side effects of concentrating so many active opponents of national socialism in one place was that they began to clandestinely organize politically before the war ended. They formed organizations along pre-war party lines and by 1944 had succeeded in forming a Popular Front Committee that planned, among other things, for the initial steps to be taken to reestablish a non-Nazi German government after the war.³⁵¹ This was especially important for Thuringia, as Buchenwald was located in the hills outside of Weimar and many of these politically active inmates formed the core of the Thuringian state government immediately after liberation. Walter Wolf, for example, was a Communist Party representative on the Popular Front Committee and the first Minister of Education in post-war Thuringia. The other KPD representative, Johannes Brumme, would go on to serve under him within the Education ministry in the first years after the war. Hermann Brill was one of the SPD representatives - and chairman - of the committee and briefly served as President of the Thuringian state government before being forced out by the Soviets. While the

³⁵⁰ “Grundsätze und Ziele der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands” in *Revolutionäre deutsche Parteiprogramme*: 204

³⁵¹ For more on the general history of KZ Buchenwald, as well as the anti-Nazi resistance activities within it and the immediate observations of US Army personnel engaged in its liberation see *The Buchenwald Report* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), a recently republished set of official US military reports compiled immediately after its liberation.

Popular Front Committee itself did not constitute a political party, it became highly symbolic and influential as an early antifascist movement within a state that was trying to reestablish itself along antifascist principles.

Shortly after liberation the Education Commission of the Popular Front Committee released a manifesto outlining recommended school policies for reforming Thuringian education. The main recommendations that they made were the immediate purging of Nazi educators and administrators, the replacement of religious instruction with classes in general life skills (*Lebenskunde*), the transfer of all teacher training to the university, the establishment of both parents councils and student governments, and a temporary halt to all instruction until the most pressing reforms could be made.³⁵²

Grand political statements and sweeping proclamations of belief and intent do not result in much concrete change without men and women in place who are willing to act on their behalf. Erwin Stein's ongoing activism within the CDU in Hesse and his efforts to further the agendas of that organization and its associated organs is a clear example of an administrator using his position to forward the interests of a favored political party. This support was extended not only to the party, but to its various sub-organs and affiliated organizations. One of these was the Junge Union, the CDU's youth branch. It was a very conservative organization, especially regarding educational issues. Their broadest educational goals mirrored that of the CDU as a whole, however they voiced their support for both private schools and religious education in an even more direct manner. They argued that "the primacy of the rights of parents with regards to the education of their children is a natural and therefore God-given right" and that the ability of

³⁵² Hans Brumme, "Über die Tätigkeit der Erziehungskommission des illegalen Volksfrontkomitees im Konzentrationslager Buchenwald im Jahre 1944," *Monumenta Paedagogica*, Vol. 15, (Berlin, 1974): 387

parents to choose to give their children a parochial or private education flowed directly from this right.³⁵³ They also strongly advocated religion as a required subject in all schools at all levels of instruction, and for all children and pressed for a single educational system across the entire nation in order to prevent a splintering of German culture along regional lines.³⁵⁴ Much like Stein himself they strongly emphasized the need for moral education regardless of religious affiliation and saw a unified public school system as a way to ensure equal access to it regardless of personal circumstances. These priorities were highly compatible with the needs of the American occupation authorities and in addition advocated a view of national spiritual restoration that came very near to Stein's own. Such a strong overlap of beliefs and priorities explains the high degree of support that they received from him. Not all student organizations were so lucky to receive the patronage of the Minister of Culture and Education.

1949 Stein became embroiled in a battle with a number of student run newspapers in Hessian schools. Throughout his tenure in the Ministry of Culture, Stein supported student government as a key means for educating German youth towards future participation in a functioning democracy. He was highly supportive of encouraging the settlement of petty classroom issues through debate, voting, and other democratic practices and even supported the establishment of local student councils. Staffed by elected members of the student body, student-run newspapers were intended to both familiarize students with democratic practices and help organize useful aspects of student life to the benefit of both students and teachers.³⁵⁵

³⁵³ "Kulturpolitische Ziele der JUNGEN UNION (Entwurf)" Abt1178, Nr. 191, HHStAW

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁵ For more on these student bodies and Stein's relationship to them, see Brian M. Puaca, *Learning Democracy: education reform in West Germany, 1945-1965* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009): 61-63

Unfortunately, from the point of view of Stein at least, these bodies quickly came to take themselves more seriously than had been intended, and attempted to organize beyond the level of individual schools and play an active role in politics outside of the school. A few of them published articles and editorials critical of both the school administration and his leadership of the educational ministry, and his office responded by attempting to have their publication shut down. What followed was a protracted fight between some student bodies and the Ministry of Education. It eventually grew to encompass not just the original questions of student publications and editorial freedom, but broader issues of student self-governance and the relationship and power dynamic between those bodies and the Educational Ministry. At one point Stein attempted to intervene directly with his contacts within the Educational Division of the US Military's occupation government, only to be admonished that that was not how one dealt with politically troublesome activism in a democratic environment.³⁵⁶ As part of this confrontation the Hessian branch of the KPD attempted to intervene on behalf of the students within the Landtag.³⁵⁷

In response to this, Stein reported the KPD directly to the occupation authorities for attempting to undermine both the peaceful occupation of Germany and the reconstruction of the educational system through unhelpful political activism and agitation within the schools. While it can be argued that the KPD likely had political motives of its own for championing the students' cause beyond a sincere belief in editorial freedoms and the value of student self-governance, it is equally telling that Stein sent copies of his denunciation to the CDU party whip

³⁵⁶ "Besprechung zw. Mr. DeLong und Minister E. Stein," 15. 12. 1948, Abt. 1178, Nr. 67a, HHStAW

³⁵⁷ "KPD Landesvorstand Hessen, Jugendsekretariat, an alle Schülerselbstverwaltungen der hessischen Schulen," 3.3.49, Abt. 1178, Nr. 189, HHStAW

and the chief editor of a regional CDU publication.³⁵⁸ Regardless of the particulars of how the KPD pressure affected his personal battle with the student papers, it seems clear that he took the opportunity to retaliate against the KPD in a way that is only explainable through his party loyalties to the CDU.

Not only direct action could be explained by party loyalties and personal views, but inaction and the failure to respond to events also had clear political motivations. One striking example of this occurred when a teacher's academy in Thuringia chose "The Party Program of the LDP" as the theme for an evening lecture. The organizers of the lecture accepted at face value the notion that the Thuringian government was a united front consisting of all of the recognized anti-fascist parties and as such it was necessary for their students to learn the basic principles and political ideologies underpinning all of them. The principal of the school, also the local school inspector, arranged to have Karl Mehnert, a lawyer from Altenburg give the lecture. Mehnert began his lecture with a clarification of the terms "democracy" and "democrat" and what they meant for a member of the LDP - which he supported - as opposed to the KPD and SED which were rapidly dominating the region. In the course of a meandering speech on politics, parties, and political theory he came to the question of the professional civil service and quoted an expert from a south German newspaper that he had brought with him. In this excerpt a

³⁵⁸ "Dr. E. Stein an die Militärregierung Abteilung Erziehung und Unterricht, Wiesbaden," 29.3.1949, Abt 1178 Nr. 189 HHStAW

Mr. Häberlin³⁵⁹ made the unfortunate demand “it should never again be allowed that a washerwoman becomes a minister of culture.³⁶⁰”

This curious appeal was a reference to Minna Faßhauer, the People’s Commissar for Education in the short-lived post-World War 1 Socialist Republic of Braunschweig. Faßhauer was notable not only as the first female minister of any modern German government, but within educational circles she was also fairly well known for attempting to establish one of the first true *Einheitsschulen* in her small republic.³⁶¹ She was a staunch member of the German Communist Party and had, in fact, worked as both a maid and a washer woman. Such a negative invocation of her name such as this, relatively soon after the collapse of the Third Reich and as people were attempting to make radical reforms and changes in much the same way as revolutionaries such as Faßhauer had after World War 1, would have been incendiary in the extreme. The fact that she had actually implemented the *Einheitsschule* model that was now being vigorously pursued by the SED added a particularly biting critique of current policy to any negative mention of her or her legacy. It would have likely been interpreted as both a slander against communist and socialist governments and - by those with an educational agenda - as an attack against the *Einheitsschule* that formed such a key component of the educational reforms being pushed by both the Soviet occupiers and the SED.

³⁵⁹ there is no known relationship between myself and this Mr. Häberlin, although the branch of my family that carries my last name did originate from the border regions between the south of Germany and Switzerland.

³⁶⁰ “Der Kreisbildungsamt des Kreises Altenburg an das Landesamt für Volksbildung,” 3, June, 1946, LT-MfV, Nr. 22, THStAW

³⁶¹ For more on the fascinating life of Mina Faßhauer see Gerd Biegel, *Minna Faßhauer (1875–1949). Biographische Dokumentation zu einem aktuellen Diskurs.* (Braunschweig: Institut für Braunschweigische Regionalgeschichte, 2013). For a more general history of the Republic of Braunschweig see Peter Berger, *Brunonia mit rotem Halstuch. Novemberrevolution in Braunschweig 1918/1919.* (Hannover: SOAK Verlag, 1979)

As if this was not enough to cause a controversy, during the question and answer period that followed Mehnert was once again confronted by the theme of differing definitions of “democracy.” Matters came to a head when a student asked him directly “if he recognized the democracy of the Soviet Union as a democracy.” Mehnert clarified that since the Soviet Union was a single party state that he did not believe it to be democratic in the sense that he was using the word.³⁶²

Another questioner stated that society must enter into a period of the dictatorship of the proletariat that the middle classes will not willfully cross into and asked what his stance was about the subject of class conflict and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Following such an obviously leading question with such blatant political overtones Mehnert answered “By the formulation of your question I recognize you as a follower of the Marxist worldview. This evening I have clearly expressed to you my views as a Democrat. From this your question has already been answered. If you want to hear it explicitly then I tell you that as a Democrat I repudiate class warfare and the dictatorship of the proletariat.³⁶³”

At this the room erupted and order had to be restored by the head of the district office, who was in attendance. He admonished the room, “You mistake this teacher’s academy for a political rally. Today was for learning the program of the LDP as an antifascist party. If something is unclear, you may have it clarified. You have [the opportunity] here to acquire knowledge in a scholarly manner. I request that you do so in a way worthy of future teachers. I am filled with bitterness that methods were used that we rejected and combatted under the

³⁶² “Der Kreisbildungsamt des Kreises Altenburg an das Landesamt für Volksbildung,” 3, June, 1946, LT-MfV, Nr. 22, THStAW

³⁶³ *Ibid.*

Nazis.” Following this only a couple more questions were posed and then the assembly was dismissed.³⁶⁴

It did not take long for the fallout from this incident to present itself. The next day the principal was informed by the local SED party secretary that Major Kowner, the Soviet educational officer for the region, was aware of the incident and very unhappy about it. A few days later he was pulled out of a regional conference of school principals and brought before the Soviet regional commander, where he was quickly joined by the local SED party chairman and Mehnert. Mehnert was rebuked for “poisoning the students” and speaking against the interests of the Soviet Union. The principal was charged with organizing an assembly without first receiving the permission of the occupation authorities or clearing its content with them beforehand. Despite his protests that it was an educational exercise and therefore beyond their purview, he was dismissed from his position.³⁶⁵

Wolf, who in other instances had a demonstrated willingness to intercede to stop petty injustices or mitigate the severity of punishments, did nothing. He bore no political allegiance to the men who were being driven out, and those who were replacing them were well known as SED party members in good standing. What is more, the incident had become an item of interest to the Soviet military authorities. Whether through a loyalty born out of his years as a KPD activist before the war or from his experiences at Buchenwald and gratefulness for the role that the Red Army played in defeating Hitler’s Reich, Wolf cultivated good relations with the local occupation forces. Perhaps he did not want to spend that hard-earned capital on men whom he ultimately disagreed with on major political issues as well as fundamental educational concerns.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Perhaps he saw in the allusion to Braunschweig an attack on the *Einheitsschule* that he was attempting to build. Whatever the reason he did not intercede, and the blatantly political ruling of the Soviet regional commander stood without challenge.

Obligations to fellow Germans

Finally, there was also the issue of the specific loyalty that the administrators felt to their fellow Germans, as opposed to that which they owed to the occupation authorities who, ultimately, were responsible for their holding their positions. While it would be unwise to read too much into this co-national solidarity and see the smoldering remains of German nationalism or any kinds of *Völkisch* ideology it would be equally unrealistic to expect anyone to be completely blind to the needs and suffering of their fellow countrymen. Even if it is also more difficult to read specific policy goals or challenges into this responsiveness to the needs of other Germans, that sensitivity alone was in many ways a policy decision and worthy of consideration as such.

One example of this is the official visit to the USSR that was orchestrated for a group of 9 women in the fall of 1948. The women selected for this tour were all members of the German League of Democratic Women (DFD), and included Dr. Marie Torhorst, the woman who succeeded Walter Wolf as Thuringian Minister of Education in 1947.³⁶⁶ The trip was designed to showcase life in the USSR for the citizens of the Soviet occupation zone and highlight the ways that various aspects of Soviet civil society could benefit Germans. The activities that the women were involved in included visiting major landmarks and receiving general tours of

³⁶⁶ “DFD-Delegation abgeflogen,” undated, untitled newspaper clipping, Nachlass Torhost, Folio 13, BBF-DIPF

Moscow, Leningrad, and Stalingrad; visiting with Georgian collective farmers; visits with educated women in Moscow, many of whom were university trained professionals, and a visit to POW camp Number 7435 near Moscow.³⁶⁷

While they were not conducted for the same reasons as Torhorst's trips to the USSR, there was a comperable connection between the western occupation zones and the English-speaking West. In the immediate aftermath of the war a number of exchange programs were established to send German students to the United States and England in order to foster closer trans-Atlantic cultural connections as well as to introduce them to Anglo-American society and give them first hand experience with daily life in a modern, healthily functioning democracy. In contrast to Torhorst's briefer tours these were less structured, longer in duration, and focused primarily on younger, late-secondary or university-aged men. At least one such program, The German Teacher Trainee Program, targeted young teachers specifically in the hopes that exposing them to the daily realities of American democracy and experiencing first hand how American schools functioned would inspire them to introduce similar techniques and practices in their own classrooms at a grass roots level. Such programs were fairly successful, and can partially be seen as a response to the perceived resistance to rapid, radical change seen in the administrative corps; men like Erwin Stein might drag their feet and balk at major structural reforms but they could also be rendered moot within a generation by younger teachers with a personal investment in American-style education and personal affinities for democratically organized classrooms.³⁶⁸

³⁶⁷ "DFD - Delegation in die Sowjetunion," Nachlass Torhorst, Folio 13, BBF-DIPF

³⁶⁸ For more on the German Teacher Trainee Program and other similar exchange programs see Puaca, *Learning Democracy* :69-75. Puaca's work as a whole makes a strong argument for the democratization of West German education during the Cold War via grassroots programs such as these that began the reforms at the classroom level.

The Soviet-organized tours, in contrast, were much more heavily orchestrated and designed to showcase an idealized Russia for a broader, non-participatory audience. Both the Soviet authorities and the local newspapers broadly publicized the trip both before and after the women visited. While it was clearly intended to be a simple goodwill tour to produce some friendly propaganda for the Soviet occupiers, it generated a significant response, especially among German women and the organizations that either targeted them or were run for and by them. The kinds of questions that this tour spawned significantly transgressed the boundaries of what the Soviet authorities probably intended to convey. Rather than focusing on the core, presented content of the healthy, cheerful lives of Soviet women and families many of the questions addressed far more sensitive issues and concerns about the changes that were taking place as the Soviet sector began its transformation from an occupied capitalist state to a quasi-independent socialist one. The simple act of considering, pursuing, and answering those kinds of questions was a political statement under those circumstances. This was doubly so for someone in a position as relatively high within regional government as Torhorst's was.

A large number of the requests and questions for which a record remains came from members of the DFD. That organization forwarded along requests and questions that they received to the women who were participating in the trip, leaving the typical paperwork trail of bureaucratic correspondence. Other women wrote individually. Dr. Torhorst's collected personal papers are full of such correspondence. Some were properly addressed letters, written in the best formal script and following all traditional conventions of correspondence. Others were quick notes on scraps of paper in Torhorst's own hand, presumably dashed down while meeting face to face with concerned citizens. These in particular bear witness not only to the concerns of the women that Torhorst spoke with, but also the ongoing material shortages within

the ministry itself. For example, one set of notes from such a meeting was made on the back of half of a blank certificate of completion for a school administration licensing exam. Yet others were typewritten summaries of concerns compiled by various women's associations and submitted as a group over whatever passed for official letterhead for that group amidst the deprivations of the first years of peace. She gathered organized these into a series of notecards that she brought with her. Torhorst at least seems to have taken very seriously a responsibility to serve as a rare source of news from inside the Soviet Union, especially the sort of information that interested the women who contacted her.

By far the most common requests for information involved the fate of loved ones who never returned from the war. A typical communication from the League of Democratic Women to Torhotst in 1947, when she first became Minister of Education in Thuringia, complained that “thousands of women are moved by the question: ‘When will our prisoners of war finally come home from Russia?’”³⁶⁹ They noted that at the beginning of that year they had been promised that it would be in 1948 at the latest. Of particular concern to them was the obvious discrepancy between what they had been assured of regarding the conditions under which the prisoners lived and what was being reported by the individual men who trickled home every day. Another asked simply, “why have our prisoners of war not yet returned?”³⁷⁰

Of those who sought details about POWs or conditions in the POW camps, one particular sore spot was the general lack of communication. The Frauenbund noted that as early as 1946 they had been assured, and promises published in every German newspaper in the SBZ, that all of the prisoners in Russia were allowed to write letters home. Yet time and again returning

³⁶⁹ “Besuch deutscher Kriegsgefangene in der Sowjetunion,” Nachlass Torhorst, Folio 14, BBF-DIPF

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

POWs reported that they had neither received nor been allowed to send mail for 4 or 5 years, and sometimes longer depending on when they had been captured.³⁷¹ Some of the individual letters that Torhorst received about this issue were more politely circumspect, perhaps out of consideration for or fear of the opinions regarding socialism and Soviet rule that could be assumed of someone who was selected for such a high office under the occupation. One woman asked if it was true that some POW camps were under a permanent correspondence blackout or if it was possible that “as in so many other examples, these tales are only mean-spirited propaganda.”³⁷²

The other major issue that they wanted addressed was the question of confirming the final fate of POWs and missing soldiers and, where possible, the final resting place of those killed in action. This was especially problematic for them, as there was no formal diplomatic end to the state of war between the Allied Powers and Germany, despite the war itself having long since been concluded. According to German law those who were missing in action could only be legally given up as dead if they were still unaccounted for two years after a peace treaty was signed. Without direct confirmation of the fate of their men or an official declaration that the war was over, these women were caught in a legal limbo that significantly hindered their ability to move on with their lives. This stands completely aside from the simple mental anguish of not knowing whether their loved ones had perished or whether they could still be in a camp somewhere. As the letter poignantly concluded, “Is this not a crime against humanity as well,

³⁷¹ “Wir bitten um konkrete Beantwortung folgender Fragen” Nachlass Torhorst, Folio 14, BBF-DIPF

³⁷² “Brief von Frau Hesta Redlich an Dr. M. Torhorst,” Nachlass Torhorst, Folio 14, BBF-DIPF

[committed] against us women? Are we widows or are we wives????????????????[sic]³⁷³” The sheer weight of question marks with which the correspondence ended underscored the continuing anguish and confusion that these matters inflicted.

Even for those who knew for certain that their loved ones lay in foreign soil, questions remained. One letter from a Thuringian woman asked if Torhorst had the opportunity to visit and German war graveyards in the USSR and whether they were being properly cared for. As with most other specifics about conditions inside the Soviet Union, the correspondent noted that no specific news had been released.³⁷⁴ The near complete information blackout from the east seems to have been just as disturbing for many as confirmation of their worst fears would have been. It also underscores a continuing ignorance about life and the conditions of living in the Soviet Union one exacerbated by the USSR’s efforts to emphasize its post-war strength and successes due to international political considerations. Given the physical devastation and dire living conditions still prevalent in many areas of the USSR where heavy fighting had occurred - the same areas most likely to feature German cemeteries - it seems strikingly naïve to inquire whether the final resting places of German war dead were being properly and respectfully tended. The fact that well-tended military graveyards and monuments were being erected for Soviet dead in Germany may give some insight into this expectation, but the presence of the Red Army goes a long way towards explaining that. Germany’s fallen had no such on-scene advocate in Russia.

While visiting prisoner camps Torhorst recorded the names and pre-capture home addresses of all the men she spoke to or could obtain directly verifiable information about,

³⁷³ “Wir bitten um konkrete Beantwortung folgender Fragen” Nachlass Torhorst, Folio 14, BBF-DIPF

³⁷⁴ “Brief von Frau Lana Riecke an Dr. M. Torhorst,” Nachlass Torhorst, Folio 14, BBF-DIPF

presumably to get the news to any surviving relatives as best as possible. In most cases she simply gathered personal information in order to create a record that these men were still alive and in Russia. In others she seems to have at least made an attempt at being a very limited means of communication for the prisoners, as with the note attached to the entry for a young POW from Erfurt stating that he “sends his father the best birthday wishes.”³⁷⁵

It should also be noted that these visits were also important to the men who were lucky enough to receive them and did much to boost spirits that had been sorely tried by years in the POW camps. An example of this was a note forwarded to Dr. Torhorst by the DFD. The DFD organized a series of transit camps for returning POWs. The POWs returning from Russia frequently had nothing but the clothes that they had left the camps in and many had trouble reintegrating into German society. The camps helped to ease this transition by providing them temporary shelter, food, new clothing, and contact information for essential state services. One such returning soldier passing through a DFD transit camp asked them to send his thanks to Torhorst for her visit to his POW camp outside Moscow and to express how much her visit meant to him and all of the soldiers held there.³⁷⁶

Other questions that she received involved what Soviet-style socialism would mean for them and their children in their daily lives if it were adopted in Germany. There were particular concerns over the work requirements in the Soviet Union and the fact that women, as well as men, were expected to be productive workers. While many women in Germany no doubt relished the professional opportunities that theoretically gender-neutral socialism offered, others had their doubts. Some seem to have been actively fearful of or opposed to the idea of women

³⁷⁵ “Liste der Kriegsgefangenen mit Angehörigen,” Nachlass Torhorst, Folio 14, BBF-DIPF

³⁷⁶ “Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschlands an Frau Minister Dr. Torhorst,” 2. 11. 1949, Nachlass Torhorst, Folio 14, BBF-DIPF

working outside of the traditional household roles. One particular issue of concern was whether the work requirements were adjusted to reflect the family status of the women. Did women have to work if they had children? Could women be freed from work requirements even if they had no children? How many weeks did women have to work? Did the family life of the men and children in the family not suffer as a result of women having to work? Did the necessity of placing children into daycare or Kindergartens alienate them from their mothers?³⁷⁷

Other questions focused on the quality of the training that women could expect in a socialist society, and the precise kinds of jobs that they would be required to take. One, for example, asked about the length of studies for a physician, noting that in Germany “it is often claimed that a doctor in the Soviet Union has no more knowledge than a nurse in Germany.”³⁷⁸ Another bluntly asked, “Are there women in responsible positions or just housewives?”³⁷⁹ Another asked if women in the USSR freely volunteered for positions in traditionally male professions. Of particular concern was whether or not there existed workplace safety commissions to ensure that women’s health did not suffer through such employment.³⁸⁰

Not all of the questions she received were about serious matters of missing family or concerns about what socialism might mean for life inside of Germany. Some of it stemmed from a simple curiosity about the reality of life in the USSR as opposed to what they had been previously presented in wartime propaganda. For example, one person asked what the

³⁷⁷ “Fragen,” Nachlass Torhorst, Folio 14, BBF-DIPF - this section of this folio is a collection of small scraps of paper with questions either hand written or typed on them.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

conditions were like for farmers on collective farms, and if it was true that they all lived in mud huts.³⁸¹

While there Torhorst also took specific notes about matters and institutions that were of personal or professional interest to her. In particular she paid special attention to how the Soviet authorities had re-established education in areas that experienced heavy fighting. While this did not include any notes on pedagogical changes that may have been occurring within Soviet education at that time, they were very specific on the similar devastation suffered by some Soviet cities during the war and the ways that they were working to overcome it. In her visit to Leningrad, for example, she noted that much as in Germany it began with the resumption of basic classroom services as soon as possible after the fighting ended and the subsequent prioritization of developing facilities, either through re-purposing undamaged buildings or new construction, and gathering basic materials and surviving books for instruction.³⁸² She also visited schools and classrooms to observe details of teaching methods and over-all classroom conditions and met with leaders of the local parents' committees to discuss how they felt about the schools and their children's progress in them.³⁸³

Torhorst's efforts to inform members of the German public about what she saw and experienced continued long after she returned. She also met with school children to answer their questions about life in Russia. Similar to the questions that she recorded from adults, many of these were concerned with the living conditions of the POWs who remained in Russia or with specific aspects of daily life under a socialist regime and what the quality of that life was like.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*

³⁸² "DFD - Delegation in die Sowjetunion" Nachlass Torhorst, Folio 13, BBF-DIPF

³⁸³ "DFD - Delegation in die Sowjetunion" Nachlass Torhorst, Folio 13, BBF-DIPF

Were there, for example, electric lights in Russian cities and towns and did they have ration cards? Did Russian theaters feature dramas and concerts from German artists? How did camp guards treat POWs and when would they be allowed to return? Others were much clearly the result of youthful curiosity and priorities: Did Russian children learn German? Were there sports in Russia? Had she visited Lenin's mausoleum?³⁸⁴

How typical the conditions and classrooms that she observed were and how genuine the conversations that she recorded were is, of course, open to interpretation. This was not a privately organized visit to a free and open society, but an officially orchestrated tour of hand-selected sites within Stalinist Russia. With that in mind, however, that simple fact that she took the opportunity to gain some first-hand knowledge of conditions inside the USSR and that she made a point of disseminating that information to the individual citizens who reached out to her office or to her personally is equally important. The Soviets certainly had their own agenda and doubtlessly crafted her trip to present a carefully structured view of their society and the people in it. The various ways that she utilized this opportunity to collect information specifically of interest to German citizens - and especially effort expended to establish the living conditions and, where possible, the names and identities of those still held captive - shows a remarkable responsiveness to the needs of her fellow countrymen. There was no pedagogical purpose behind recording the names of the POWs she met, nor did it somehow affect her relationship with the occupation forces or further the agenda of political organizations that she supported. What it stands as, however, is a striking example of someone in a position to intermeditate between the Soviet military and the German people using that agency to intercede on the

³⁸⁴ "Diskussionsfragen der oberen Klassen und Berufsschule am 24.11.48 an Frau Minister Dr. Torhorst," Nachlass Torhorst, Folio 14, BBF-DIPF

civilians' behalf, in this case to expand upon the very limited information available about what the status of those still in captivity was.

Conclusion

Due in part to the political self-sorting that occurred between the Western and Soviet zones in the immediate aftermath of World War 2, a broad pattern emerged regarding whether local civil government tended to cooperate with or resist the post-war reforms of the occupation powers. The administrative agency enjoyed by civil servants such as educational administrators was generally used in the Soviet Sector to support the needs and goals of the occupation, while in the west it was also used in some circumstances to undermine or delay reform. This was naturally not true at all times in all places - there are examples of administrators working with the Americans to make unpopular reforms just as there are examples of their opposite numbers in the SBZ working against the Soviets - but stands as a general trend. The political legacy of the Weimar Republic is largely responsible for this pattern. If the political struggles of the 20s and 30s are viewed as a three-way struggle between fascist and communist extremes and a more moderate center, and if the events of the early 1940s largely removed fascism as a viable political force, then the initial political landscape after the war would be determined by the relationship between the old center - now liberal democrats - and the communists. Those with a strong enough affinity to pre-war communism to be drawn to life under the Russians would move eastward, while those who felt a strong opposition to communist or socialist ideologies would probably prefer one of the western occupation regimes.

The immediate result of this is that the Germans with clear anti-Nazi credentials that the Soviets had to choose from were likely seeing themselves as politically allied with the beliefs, interests, policies, and goals of the USSR. Those in the American Occupation Zone, however, did not have any such built-in loyalty to or sympathy for a common belief, were more likely to disagree with some of the basic premises and goals of the American occupation, and were more likely to act on this disagreement and use the power inherent in their positions to delay, resist, or temper those policies.

CHAPTER 7: ADMINISTRATORS AS POLITICAL TARGETS

It is a well-known fact that primary school teachers lean strongly to the left. They will surely be less likely to follow this tendency when they know that the people who are responsible for their advancement and assessment are members of the CDU.

- The head chairman of the CDU for the district of Oberlahn in Hesse, 1945³⁸⁵

The Party, the Party, it is always right / And, comrades, may it ever be so!

-Party anthem of the SED

After more than a decade of single party dictatorship under the Nazis, the resumption of multi-party political life happened surprisingly quickly under the occupation. Many of the parties were the reconstituted ghosts of political movements that had been disbanded following the NSDAP's seizure of power. Others were new

³⁸⁵ "Margarate Pfeifer, Kreisvorsitzende der Schristl. Demokr. Union, Kreisverband Oberlahn an den Herrn Kultusminister Dr. E. Stein," 4.9.1948, Abt. 1178 Nr. 138, HHStAW

organizations dedicated specifically to antifascist ideals or new coalitions built on traditions allowed to lapse for too long to simply resurrect. In the first days they all had one key aspect in common: they were approved by the occupation forces and much of their initial work concentrated on helping root out the remnants of National Socialism. In doing so they established their own anti-fascist credentials for the future.

Part of this process involved assuming an auxiliary role in the political vetting of members of the new government. As military authorities began to make appointments to positions of civic leadership and responsibility, including the educational system, the nascent political parties drew upon the connections that they had within established antifascist circles to confirm the anti-Nazi credentials of existing candidates and occasionally to propose them. These included professional networks, wartime expatriate organizations, and some connections made through wartime resistance and imprisonment.³⁸⁶

These organizations grew both in strength and political confidence relatively quickly and were soon making themselves heard on a variety of subjects related to national reconstruction, including education. In Thuringia this was largely due to the Soviet-aided

³⁸⁶ For a good description of how the SED worked alongside the occupation government in the SBZ, see Jan Foitzik, *Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland (SMAD) 1945-1949: Struktur und Funktion*. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999): 372-384; for a parallel examination of how the political parties in Hesse aided in denazification see Armin Schuster, *Die Entnazifizierung in Hessen, 1945-1954: Vergangenheitspolitik in der Nachkriegszeit*, (Wiesbaden: Historische Kommission für Nassau, 1999): 272-281

political consolidation of an initial coalition of established, pre-war and wartime organizations that had agreed to work alongside each other in a communist-dominated united front. In Hessen it was the result of the expedited resumption of local elections and the rapid establishment of civilian governance that posed a credible challenge to the relatively weak military civil administration. In both cases the increased power and confidence of the local political parties allowed them to exert significant influence on domestic policies, including educational reconstruction.

Some of this pressure was directed towards educational issues that the political parties had a direct interest in. Educational policy is highly politicized in most countries under normal circumstances. In Germany after the war the issue became how to best enact sweeping reforms in order to further wide-scale renewal and reconstruction of an entire society. As a result the stakes for the parties involved were that much higher and political considerations and reactions were much more sensitive affairs. It has already been observed how educational administrative positions became important intermediaries between the occupation governments and the German population as a whole, and how this intermediary role created a degree of political agency for administrators as they pursued varying agendas. This, in turn, resulted in the administrative posts becoming political targets in and of themselves.

What was the nature of this influence and why did the parties concern themselves with the administrative details of educational policy? At some level intervention was inevitable due to the policy and specific political platform agendas that each of the parties had. But the administrative positions within state and local governments held value not only in terms of the influence and decision making ability that the people who filled them

could bring to bear on any particular issue. They could also serve as rewards for valued party members, were pressure points to encourage cooperation from already-established civil authorities, and could be developed into institutional redoubts to buffer the party from the ever-changing winds of parliamentary politics.

Political parties protecting their platforms

Among the various portfolios held by politicians and political parties, public education is unusual in how readily accessible it is to the general public. In most modern, industrialized, literate societies the vast majority of citizens have, by the time they come of age, spent a significant amount of time in a classroom. As adults, most continue to have an ongoing second hand relationship with public education, whether through children and grandchildren of their own or those of friends and family. At the same time, the government has a considerable degree of control over what the precise experience within the classroom entails. Even within systems that make allowances for private and parochial schooling public education usually remains the most wide-spread option and the one that the majority of the population relies on. Furthermore, what private institutions there are must generally meet some set of standards to receive state licensing or accreditation. This renders education both a topic that the typical citizen tends to care about, as well as something that political parties tend to look towards when articulating their own policies, both when campaigning and when forging their own legislative legacies. The use of public education as a means for transmission of ideologies and reproducing general world views also makes the subject of intense public debate, as both political parties and concerned

individuals hold differing views on what sort of messages should be conveyed to the next generation of citizens and voters.³⁸⁷

It should then be unsurprising that educational reform was a flagship issue for the SED in Thuringia, as well as a major concern among the political parties in Hesse. While many in the west sought to renew or reform the best that pre-National Socialist Germany had to offer, the SED's Marxist understanding of politics, society, and history made it more comfortable with a clean split from what it viewed as an irredeemably flawed heritage. This was understood to be a project on a generational scale, and as such one that would require a very careful and self-conscious use of public education in order to ensure its success. The SED in particular viewed Germany's educational tradition as highly problematic and long in need of fundamental reform. The disastrous legacies of twelve years of National Socialist educational policies provided the immediate pretext for that reform, but the structural problems that needed to be addressed went back much further than that.

The significance that was attached to these reforms can be seen in the extreme reaction prompted by one child's indiscreet letter to the editor. On the 1st of March, 1947 a brief note was published in the Sunday edition of the Thuringian regional newspaper *Abendpost*. In its entirety it took up only two inches of a single, narrow column and appeared under the heading "76 Mistakes." The author, identified only as 'H.W. in Erfurt' stated that the paper had recently re-printed a story from the *Frankfurter Neue Presse*, a newspaper in the American Zone, about a 7th grade class that was struggling academically.

³⁸⁷ For a view of how educational policy became a political football in another era, see Marjorie Lamberti, *The Politics of Education: Teachers and School Reform in Weimar Germany*. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002).

According to the article the children were underperforming so badly that an average of 20 mistakes per pupil were recorded in a basic dictation exercise.

'H. W.' countered that this was not news worthy. He identified himself as an 8th grader in Erfurt and a member of a class within which, as part of the ongoing restructuring of the school system, children from the *Volksschule* and *Oberschule* had recently been combined. He claimed that in an equally simple dictation exam taken by his class, only 2 and a half pages in length, 76 errors had been recorded. His letter was grammatically vague, leaving it unclear whether that was an average of all the pupils or the unenviable score of a single child. He condescendingly concluded, "It may be that the *Volksschüler* are at the moment not made of the right stuff for the *Oberschule* that they were transferred to."³⁸⁸

This short letter, apparently written by a child, immediately created a scandal that would eventually involve not only the local teaching community but occupation authorities on both the local and regional levels, and the school administration all the way up to the Thuringian Minister of Education. The Ministry quickly began an investigation, beginning with an attempt to discover who the author was, if he was really a young pupil in a local school, and the motivations behind the letter.³⁸⁹

The restructuring of the Thuringian school system into the single track Einheitsschule model at that time was ongoing and politically contentious. It was a banner issue not only for the Soviet occupation authorities and the German civil administration,

³⁸⁸ "47 Fehler," *Abendpost: Das Blatt für Politik, Kultur und Wirtschaft*, 1 March, 1947, LT-MfV, Nr. 22, THStAW.

³⁸⁹ "Der Kreisbildungsamt der Stadt Erfurt an das Ministerium für Volksbildung, Weimar Betr: Zeitungsnoteiz "76 Fehler" in der Abendpost," LT-MfV, Nr. 22, THStAW.

but one that was being championed by the relatively young and ever more influential SED. It was a set-piece of institutional reform in the SBZ, a relatively early example of the kinds of sweeping political and institutional changes that would eventually form the underpinnings for the East German state. The '76 Mistakes' article was perceived not just as a criticism of the performance of a single school, but an attack on the ways in which the restructuring of the entire educational system was being carried out, and therefore an assault on the broader coalition of state and political interests that were heavily invested in it. The issue brought into question not only the political motivations of the author of the letter, but of the paper that published it. A handwritten note attached to the initial correspondence about the issue noted that, "Anyone who advocates democratic school reform and has recognized its need for the general democratization of Germany deplores that the *Abendpost* once again let itself be misused by the reactionary enemies of school reform."³⁹⁰

The Ministry of Education immediately launched an investigation. During its course it emerged that the author of the letter was indeed a pupil in one of the local schools named Heinrich Werner.³⁹¹ As was typical of many children in the area he was a refugee, originally from Düsseldorf, a city that was now in the Western Zone. His mother was a half-Jewish widow and had moved to Thuringia during the war in an attempt to escape the harassment and persecution that she suffered from neighbors and local authorities. Heinrich had taken the original article about the performance of pupils in Frankfurt as an

³⁹⁰ "Artikel im Rund-[illegible]," Author unknown, March 1947, LT-MfV, Nr. 22, THStAW

³⁹¹ Due to German privacy laws the name of this individual has been changed. This is the only instance in this work where a source has fallen under these laws. All other names have remained unaltered.

attack on his old homeland and wrote with the intention of showing that children in the Rhineland were no worse academically than those in Thuringia. His teachers considered him a bright child, if somewhat lacking in supervision and discipline.³⁹²

An examination into his claim of 76 errors on a simple dictation showed that it was true, but it was a single extreme example in a class that had average scores much more in line with what was expected of children in that age group. The school inspector tasked with looking into the affair noted that the class had a very high proportion of children in it who had been recently evacuated from lost territories in the east and that the assignment was given without notice in order to judge the varying academic levels within the classroom. The displaced pupils, including the one who had produced the notorious 76 errors, had received no formal schooling for the past 1½ years.³⁹³ Even as lengthy an educational lapse as this was not considered especially unusual or noteworthy. Even students from areas that were not directly bombed or fought over had their studies disrupted by the total military collapse that ended the war and the effect was even more pronounced for those who had been made refugees. The dictation assignment itself wasn't intended as a test of competency as much as a diagnostic tool to assess where to resume their schooling.

Even at this juncture the political implications of the letter could not be ignored. Since the author was a child there always remained the possibility that young Heinrich was

³⁹² “Betr: Feststellungen zur Notiz in der Abendpost vom 1. März 1947 „76 Fehler,““ 5 March 1947, LT-MfV, Nr. 22, THStAW

³⁹³ “Brief von Volkmer, Studienrat, Klassenleiter d.8.Kl. V. 21 an Kramer, Direktor der „Abendpost,““ 3 March, 1947, LT-MfV, Nr. 22, THStAW

being used as “a tool of reactionaries opposed to our new school system.³⁹⁴” Further interviews with him satisfied the local school inspector that he had acted alone, without prompting from any of the adults in his life or from any other outside influence. The inspector noted that Heinrich was very intelligent and precocious for his age. He recorded that both he and the child’s mother had made it clear to Heinrich that children should not do such things without the aid of an adult, as they couldn’t always foresee the consequences of their actions or understand “the ways that articles they write might sow discord.³⁹⁵”

Once the educational ministry was satisfied that the incident was indeed the result of a single student’s mischief, the furor over the ‘76 Mistakes’ rapidly faded away. With apparently no need to worry about a broader scheme to attack the reforms that played such a crucial role in their vision of a new German society, the SED directed its attention elsewhere. Without pressure from them the Ministry rapidly wrapped up the investigation, and Heinrich was never punished or penalized for his actions beyond whatever unrecorded chastisement he may have faced from his mother. The Ministry, while noting the ongoing classroom difficulties represented by the large numbers of refugee children like Heinrich, was satisfied that the initially shocking test performance was an outlier rather than the symptom of a structural problem and made no suggestions for alterations on their current plans for reform and restructuring. Despite an ominous conclusion that “the one most to blame is the newspaper that published such alarming news from such an unproven source .

³⁹⁴ “Ministerium für Volksbildung an den Leiter des Kreisbildungsamtes Erfurt,” 7 March, 1947, LT-MfV, Nr. 22, THStAW

³⁹⁵ “Der Kreisbildungsamt der Stadt Erfurt, An das Ministerium für Volksbildung Betreff: Zeitungsnotiz “76 Fehler” in der Abendpost,” LT-MfV, Nr. 22, THStAW

.. suggesting a conscious enmity to the schools,³⁹⁶ no immediate action was taken against the *Abendpost*, which continued publication uninterrupted well into 1951.

Parties pressuring and protecting individuals

In the very early days the direct impact of political parties was generally limited to influencing the appointment of administrators tasked with overseeing the resumption and reformation of public education. At this stage appointments were made directly by the military, although sometimes in consultation with already-selected senior administrators and ministers.³⁹⁷ Regardless of party affiliation the primary criterion in the first weeks and months after the war was generally that an applicant be clean of any association with the previous regime or its ideologies, however in some cases specific hopes for the future were indulged.

As an example, on April 25, 1945 the recently reconstituted Center Party in the Hessian town of Dillenburg put forward the local Volksschule rector, Dr. Marx, for the position of school inspector. Two direct grounds for his establishment in this position were given: First, since the Nazis had systematically repressed religious education since 1933 and it was vital that it resume as quickly as possible in order to “weed out the specter

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁷ For an in-depth examination of the reconstitution of German self-government under Soviet rule, see Foitzik, *Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland (SMAD) 1945-1949*: 331-347. See James F. Tent, *Mission on the Rhine: Reeducation and denazification in American-occupied Germany*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982): 50-57 for a brief discussion of very early denazification and re-filling of civil positions under American occupation.

implanted by the previous regime.” They held that Marx was ideal for this due to the fact that, even though he remained employed during the NSDAP’s reign, he was consistently passed over for promotion as “politically unreliable” (*staatspolitisch nicht zuverlässig*) specifically due to his well known, strongly held religious convictions.³⁹⁸ Almost immediately two more organizations, one that was nominally apolitical and the other that had nearly opposite goals from those of the CDU, also endorsed Dr. Marx. On May 5th the United Opponents of Nazism, a loose coalition of people and smaller organizations who claimed some wartime resistance, endorsed Marx as a fellow anti-fascist. Two days later the KPD followed with an endorsement of its own on similar grounds, embracing him as a clear opponent to Nazism. Although the KPD would later come out strongly against confessional schooling,³⁹⁹ at this early date it was enough that a proposed school administrator have strong antifascist credentials for groups with as deep and long running divisions as those between the Communists and the Center Party to agree on a single candidate.⁴⁰⁰

Parties in the east also found ways to turn the denazification process to their benefit. At a January 14, 1946 district conference for school principals and inspectors in Thuringia it was reported that all previous members of the NSDAP had been released from

³⁹⁸ “Zentrumspartei, Dillenburg an den Herrn Landrat des Dillkreises Antrag betr. Berufung des Herrn Dr. MARX, Dillenburg, zum Schulrat des Dillkreises.” Abt 652, Nr. 520, HHStAW

³⁹⁹ See the “Aufruf des ZK der KPD vom 11. Juni 1945” in *Revolutionäre deutsche Parteiprogramme: vom Kommunistischen Manifest zum Programm des Sozialismus*, Lothar Berthold and Ernst Diehl, eds., Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1967 for the earliest articulation of any KPD educational policy.

⁴⁰⁰ “Demokratische Fraktion der vereinten Nazigegner an den Herrn Landrat des Dillkreises,” 5. May 1945, Abt. 652, Nr. 520, HHStAW

their jobs, with a couple of exceptions. On humanitarian grounds the blind and people judged “over 70% incapacitated” were retained as long as they had held no party leadership positions. Any member of the Nazi Party or of the various NSDAP youth groups was exempted, as long as he was born after 1920 and had held no leadership positions within either the Party or the youth organizations. Most tellingly, however, any Nazi party member who had successfully joined one of the four officially recognized post-war political parties was exempted from termination as long as a local political leader would testify to his good character.⁴⁰¹

This provided a means by which the political parties could shield individuals from the full brunt of the denazification process for whatever reasons they might have. In the short term it afforded a convenient way to protect key individuals who had necessary professional or technical skills, while in the longer run indebting them to the party that gave them shelter. At the same time, the degree to which most members of the officially sanctioned post-war parties had been mistreated by the NSDAP put a limit on just how deeply implicated such a person could be; after a certain point it simply became too unpalatable to overlook some offenses, regardless of an individual’s immediate utility.

As the post-war political situation stabilized and the parties themselves matured, the nature of the influence that they exerted on administrative posts also changed. The quality of the relationships that they had with the individuals who were in those positions became increasingly important. The relationships and loyalties forged as a result of

⁴⁰¹ “Bericht über die Schulleiterkreiskonferenz am 14.1.1946 in Rathaussaal Altenburg.” LT-MfV, Nr. 22, THStAW

membership in political parties and political activity in general could easily result in outside political forces taking an interest in affairs which otherwise would have been relatively small matters of local educational administration. This could range from ineffective administrators escaping censure due to political connections on through individuals being granted or maintained in certain administrative posts not because of their qualities as educators or organizers, but because of some separate political utility.

One such instance is the case of a Hessian school inspector named Laake. He was, in most ways, a fairly unassuming inspector with a fairly typical career arc for a man of his age and education. The only really remarkable thing about him was the ardor he displayed campaigning for the CDU in the years immediately following the collapse of Nazi Germany. When the scope of his passions eventually expanded to include the young women that he was tasked with approving for teaching jobs, he became embroiled in a scandal that by all rights should have ended his career. His political utility, however, drew the matter of his professional difficulties to the attention of far more illustrious men than would have normally taken notice of it and, in doing so, helped him escape with his career more or less intact.

Born in 1887 to a protestant Christian household, Laake completed his academic training as a teacher in 1908, became a rector in 1922, and was quickly appointed as Schulrat in 1923. He fell afoul of the Nazis after they assumed power and was demoted to being a teacher in a Volksschule in 1933. He remained in that position throughout the war and maintained the usual connections to minor, party-affiliated professional bodies that were required. Politically, he was a traditional conservative. He was a member of the National-Liberal Party (NLP) during the years of its pre-World War 1 rightward shift, and

remained with it until 1918 when it dissolved in the face of Imperial Germany's surrender. He then followed Gustav Stresemann into the German People's Party (DVP) and remained there from its foundation until its dissolution following the Nazi takeover.⁴⁰² After the war he immediately joined the CDU, into which he threw himself with verve from the beginning. Within a couple of years he had risen to being the party leader for his district. He was reinstated as a Schulrat by the military occupation forces soon after the war ended, in large part because of his clean political record and prior professional experience.

The nature of the scandal that he became embroiled in is aptly described in the title applied to his file within the Hessian State Archives: "Furloughing and transfer of a School inspector due to 'improper behavior' with regards to female teacher candidates."⁴⁰³ His troubles, however, did not begin with these allegations, but with an earlier investigation. In late 1946 the military government began an investigation into whether Laake had falsified information on his denazification paperwork, specifically whether he had omitted details of his involvement in Nazi Party affiliated professional groups in order to secure employment after the war. As part of that investigation he was suspended in December, 1946. It was during this period of temporary suspension that women began to come forward with allegations of sexual harassment. He was cleared of the falsification charges on January 21, 1947 but remained suspended while an investigation into these new allegations was carried out.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰² "Lebenslauf" Abt. 1178, Nr. 154, HHStAW

⁴⁰³ "Beurlaubung bzw Versetzung eines Schulrats wegen „ungebührlichen Verhaltens“ gegenüber Lehramtskandidatinnen," Abt. 1178, Nr. 154, HHStAW

⁴⁰⁴ "Betr.: Schulrat Heinrich Laake in Hofgeismar," 28. February, 1947 Abt. 1178, Nr. 154, HHStAW

The specific details of the allegations were as mundane as they were sordid: according to the testimony of a group of female accusers, Laake promised to help them find jobs in the local school system. The women tended to be young: 3 of the 4 were between 20 and 21 years old, and one was 31. According to the complaints that were filed, Laake suggested private meetings at his office to discuss their career prospects and ambitions. Once behind closed doors he made various sexual advances with the clear understanding that the likelihood of their being hired was directly linked to how receptive they were. Based on the testimony of the women who came forward he began behaving in this manner soon after his appointment and continued until he was suspended pending the falsification investigation.⁴⁰⁵ His accusers claimed that they were not alone in having received these advances, but as those other women never came forward to file complaints the investigation concentrated itself on their four specific instances.

All of this took place against the backdrop of a 'grand coalition' government forged between the two largest German political parties - the SPD and the CDU - that was unraveling. Erwin Stein, the Minister of Education and a prominent member of the CDU, was under increasing pressure to protect valuable CDU political assets at any cost. On 3 November, 1948 Stein received a letter from the CDU State Secretary for North Hessen that made this explicitly clear. The Secretary claimed, "Our dear friends in the SPD are doing everything in their power to push our most active members against the wall." He was emphatic that "from now on in North Hessen we must look after *our party colleagues* [sic] first." In these circumstances party considerations had to have primacy. "All of us that call

⁴⁰⁵ "Ermittlungsverfahren betreffend die gegen Herrn Heinrich Laake aus seiner Tätigkeit im Schulverwaltungsdienst erhobenen Beschuldigungen" 26.4.1947, Abt. 1178, Nr 154, HHStAW

ourselves CDU-members have the responsibility to promote the interests of our members, and only our members - the concerns of other parties do not concern us.”⁴⁰⁶

Laake directly profited from this highly politicized, unstable atmosphere. As an important part of the CDU apparatus in his district the investigation into his misconduct, something that would have under normal circumstances almost certainly drawn little attention outside of the halls of the Ministry of Education, became an item of concern for CDU politicians from across the state. This increased scrutiny manifested itself very early in the investigation and continued throughout. In late February of 1947 the prominent CDU politician Erich Köhler, a man who would later rise to be President of the West German Bundestag, wrote to Stein in support of Laake. “I naturally do not know the particulars, only the allegations - exactly as little as you. However, if the man is our party leader in his district assembly (*Kreistag*) we must under any circumstances do something for him.” This general refrain, that something must be done to aid and support an important party member while either claiming a general ignorance of the specifics of the case or downplaying the importance of the matter, would become a very common pattern in the correspondence in support of Laake. It is abundantly clear that Laake’s political connections and his activities outside of his professional obligations were far more important than his performance within his office and any improprieties that he may have engaged in.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁶ “Landessekretariat der CDU an Herrn Kultusminister Dr. Erwin Stein,” 3. November, 1948, Abt. 1178, Nr. 154, HHStAW.

⁴⁰⁷ “Dr. sc.pol. Erich Köhler an Herrn Minister Dr. Stein,” 25. February, 1947 Abt. 1178, Nr. 154, HHStAW

This support was a steady pressure through the course of the investigation. Nearly a year after the initial charges had been made it had still not run its course, and CDU officials at all levels continued to apply pressure. In January of 1948 Heinrich von Brentano, one of the founding members of the CDU in Hesse and a man who would eventually rise to be Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of the BRD in 1955, sent a letter to Stein asking for a speedy conclusion to whatever investigation Laake is embroiled in, “if only because we cannot do without Mr. Laake’s cooperation in the upcoming elections.”⁴⁰⁸ Late in that year another letter from a far more local politician, the Bürgermeister of the town Laake’s office was located in, voiced very similar concerns. His letter was forwarded to Stein’s office from that of Dr. Werner Hilpert, the Hessian Minister of Economics, to whom it had initially been sent. The Bürgermeister petitioned Stein “in the interest of our CDU, to use your influence to ensure that Herr Schulrat Laake stays in the Hofgeismar district. His eventual transfer would grievously truncate the political activity of our party in the district.”⁴⁰⁹

The issue was not only of interest to CDU politicians who wished to protect Laake in order to make use of him on the campaign trail. Stein had a parallel correspondence with senior members of the SPD with whom, as fellow members in a coalition government, he had working relationships. In late June Stein wrote to Dr. Fritz Hoch, the Regierungspräsident in Kassel and an SPD politician, in order to “inform you personally about the matter that has in my opinion wrongly stirred up so much dust in certain

⁴⁰⁸ “CDU Fraktion der Christlich-Demokratischen Union im Hessischen Landat an Herrn Minister Dr. Stein,” 15. January 1948, Abt. 1178, Nr. 154, HHStAW

⁴⁰⁹ “Walter George, Bürgermeister Hofgeismar an Herrn Minister Dr. Hilpert” 20. November, 1948, Abt 1178, Nr. 154, HHStAW

circles.”⁴¹⁰ He maintained that, “The charges against Mr. Laake have been examined in detail. Investigations have taken place . . . [and] the result is that the accusations against Mr. Laake have been exaggerated for personal and unfortunately for party-political considerations.”⁴¹¹ He saw no need to dismiss him or transfer him to another Kreis. In support of his decision he noted a letter from the CDU/LDP coalition in Laake’s local district assembly that called the allegations “Party-political and personal badgering” and called for the immediate reinstatement of Laake in his office as Schulrat of the Hofgeismar district.⁴¹²

Unsurprisingly given Laake’s local influence and political utility, the local branch of the SPD made itself clear on its opposition to his continued employment. The party office for the Hofgeismar district wrote to voice their strong objections to Laake being reinstated. They chose to couch this opposition not in political terms but with regards to the moral fiber and professional competency that they felt necessary for civil employment. “For us it is only about the maintaining of democratic rights and the staffing of civil administrative posts by trustworthy, qualified personages.”⁴¹³ No specific political purpose is admitted by any of the non-CDU affiliated groups and individuals who wrote with regards to with Laake’s case, however the strong pattern of SPD opposition and CDU support for his further

⁴¹⁰ “Minister E. Stein an Herrn Regierungspräsident Dr. Hoch,” 28. June 1948, Abt. 1178, Nr. 154, HHStAW

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁴¹² *Ibid.*

⁴¹³ “SPD - Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands Kreis Hofgeismar an den Herrn Minister für Kultus und Unterricht,” 17. July 1948, Abt. 1178 Nr. 154, HHStAW

involvement with the local school system suggests that there were likely motivations beyond the pure pursuit of justice.

Stein also indicated to Hoch that he was aware that the political situation in Kreis Hofgeismar between the CDU and the SPD had deteriorated over the issue of growing cooperation between the LDP and the CDU. He reported that he was aware that “from certain districts several senior officials have threatened to “resign” in the event that Mr. Laake continues to be associated with the Hessian educational system,⁴¹⁴” but linked this to the broader political tensions in the area rather than Laake’s specific behavior. He did not mention it to the Regierungspräsident, but he was also under similar pressure from the teachers in Laake’s district as well. A recent joint letter from a teacher’s organization in Laake’s district recorded their dismay at rumors that he could soon be returning to office. “This news alone has caused the greatest disturbance among the teaching staff and there is no doubt that in the event of Herr Schulrat Laake’s return to service it will very soon come to discord and conflict.⁴¹⁵” Given that there seemed to be grave concern at all levels of the local teaching community with the prospect of Laake’s return, Stein’s insistence that the pressure against it was politically motivated seems suspect. It seems far more likely that when responding to the queries of a political opponent who wished to see Laake deposed for political reasons, Stein attempted to politicize those complaints in order to dismiss them as such in accordance with his own partisan motivations. The fact that the original complaints against Laake were not politically motivated and involved behavior that was

⁴¹⁴ “Minister E. Stein an Herrn Regierungspräsident Dr. Hoch,” 28. June 1948, Abt. 1178, Nr. 154, HHStAW

⁴¹⁵ “Karl Dönsch, Lehrer u. Vorsitzender des Kreislehrervereins im Namen [9 signatories]. . .”, 11. 6. 1948, Abt. 1178, Nr. 154, HHStAW

not political in the slightest beyond its capacity for embarrassment and scandal was by this point a secondary concern at best.

Stein was of the opinion that Laake should be returned to his position as a school inspector, but also indicated to Hoch that he would be appointing him to a different position of roughly equal responsibility and authority in the Hessian educational system after an appropriate amount of time. This can be read two ways. First, it was above all else a commitment to stand behind Laake, whether through a cold assessment of his political utility or a genuine belief in his innocence regarding the sexual harassment charges. At the same time it also indicated some sensitivity to the fact that Laake's issue had become both a political flashpoint and a professional scandal and that it would benefit everyone if he were quietly moved somewhere that his presence would be less disruptive. In making his case for these measures Stein emphasized Laake's professional competency and used that as the rationale for retaining him. In his reply to the SPD and the SPD-affiliated president of the Hessian government he wrote, "You will concede to me that a school and cultural policy that is in the interest of the whole nation and not only a part of the population or a party cannot be operated in this way. It seems necessary to me - and I must emphasize this over and over again - that the professional and political suitability of officials must come before party considerations.⁴¹⁶" It must be understood that when Stein wrote of political suitability he was referring to it within the context of denazification and the necessary anti-fascist credentials of government employees. He consistently referred to more contemporary competition between the post-war political organizations as party affairs.

⁴¹⁶ "Minister E. Stein an Herrn Regierungspräsident Dr. Hoch," 28. June 1948, Abt. 1178, Nr. 154, HHStAW

Given how frankly he discussed Laake's political usefulness to the CDU in other instances and with other correspondents, it seems highly likely that rather than genuinely upholding this apolitical ideal, Stein was using it as a cover to protect a politically useful subordinate and placate a political rival.⁴¹⁷

Hoch and his SPD allies remained unconvinced. In early July Stein wrote to Minister Werner Hilpert, another key founding member of the CDU in Hesse and an early President and Finance Director of the Deutschen Bundesbahn. He reported the results of an earlier, unrecorded conversation with Dr. Hoch. Hoch continued to have reservations about the re-employment of Laake, and noted that since the investigations had begun Laake's personnel files - which allegedly contained very convincing evidence against him - had disappeared without a trace. He recognized the Education Ministry's primacy in the matter, but hoped that in the name of governmental accountability that "the entire Laake matter will be rolled up publicly." He made oblique threats that if this wasn't the case he might make use of his ability to independently pursue disciplinary proceedings against Laake in order to bring the matter into the open.

Stein asked for Hilpert's and the CDU's support but warned that as useful as Laake might be, protecting him would not be without cost. "At the very least I would like to dutifully call your attention to the fact that should Mr. Laake be reinstated, considerable political difficulties will accrue for both myself and the CDU."⁴¹⁸ Stein was increasingly

⁴¹⁷ For a brief, but useful, description of the jockeying for post-war position between the political parties and the short-term politicization of anti-fascism that resulted, see Wolf-Arno Kropat, *Hessen in der Stunde Null: 1945-1947: Politik, Wirtschaft, und Bildungswesen*, (Wiesbaden: Selbstverlag der Historischen Kommission für Nassau, 1979): 7-9, 71-81

⁴¹⁸ "Betr: Schulrat Laake, Hofgeismar," 7. 7. 1948, Abt. 1178 Nr. 154, HHStAW

finding himself trapped between a rock and a hard place, and the longer the matter dragged on the more uncomfortable his position became. If he allowed Laake to be removed the CDU lost a valuable campaigning asset just as critical elections were looming, but if he retained him in his current position he provided the SPD with significant political leverage all the same.

The final decision was made shortly before Christmas. On December 22, 1948 Stein wrote a letter to one of the many local CDU politicians who had shown an interest in the proceedings. In it, he made it clear that Laake would soon be reinstated in his old position. The first reason he gave was that Laake was a quality worker who did his job well and had many years of valuable experience. "With Mr. Laake it is a consideration of an official who, in educational matters, is very experienced and conscientious and whose administration itself has never been cause for complaint." He emphasized that experienced professionals such as Laake were very hard to find in the face of the political requirements of denazification. The harassment scandal was acknowledged, but the final judgment was that even though "certain lapses had occurred in his off-duty behavior" they were "not so serious that School Inspector Laake is no longer fit for the School Inspection Service." On that note, the record ends. Laake presumably resumed his duties and retired within a few years, the scandal behind him.⁴¹⁹

Displays of blatant political bias such as this were not limited to the West. Similar incidents, usually resulting from the personal and professional difficulties of men and women with strong ties to the SED, occurred in the Soviet Zone as well. In late May of 1946, for example, Thuringian Minister for Education Walter Wolf was required to write to

⁴¹⁹ "Betr.: Schulrat Laake in Hofgeismar," 22. December, 1948, Abt. 1178, Nr. 154, HHStAW

Erich Knippel, then one of the school inspectors serving in Altenburg. The town government, in conjunction with the teachers and local the officials, and with the reluctant compliance of the regional branch of the SED, was attempting to have him removed from his position.⁴²⁰ In response he appealed directly to the state education ministry in Weimar, asserting that he was both professionally competent and politically palatable for his position. In answering Wolf apologized that he must be “perfectly clear and brutal” in outlining why he was not, in fact, fit for the position: he was extremely physically handicapped, the result of an extreme case of rheumatoid arthritis that developed in his early 30s.⁴²¹

Knippel was an old favorite of the local SED branch; he had long term, pre-war KPD associations and had been persecuted under the Nazis for his political convictions.⁴²² After the war he remained active, first in the KPD and then in the SED after it emerged as the dominant party in 1946. These political connections played a significant role in securing him his position and, for a time, shielded him from the repercussions of his physical deformities. The district SED office in particular was adamant that his disabilities did not constitute a compelling case against his working as school inspector, although they did not attempt to push beyond voicing their support for him.⁴²³ Despite this, matters clearly reached a critical point by the end of May. Minister Wolf wrote that Knippel, who in

⁴²⁰ “Landesdirektor Wolf an Herrn Erich Knippel,” LT-MfV, Nr. 22, THStAW

⁴²¹ “Lebenslauf,” Personal Akten Nr. 14882 - Knippel, THStAW

⁴²² *Ibid.*

⁴²³ “Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands Kreisvorstand Altenburg Pol. Sekretär an das Landesamt für Volksbildung,” 6 May 1946, Personal Akten Nr. 14882 - Knippel, THStAW

making his rounds of the schools had to deal with children and teachers alike, “invokes either terror or laughter from the students.” This was not just a problem with elementary school pupils. It was reported that his physical deformities led to his being received by adult candidates at testing facilities for new teachers with laughter, and the citizens of Altenburg called him by the unkind nickname of “the witch.”⁴²⁴

Interestingly, Knippel seems to have been successful at fighting to retain his position, despite the limited amount of support he received from his political allies and the expressed intent of the Educational Ministry to replace him. The specifics of how or why this decision was reversed do not survive in the record, however he continued on as school inspector in Altenburg.⁴²⁵ He seems to have been successful, if the complaints leveled by the SED’s political opponents are any measure. In July 1947 a member of the CDU singled him out during a speech before the Landtag decrying inappropriate SED influence within the Educational ministry. He complained that Knippel had no formal pedagogical training, no experience as a teacher, no secondary school experience, and yet was recently promoted due purely to his KPD and SED party affiliations.⁴²⁶ Whatever his physical infirmities he was either judged valuable enough, or still had enough political pull, to not only stay employed but to prosper until 1949. His position was then eliminated as part of the

⁴²⁴ “Landesdirektor Wolf an Herrn Erich Knippel,” LT-MfV, Nr. 22, THStAW - a note on translation: in the original he is specifically said to have the nickname ‘Hexe’ rather than ‘Zauberer’ or any more masculine forms, despite the resulting grammatical difficulties. Presumably witches are more well known for their physical deformities than wizards, warlocks, or any more typically masculine elderly and physically disabled wielders of magic.

⁴²⁵ “An das Ministerium des Innern Hauptabtl. Personal und Schulung” 22. March, 1950 Personal Akten Nr. 14882 - Knippel, THStAW

⁴²⁶ “Ansprache vor dem Landtag von Dr. Rudloff,” 24.7.1947, LT-MfV, Nr. 76, THStAW

general governmental restructuring that accompanied the formation of the DDR. It is worth noting that he was not dismissed or even forced into retirement as a result, but that “due to his capabilities” he was “entrusted with the management of the Altenburg State Library, effective March 1, 1950.⁴²⁷” It is likely that this was a palatable compromise for all parties, as it retained Knippel in useful and productive position while removing the direct interactions with the public that were made so problematic by his physical deformities.

In Knippel’s situation, the SED was also relatively more secure in its political position than the CDU was when they protected Laake. They still attempted to help Knippel, but the efforts that they made on his behalf were not pursued with nearly the determination as was observed with Laake. This may have simply been a matter of how relatively important each man was at that moment in time. The SED was an ascendant political party that, if anything, could feel secure in their immediate future. Having recently formed via the merger of the Soviet-Zone’s branches of the KPD and SPD they held a dominant position in the Soviet-sanctioned “Democratic Block” that was quickly forming the basis for de facto single party governance in the SBZ.⁴²⁸ It is likely that, as much as they valued the support of old party members such as Knippel, the political reality was that they did not need them to guarantee their future success and well-being. The Hessian CDU, in comparison, was far more politically threatened during this same period. The grand coalition that it was co-member of was beginning to fragment, and a new round of

⁴²⁷ “An das Ministerium des Innern Hauptabl. Personal und Schulung” 22. March, 1950 Personal Akten Nr. 14882 - Knippel, THStAW

⁴²⁸ For more on the early political history of the German political parties in the Soviet Zone, see Siegfried Suckut, *Blockpolitik in der SBZ/DDR 1945-1949 : die Sitzungsprotokolle des zentralen Einheitsfront-Ausschusses: Quellenedition*, (Köln: Verl. Wissenschaft und Politik, 1986)

parliamentary elections was becoming ever more inevitable. The support of locally important and influential party members such as Laake was of vital concern under these circumstances, and directly resulted in the increased pressure and scrutiny that his case received.

The direct pressure received by Stein from members of the SPD over the Laake issue is also worth noting. While it is difficult to argue for a motivation based on a lack of evidence, it should be noted that their interest in his case was fairly unusual. While it was customary for a political party to write to the Education Ministry regarding the disposition of district-level administrative offices, it was almost always in support of one of their own who was a candidate for the position. To write in opposition of someone, even a candidate from another political party, was uncommon. The politically charged atmosphere resulting from the upcoming election and the especially inflammatory nature of the charges against Laake go some way toward explaining this interest, but it is perhaps best understood as a further elaboration of his local importance in the electoral landscape. He had not only been identified by the CDU as valuable enough to be worth protecting, but had apparently also been identified by the SPD as valuable enough to actively attempt to have him removed or transferred elsewhere.

The partisan use of political influence on those who held administrative positions was a two-way street. The examples of Laake and Knippel exemplify the use of this influence as the proverbial carrot, a reward for service and utility to the party whether in the past or present, and a recognition of the potential held by that relationship for the future. Where there is a carrot, however, there is often a stick as well. In this case the stick was the threat of professional repercussions if individuals did not align themselves with

the political party in power, or at least the political party that held power within the educational ministry. This was a means by which the parties could use their influence to ensure that those whose professional aspirations drove them to seek administrative office swore at least nominal allegiance to their political program, but also a way to guarantee that the specific educational programs that they envisioned were carried through.

The SED in particular was prone to using professional aspirations as leverage to ensure that administrators were politically loyal to them. Educational reform was a flagship issue for the young SED. It was also an integral component of a much larger social engineering program, one that they hoped would give birth to a much more equal society founded on strong anti-fascist principles. From the beginning of their consolidation of political power within the Soviet Zone, they made it explicitly clear to the teachers and administrators within it that their continued employment was contingent upon aligning politically with the SED.

As early as 1946 the CDU in Thuringia wrote to complain to Walter Wolf, the State Director for Education. Their constituents were under great pressure to join the SED, and those with professional ties to the state were facing direct threats to their livelihoods if they did not comply. A selection of specific, representative examples was provided: In Eisenach a city school inspector named Linde had made it clear to his subordinates that their continued employment and prospects for promotion were dependent on joining the SED. In Mosbach a teacher by the name of Schmiedel was informed that his promotion to principal would only be possible if he became a member of the SED and that if he refused he would be immediately transferred to a school in another municipality. The immediate consequence of these abuses was also highlighted, namely the flight of badly needed

trained educators to the west. The case of a teacher named Nellhübel was provided as an example of this. He felt himself so harassed, his professional prospects so constrained, that he informed his local CDU representative that it was likely he would soon seek a new position in one of the Western Occupation Zones.⁴²⁹

Parties carving out their own protected spheres

This kind of political pressure wasn't an end in and of itself, but part of a larger agenda of building protected institutional spaces that the political parties could safely operate from. In Thuringia, as we have seen, it was part and parcel of a greater program of political coordination, a second *Gleichschaltung* designed to properly orient the ideology of German society to function under a new single party dictatorship. In Hesse, however, it was part of the political calculations of the post-war CDU, as they prepared for what turned out to be an extended period as the party in opposition.

Ministers come and go with changes in government, but mid- and low-level administrators such as school inspectors are much harder to replace en masse due to the technical expertise and qualifications required to perform their jobs. This was the basic insight of a local politician in Darmstadt when he wrote to the Educational Ministry that “[we must] include among the school inspectors suitable teachers that have proven themselves valuable not only as management professionals, but also through their

⁴²⁹ Land ThMinVB Nr. 22 Doc 131

knowledge of educational matters.⁴³⁰ Top-level administrative positions within a government demand administrative expertise and political savvy, but the mid-level and local positions usually need to be staffed by competent administrators who also have extensive professional knowledge of the field that they are overseeing.

Furthermore, the supervisory role that they filled meant that they had a significant amount of power over their subordinates, and if motivated to do so could use that power to shape the political landscapes of their offices. In addition to being directly useful as party activists, they also had the ability to pressure those beneath them to either conform to their own party ideology or at least not actively campaign against it. CDU leadership was very much aware of the potential that this represented. The head chairman of the CDU for the district of Oberlahn expressed this directly when he observed in a letter to Stein that, "It is a well-known fact that primary school teachers lean strongly to the left. They will surely be less likely to follow this tendency when they know that the people who are responsible for their advancement and assessment are members of the CDU."⁴³¹

The importance of these concerns is evidenced by the care and consideration that was given to the disposition of lower-order administrative posts within the Hessian Ministry of Education. In March of 1949 an audit was performed of all of the school inspector positions within Hesse. For each inspector the following information was provided: Name, date of birth, any academic titles, political affiliation, religious affiliation,

⁴³⁰ "auf Erlaß v. 24. April 1946" Letter from Regierungspräsidium Darmstadt Abteilung V, Erziehungswesen to Herrn Minister für Kultus und Unterricht, 5. August 1946, Abt 504, Nr. 848, HHStAW

⁴³¹ "Margarate Pfeifer, Kreisvorsitzende der Christl. Demokr. Union, Kreisverband Oberlahn an den Herrn Kultusminister Dr. E. Stein," 4.9.1948, Abt. 1178 Nr. 138, HHStAW

and the city or town that they worked in. This information was compiled by region and then sorted by city so that, at a glance, the makeup of the officers within any particular geographical area could be established. Additionally, on the reverse side there was an additional table summarizing the data handwritten in pencil. While the identity of the person who organized that table can not be confirmed with certainty, the handwriting looks very similar to examples known to have come from Minister of Education Erwin Stein, and it was located in a file that contained a significant amount of correspondence from and to his office.⁴³²

The political situation in Hesse at this time was fairly volatile. In the years after the war a grand coalition government was formed between the two largest parties that emerged from the first post-Nazi elections, the SPD and the CDU with the SPD-affiliated Christian Stock leading as minister-president. The results for the four major parties of the first votes in 1946 were: 42.7% SPD, 30.9% CDU, 15.7% FDP, 10.7% KPD.⁴³³ There were numerous statements, particularly early on, regarding the ways that the four major parties would work together in a unity government to ensure that Hesse, and Germany as a whole, got back on its feet after the war. The reality that quickly emerged, however, was that the FDP felt itself increasingly marginalized and the KDP was excluded wherever possible.⁴³⁴

This political situation is reflected in the figures reported for the political affiliations of the school inspectors. Out of 48 total, 19 were SPD, 11 CDU, 3 FDP, and 15 “without party.” Of those who were listed as not being affiliated with a party 4 were noted to be

⁴³² No Title, Wiesbaden 24. March 1949, Abt. 1178, Nr. 81, HHStAW

⁴³³ “hessisch Landtagswahlen 1946” cited in Kropat, *Hessen in der Stunde Null*: 92

⁴³⁴ *Ibid*: 70-80

catholic.⁴³⁵ If they are added to the CDU totals you get the following percentages: SPD: 40%, 31% CDU, 6% FDP. While not perfect, these figures roughly match the proportions that the general population voted in in the 1946 election, with one major and one more minor exception: The major issue is that KPD is completely unrepresented. Given the political climate at the end of the 1940s this is not particularly surprising, but it does strongly indicate that political considerations as well as professional credentials played a role in the distribution of offices within the Educational Ministry. Furthermore, the FDP is significantly under-represented compared to what one would expect if it was a straight forward allocation of positions according to the merits of the ballot box. This lines up fairly well with what one would expect from a two-party coalition made up of the largest parties in the state. As long as the coalition remained stable it made sense to jointly disperse the school inspector positions between themselves while marginalizing non-partner parties.

There are also indications within other correspondence that the distribution of offices was jointly agreed upon by senior officials in the SPD and CDU earlier on in the occupation, but that this relationship fell apart as the next election approached. In late 1947, for example, Minister Stein noted in a letter to a ministerial undersecretary regarding the disposition of a number of administrative posts that “The filling of this post should be agreed upon between the SPD and CDU. Just to be safe the *Regierungspräsident* in Kassel should be consulted and his opinion sought.⁴³⁶” Only a year later matters had deteriorated to the point that Stein’s fellow Christian Democrats were writing to exhort him to “promote

⁴³⁵ No Title, Wiesbaden 24. March 1949, Abt. 1178, Nr. 81, HHStAW

⁴³⁶ “Dr. E. Stein an Ministerialrat Dr. Müller” 5. December, 1947, Abt. 504, Nr. 848 HHStAW

the interests of our members, and only our members - the concerns of other parties do not concern us” in the face of what they perceived as an ever-more openly hostile SPD.⁴³⁷

History would prove these concerns justified: all succeeding governments in Hesse through 1987 were either SPD majorities or coalitions between the SPD and a much smaller, non-CDU partner.

Given the concern already displayed among members of the CDU with regards to how individual administrators could impact local elections and the consciousness that they had of how those positions could be employed to alter the political makeup of local school systems, it seems likely that the CDU was preparing at least part of the Hessian educational administrative apparatus as an institutional stronghold. In the event of an electoral defeat such a redoubt would guarantee them some continued say in policy matters, as well as provide a professional safe haven for some of the party activists that would be needed to wage future elections and stage a political resurgence.

Conclusion

Late in April 1949 the Hessian branch of *Allgemeine Deutsche Lehrer- und Lehrerinnenverband* (ADLLV), wrote to the Hessian Ministry of Education. The ADLLV had been recently founded in the tradition of similar organizations such as the Weimar-era *Deutscher Lehrerverein* (DLV) and *Deutscher Philologenverband* (DPV) that had been dissolved following the Nazi seizure of power. Unlike their Weimar-era predecessors they

⁴³⁷ “Landessekretariats der CDU an Herrn Kultusminister Dr. Erwin Stein,” 3. November 1948, Abt. 1178, Nr. 154, HHStAW

were not divided professionally; they claimed to represent educators in institutions of all levels. They were also not tied to a specific political party, unlike the Nazi-era *Nationalsozialistischer Lehrerbund* (NSLB). First, they asked the ministry for assurances that “the re-employment of former ‘fellow-travelers’ [nominal members of the NSDAP] will not be turned back through intermediate level bureaucrats.” Second, that “regarding the promotion of officials only professional qualities should be decisive and partisan demands, from whatever side they may come from, must remain decoupled.” Finally, “the officials who have served in leading positions since the beginning of the 1945 school year and who have provided their service to the satisfaction of the authorities should as soon as possible - if it has not already happened - be appointed permanently.”⁴³⁸

For an organization dedicated to protecting the professional interests of its members, the substance of the requests does not come as any great surprise. Fairness in hiring and promotion, the quick resolution of problems and avoidance of unnecessary red tape, and an appeal on the part of as of yet temporary employees who have shown themselves capable and dedicated to their positions; anyone would welcome this kind of advocacy from a professional organization. That it was necessary to write directly to the head of the Hessian Ministry of Education and emphasize the need for these measures is, however, noteworthy.

The fact that the ADLLV was active and petitioning on behalf of educational administrators for what amounts to fair, even governance without partisan bias gives some small indication of the degree to which the opposite was increasingly true. These were not

⁴³⁸ “Allg. Deutscher Lehrer- und Lehrerinnenverband Landesverband Hessen an das Ministerium für Kultus und Unterricht,” 13.4.1949, Abt. 504, Nr. 848

only professional positions to be coveted for personal gain, these were also positions of public authority that became targets in and of themselves because of the political utility that they had and the uses to which they could be put. The fact that it was possible to even consider shielding administrative posts from political interference also illustrates how far German governance had come since the collapse of central authority in the spring of 1945.

The fact that positions of all kind within the government - both elected seats and appointed administrative posts - were now contested between multiple political parties was the largest and most obvious change. In a multi-party system the various coalitions and parties are constantly seeking their own advancement and leverage over their opponents.

Under a single party system there is no interior rival to compete with, but the system is so dominated that the party in charge can do as it will. While there is no direct competing over government positions as a means of achieving an advantage over one's opponents, absent this competition it is trivial for the party in power to dominate the entire bureaucratic apparatus in pursuit of its own goals. The elimination of multi-party struggle does not lead to a de-politicization of public life, but its hyper-politicization. State and party themselves blend together in a way such that it is difficult to determine where one ends and the other begins, and political rivalries are played out inside the state political apparatus rather than in the open. Institutional and professional organizations that would otherwise provide some level of protection from this, or at least advocacy against it, are coopted into a joint State/Party apparatus and serve only to enable the politicization of daily life in pursuit of the single party state's goals, or the individual aspirations of whoever controls it.

But Germany under occupation was not Nazi Germany nor, in the Soviet Sector, was it yet the single party dictatorship that would define the German Democratic Republic for the duration of the Cold War. The appeals of the ADLLV stand as evidence of this, a moderate voice imploring for government employees to maintain a degree of professional aloofness from the political struggles that Germany's repopulated political landscape was giving birth to. That these skirmishes took place does not indicate a weakness in the burgeoning democracy of the BRD, nor does it presage the slide into SED domination under the DDR. The fact that the parties increasingly chose civil administrative posts as both their battlegrounds and their political prizes highlights the utility and advantage that these positions provided and helps to illuminate the importance of the roles that they played in rebuilding not only German education, but German political life in general.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

There are some men whose only mission among others is to act as intermediaries; one crosses them like bridges and keeps going.

- Gustave Flaubert, *Sentimental Education*,
1891⁴³⁹

The hope for schools and education always grow after a low point. After the 30 Years War emerged a Comenius, after the Napoleonic Wars a Pestalozzi, after the collapse of 1918 there were all manner of new school laws. But at no other time was the pedagogical mission so great as today.

-Karl Trinks, 1946⁴⁴⁰

In the summer of 1946 a pedagogical conference in Weimar discussed how to move forward with rebuilding the educational system in Thuringia. Its purpose was to produce a manifesto so as to “open a broader discussion in the Thuringian schools with the goal of raising

⁴³⁹ Gustave Flaubert, *Sentimental Education: The story of a young man*, Dora Knowles Ranous, ed., (New York: Bretano's, 1922): 317

⁴⁴⁰ Karl Trinks, *Schulreform* (Weimar: Thüringische Vertragsanstalt, 1946), TRINKS 105, BBF-DIPF

the quality of methodology.⁴⁴¹” The author of the manifesto’s introduction was not provided, however as chairman of the committee that produced it Dr. Walter Wolf, the minister of education for the state, was most likely heavily involved. The manifesto observed that in the Weimar Republic progressive educational methods were unhesitatingly applied by a large portion of the German teaching profession. But “on the one hand old, regressive methods were not rooted out energetically enough, and on the other hand methods were disseminated that . . . were undemocratic.” It was this situation, the manifesto contended, that had prepared the groundwork for the complete disgrace of every teaching methodology under the Nazis. “Building the instruction on the *Führerprinzip*, the schools sank back into florid, hollow phrases and empty verbiage [*Wortkram*], in dreary military drill and sinister force, terror, and beating. At the end of the Third Reich we stood methodologically before a void.⁴⁴²”

This was, in essence, the basic problem that all German educators faced by the middle of 1946. Throughout most of the country the worst of the immediate physical barriers to renewed education had been overcome. School buildings were either repaired enough or relocated, teaching materials had been hastily adapted from whatever sources were available, the teaching staffs of the schools had been purged of the most vocal Nazi party members, and the children themselves were generally fit enough to allow at least a limited return to daily classroom instruction. What remained was the much harder work of deciding how to move forward and constructively build upon the legacy of Nazism.

In the areas under Soviet occupation that would one day become the German Democratic Republic that answer lay largely in the creation of a single track educational system with a

⁴⁴¹ “Methodisches Manifest,” Nachlass Sothmann, Folio 1, BBF-DIPF

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*

polytechnical emphasis that was, for the most part, unlike anything that had been attempted on such a scale in Germany before. It represented a complete break with not only the National Socialist nightmare of the previous decade, but with a longer educational tradition that many blamed for having laid the groundwork for it. If the finest minds that were trained under Weimar and the Kaiserreich proved just as susceptible as any others to the allure of militarism, racism, and leader-worship, then why bother trying to revive those educational traditions? Better to begin anew, in a state founded on anti-fascist ideals and dedicated to socialist equality.⁴⁴³

In the areas under control of the Western Allies that eventually became the Federal Republic of Germany the schools that emerged were much more recognizable descendants of the educational systems that were already in place before the occupation. Denazification was carried out, new curricula put in place, and the worst excesses of tracked education reformed, but the structure of the institutions themselves remained recognizably intact. Even so, the rebuilt schools in the west were much more open to children from all walks of life than their Imperial German forbearers and, while there were still distinct pathways leading to specific academic outcomes, there was much more ability for students to cross over between them.⁴⁴⁴

What explains this divergence in German education during the Cold War? It cannot only be credited to the differing ideologies of the military occupations that directly controlled these regions after World War 2. Vague as the earliest statements on educational reform under the Allied Control Commission were, they provided a consistent baseline that each side had to work

⁴⁴³ For an overview of Russian policy in the SBZ, see Norman M. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A history of the Soviet zone of occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1995).

⁴⁴⁴ For an overview of the democratization of German education in the American sectors, see Brain M Puaca's *Learning Democracy: education reform in West Germany, 1945-1965* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009)

from, and the earliest American proposals were just as critical of the pernicious aspects of long-term tracking as their Soviet colleagues.

A large part of the answer to that question lies in the reestablishment of the German civil service early on in the occupation period. Seen at the time as a necessary measure to streamline administration and ensure a minimum level of local compliance with Allied directives, the presence of local administrators introduced a German voice to the issue of educational reconstruction. It was these administrators who were the critical element in deciding how the schools that they oversaw would develop. In the Soviet Zone a shared vision for a new, better type of German society led them to support the Soviets and their German socialist and communist allies. Part of that larger plan for societal renewal was a fundamentally different type of educational system. In the Western Zones, including American-occupied Hesse, a different historical understanding of National Socialism led to efforts that were more focused on reform than reconstruction and an emphasis on establishing representative government as quickly as possible. This provided the framework needed by local administrators who wanted to find a positive basis for a non-Nazi future in Germany's past to stall the most aggressive reforms and push back against the occupation forces in favor of a reformed school system, but one that was still recognizably German.

The importance of intermediaries

Educational administrators in Germany were largely able to accomplish this because of their status as transactional intermediaries. Intermediaries were important because they provided a needed bridge for communication between the occupation forces and the general population.

They could also function as selective intensifiers, working to forward some agendas or goals while working to block others. It is this aspect that gave them a previously unrecognized amount of agency in the reconstruction of German education as they chose to either cooperate with or push back against the proposed reforms of the occupation powers based on their own interests, goals, and beliefs. The power inherent in this agency and the inherently political nature of educational reform in turn made them both active participants in and the targets of the emerging post-war political parties as post-war German political life slowly emerged from its singular focus on antifascism.

In order to understand the differences that emerged between East and West German education during the cold war it is necessary to consider the specific historical contexts that each occupation zone had to operate within. German, American, and Russian education had a shared history stretching back into the 19th century. Both American and Russian educational experts had a strong respect for German education that dated back to the struggles of their own countries to modernize their educational systems and the internationally recognized accomplishments of German educators and pedagogues during that period. They also shared assumption of the power of education as a nation building and social engineering tool. This view stemmed from a shared effort to use domestic educational policy to shape their own countries and steer their development in desired directions.

Wartime planning for the occupation period was hampered by the physical distance between the USSR and the US, difficulties in communication rising out of the war itself, as well as organizational difficulties within each country. The immediate needs of the war also discouraged long-term planning about issues that might be ideologically or politically contentious - such as the future organization of central Europe - until the waning days of the

conflict. In the US these organizational problems manifested itself mostly in the form of inter-departmental rivalries between the Department of State and the Department of War, as well as a generally weak sense of direction or priority for the post-war period coming from the executive branch.⁴⁴⁵ In the case of the USSR the existentialist nature of the conflict combined with Stalin's mercurial leadership style led to a similar concentration on the immediate goal of militarily defeating Nazi Germany.⁴⁴⁶ Once ultimate victory became inevitable early plans began to be sketched out. However events outran the ability of military planners to articulate a specific vision for the future of the German state, much less German education.

Both the Americans and the Soviets recognized the need to include Germans in any plan for post-war educational reconstruction, if only to legitimize their efforts at reconstruction and reform in the eyes of the German public. For this reason German educators living in exile, many of them among those who fled initial Nazi suppression in 1933, played a limited but still significant role in articulating a vision of what post-National Socialist schools in Germany could look like. The lack of a shared wartime experience still raised questions of credibility. As events unfolded it became clear that many domestic victims of Nazi repression had both the political and cultural legitimacy to take on early leadership positions. In some extraordinary instances they literally walked out of concentration camps and into the ministerial offices of nearby towns.

In the mean time, the early advances into the German periphery in late 1944 and the total military collapse in the spring of 1945 revealed to Allied planners the extent of the job ahead of them. They were faced not only with the need to ideologically purify and pedagogically

⁴⁴⁵ James F. Tent, *Mission on the Rhine: Reeducation and denazification in American-occupied Germany*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982): 13-30

⁴⁴⁶ Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*: 9-20

restructure an educational system that had been converted by the Nazis into an effective means of communicating their own ideology to the next generation, but with the reality of the incredible physical hardships that they would need to labor under. Five years of aerial bombardment and the final stages of intense urban fighting had heavily damaged many of Germany's cities and towns. Schools were just as likely as any other building type to have sustained damage, and their status as government property gave them higher than average exposure to the risk of seizure for use by the occupation authorities. This disastrous situation was further complicated by the refugee crisis that gripped Central Europe as the war ended. The net result was that even when suitable accommodations could be found for re-opening a school, the children who could make it were frequently traumatized, malnourished, under-clothed, and frequently facing home lives that were not conducive to education.

The first steps that were to be taken in reforming German education in the post-war era and the general framework that the occupation forces were to work within were agreed upon at the Potsdam Conference following Germany's military surrender. Soviet and western planners had a number of shared assumptions and priorities about post war German education. They agreed, for example, that it required an extensive purging of both course content and personnel in order to 'denazify' the system as a whole, that whatever system emerged needed to be 'democratically' integrated into society - however one chose to define that term -, and that the new school system must be far more inclusive and serve as a means for social mobility rather than an exclusive bastion of social privilege.⁴⁴⁷ However, their fundamentally different historical understandings of National Socialism and its origins left them in deep disagreement

⁴⁴⁷ "Potsdam Agreement: Protocol of the Proceedings, August 1, 1945" in *A Decade of American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents 1941-1949 Prepared at the request of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations by the Staff of the Committee and the Department of State* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1950).

about the specifics of what kind of educational systems should be allowed to return. In general, the Western Allies were much more in favor of reforming German education as it had existed pre-1933, while the Soviets were favored an approach that would completely rebuild German education along more egalitarian lines.

The circumstances of military occupation thrust some German educational administrators into the role of “transactional intermediaries.” This rigorously denazified and politically vetted cohort of administrators had access to and working relationships with the occupation forces necessary to serve as valuable ‘go-betweens’ between the military governments and the German population as a whole. Frequently they were selected because of pre-existing international connections or political ideologies that had placed them at odds with the National Socialist state but which now facilitated, both linguistically and culturally, their work as intermediaries.⁴⁴⁸

In their function as intermediaries, school administrators were in the unenviable position of facing pressure from both the occupation authorities who were primarily concerned with reforming the German educational system along anti-militarist, anti-fascist principles at any cost, and a German public that was at best ambivalent about such changes and more concerned with the immediate costs to themselves and their children. In addition they served as valuable go-betweens within the German teaching profession itself. As the structure of German education was reformed various professional boundaries and structures needed to be reformed as well, and this created significant friction within the educational community. Educational administrators had to mediate these conflicts in order to prevent them from escalating into the kinds of crises that drew often unwanted attention from the military authorities.

⁴⁴⁸ For a general introduction to the concept of transactional intermediaries see, Alida C. Metcalf, *Go-betweens and the Colonization of Brazil: 1500-1600*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005

This intermediary role placed German educational administrators in a position where they had a very significant amount of agency. As intermediaries they could lend their support unevenly to one side or the other, in effect acting as a third voice on contentious issues. This power could, for example, be used to push reform efforts over populations that had no particular desire to change educational systems that they had known for generations, or it could be used to help delay the implementation of certain reforms until elections put the military government in a much less powerful position relative to the German population.

Educational administrators in the east tended to support the goals of the occupation authorities to found an entirely new German school system and advanced them over the concerns of the local population. In the west this tendency was reversed, with administrators fighting a rear-guard action to delay the implementation of the most radical reforms and generally encouraging the reconstruction of the pre-war educational system within democratic guidelines rather than the creation of something entirely new. This was due to a combination of factors, including political self-selection as those with personal ideologies that favored the Soviets settled in the east and those opposed to that worldview settled in the west, membership in and responsibilities to the various political parties that were beginning to re-emerge as civic life resumed, and any sense of obligation that they felt towards their fellow countrymen.

The political power that was inherent in these intermediary functions did not go unnoticed by the political parties active at this time. Whether operating within the context of the early reemergence of multi-party representative politics in Hesse,⁴⁴⁹ or the Soviet-assisted

⁴⁴⁹ Wolf-Arno Kropat, *Hessen in der Stunde Null: 1945-1947: Politik, Wirtschaft, und Bildungswesen*, Wiesbaden: Selbstverlag der Historischen Kommission für Nassau, 1979: 7-9 and 71-81

domination of the East German political scene by the SED,⁴⁵⁰ the power that these administrative positions wielded drew the attention of politicians and political parties. This was compounded by the fact that educational issues were of paramount concern for a number of them, particularly in the East where the SED was counting very heavily on the success of the *Einheitsschule* as part of its broader package of reforms for German society.

Political parties attempted to influence educational administrators in a number of ways. These included the double carrot and stick of overt political protection and pressure. Where possible they used relationships with higher ranking educational administrators to ensure that political affiliation became a consideration in the hiring, retention, and geographical disposition of candidates for office. They also used their influence to protect threatened administrators that were allied with them and to attack those who were not. In its most extreme form, this political influence could be made to construct institutional redoubts within the non-elected administrative layers of the government to protect them against the changing weather of parliamentary politics, or as institutional launching pads for initiatives that would otherwise prove unpopular with the general public.

As 1949 drew to a close and the two post-war German nations became internationally realized - if not always recognized - entities, the educational frameworks that they inherited from the occupation zones that they replaced were strikingly different. In the West major reforms had taken place, yet 'reform' was still the operative word. Delay, negotiation, and general resistance to change both on the part of the citizenry and the educational administration led to a school system that while much more accessible and open than its Imperial antecedents was still a recognizable descendent, the most recent iteration of an educational legacy that could be traced

⁴⁵⁰ Henry Krisch, *German Politics under Soviet Occupation*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974) : 101-171

back to the era of Frederick the Great. The traditional tripartite division of the major educational pathways remained, and although it was much more accessible than before there remained inequalities that reformers would fight against for decades to come.

In the East, nearly the opposite had taken place. Spurred by a military occupation authority that was actively enabling the domination of the local political scene by a single party and overseen by administrators who shared their vision of a completely renewed German society, the educational system was in the process of being rebuilt from the ground up as a single educational pathway for the majority of the GDR's children, a unified educational pathway that would theoretically grant every child an equal opportunity within the same educational system. The groundwork for this new system was laid down in mid-1946 with the Law for the Democratization of the German Schools, and had been actively supported by an administrative cohort that agreed with its aims, both ideologically and pedagogically. The transformation was not complete in 1949. It would take until the mid-50s to completely transition over to the new model, however the wheels had been set in motion.⁴⁵¹ Tragically, for all of the progressive reforms made in East German education, it was this school system rather than the comparatively un-reformed West that became a tool for propping up a second German dictatorship.

The importance of administrators

Now, as then, intermediaries are all around us; we use them every day and usually take little notice of them. For the most part, historians share this blind spot. When they are spoken of

⁴⁵¹ For an excellent overview of the development of East German education from 1949 through to the collapse of the GDR, see, Emmanuel Droit. *Vorwärts zum neuen Menschen?: Die sozialistische Erziehung in der DDR (1949-1989)*, (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2014)

at all the tendency is to concentrate upon their function, upon the groups or people or institutions that they connect and the results of this connection for those who can now interact with one another. What is missed in this approach is that people are not, in fact, bridges and unlike the architecture that they are often compared to, their position as intermediaries grants them a significant amount of agency. This study contributes to our understanding of a unique period in German history by not only recognizing those intermediaries, but attempting to trace what influenced their behavior in that role and how this in turn affected the reconstruction process in Hesse and Thuringia and the subsequently radically different approaches to education adopted in East and West Germany for the duration of the Cold War.

It also corrects the current literature on denazification, at least as it pertains to German schools. Far too often it is represented as something that failed in the West, especially by those scholars who either participated in or wrote in support of the student movements of the 1960s that helped to shine a light on the numerous instances where educators and officials with unsavory personal histories had been allowed to resume important functions in public life.⁴⁵² Traditionally it has also been asserted that East German denazification was substantially better, presumably because of an inherent antipathy to re-employing Nazis based on the founding anti-fascist principles of the German Democratic Republic. More recent scholarship has shown this to be problematic at best, and indicates that German teachers specifically were re-hired at roughly the same rates as their western counterparts and due to approximately the same set of reasons: the extremely large number of teaching professionals needed after the war and the comparatively poor performance of the “New Teachers” (*Neulehrer*) who were rushed through

⁴⁵² for an example of this literature and the case that it makes against West-German reform see Saul Robinsohn and J. Caspart Kuhlmann, “Two decades of non-reform in West German education” in *Comparative Education Review* Vol. 11, No. 3, (October 1963)

expedited training programs to fill the immediate manpower shortages caused by denazification.⁴⁵³

This work, however, suggests that a narrow framework of ‘success’ and ‘failure’ is far too narrow to understand as complex and fraught a topic as the political cleansing and spiritual revival of an educational system, much less an entire government or nation. A far more nuanced approach is required, and one that evaluates the results of the process within the context of what the contemporary needs were. Among educational administrators there was at the very least a short term success in denazification. This may be due in part to the number of positions that had to be filled, which was orders of magnitude smaller than the total number of teaching positions that had been vacated. It should also be noted that even though the rigors of early denazification may have been relaxed in the 1950s, during the period covered here they very much remained in force. This is significant, as it was during this period that much critical political and cultural development occurred in both sides of occupied Germany. Denazification, in short, did not need to be a long-term success in order for it to succeed at its ultimate goal of fostering a healthy post-war German society that could resist any revanchist temptations. By effectively removing - even if only for a couple of years - those with tainted political histories it created the space to re-found German political and civic life along antifascist principles strong enough to withstand the later re-employment of those troublesome individuals.

Ultimately, it is hoped that the greatest contribution of this work may lie in a greater appreciation for how contingent the success or failure of military occupations and nation building projects are on local factors and the complex interplay of specific contexts. The U.S. Army and Soviet Red Army that defeated the Nazis paid far too little attention to the details of

⁴⁵³ that book on Brandenburg an der Havel - Lansing?

what Central Europe would look like in the post-war period. Many of the measures that were undertaken and much of what was accomplished was done through ad hoc mechanisms that were at best temporary solutions to problems that had political, social, and cultural antecedents that stretched back centuries.

The struggles to rebuild the German school system highlight this. It was only through the participation of the Germans themselves that the scholastic legacies of National Socialism could be laid to rest, and much of the future path of German education was dependent upon the decisions and proclivities of a relative handful of men and women in administrative positions. Yet Germany was, with hindsight, generally considered a ‘good occupation.’ There was no militaristic recidivism, no broadly supported rebirth of populist fascism, no great Central European threat to international security in the 20th century.

None of this would have been possible were Germany not a modern, developed nation capable of producing its own educated, administrative class after the military defeat of 1945. Military intervention is a powerful tool in foreign diplomacy, however it is not enough to tear down one regime and replace it with another. No amount of infrastructure building and no number of purple-stained fingers will sustain the creation of a successful government if it lacks a native civil administration that can skillfully and professionally oversee the renewal of public life in a constructive manner. In the case of the German school system that pool of skilled personnel was not only available, but eager to contribute to what they saw as a unique opportunity to reshape many of the underlying assumptions and goals of German education. This can not be said of many other countries that have suffered the indignity of ‘nation building’ at gunpoint in the last quarter century, and many of them are worse off for it.

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