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Evaluating Democracy

The 1946 U.S. Education Mission to Germany

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Abstract: Following World War II, a group of American educators was assigned the task of evaluating the U.S. military government's program for reconstructing Germany's educational system. Although issuing a generally positive report, this education mission identified a number of persistent tensions that ultimately undermined America's efforts to rehabilitate and reform German schooling. As with the American occupation of Germany during the postwar era, current U.S. foreign policy directives include establishing educational institutions in the "broader Middle East" as a primary mechanism for inculcating democratic values and ideals. Determining America's success with these efforts, especially in ideologically conservative nations, poses a significant challenge to evaluators. Through an analysis of the 1946 *Report of the United States Education Mission to Germany*, this article presents a historical case study of the stumbling blocks, failings, and successes of one attempt to evaluate efforts in infusing democratic values into educational institutions in a fallen totalitarian state.

Keywords: *democracy; foreign policy; reconstruction; reform; reeducation; cooperation*

Overview

The United States is currently engaged in nation building in ways that few would have predicted prior to September 11. Initially confronted with the challenge of winning U.S.-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, America now faces a potentially greater struggle in establishing security and stability in what the Bush administration has labeled the "broader Middle East." As

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American Journal of Evaluation, Vol. 26 No. 2, June 2005 267-277

DOI: 10.1177/1098214005276285

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with the American occupation of Germany following World War II, current U.S. foreign policy directives include establishing educational institutions as a primary mechanism for inculcating American-style democratic ideals. Determining America's success with these efforts, especially in ideologically conservative nations such as Afghanistan and Iraq, poses a significant challenge to evaluators. Through an analysis of the 1946 *Report of the United States Education Mission to Germany*, this article presents a historical case study of the stumbling blocks, failings, and successes of one attempt to evaluate efforts in infusing democratic values into educational institutions in a fallen totalitarian state.

German Educational Reconstruction

Following the D-Day invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944, the Allied offensive into Nazi Germany occurred with striking speed. Rapid military advances led the governments of Great Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and the United States to agree to divide postwar Germany into four zones of occupation. Although establishing a Control Council to make decisions for the German nation as a whole, Allied governments and military commanders claimed significant control over their respective zones. The United States created an Office of Military Government to administer its zone, which included three German *Länder* or states (Greater Hesse, Württemberg-Baden, and Bavaria) with cities such as Munich, Nuremberg, Frankfurt, Heidelberg, and Stuttgart, as well as a sector of Germany's capital, Berlin.

Even prior to Germany's surrender on May 7, 1945, Allied leaders acknowledged that winning the peace in Europe following the end of the war would prove difficult. The Allied failure to implement a lasting security arrangement after World War I led many Americans to believe that Nazi military defeat was simply the first step in establishing postwar international stability. The second required reeducating the German people. As one scholar observed following the war,

Thoughtful people realized that military victory marked only a phase in a far more basic conflict, one involving economic, psychological, and diplomatic pressures, and one which would ultimately be determined on that most intangible yet fundamental of battlegrounds—the mind of the defeated peoples. (Hall, 1948, p. 59)

The belief that Germans could be reeducated away from fascism and toward democracy was widely shared. General Lucius Clay (1950), for instance, who served as deputy governor of the American zone of occupation from 1945 to 1947 and as governor from 1947 to 1949, described the military government's efforts during that period as "the appeal to the German mind." As strong as this belief was, however, it relied on the unproven assumption that reeducation could "psychologically disarm" the German people (*Occupation of Germany: Policy and Progress*, 1947).

At the Potsdam meeting of Soviet, American, and British leaders in the summer of 1945, Josef Stalin, Harry Truman, and Clement Attlee agreed that "German education shall be so controlled as completely to eliminate Nazi and militaristic doctrines and to make possible the successful development of democratic ideas" (*Germany, 1947-1949: The Story in Documents*, 1950, p. 49). Reflecting the Allies' adoption of a punitive approach toward Germany following the war, this multilateral statement also indicated their intent to raise a democratic nation up from the defeat of fascist Germany. Indeed, the Potsdam statement on German education mirrored U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) directive 1067, which required that "all educational institutions . . . be closed" and that "a coordinated system of control over German education and an affirmative program of reorientation" be established by the U.S. military government so as to "completely eliminate Nazi and militaristic doctrines and to encourage the development of democratic ideas" (Dorn, 1957; *Germany, 1947-1949: The Story in Documents*, 1950, p. 26; Kellermann, 1978; Snell, 1959).

JCS 1067's punitive policies conflicted with the strategies of soldiers responsible for implementing German educational reconstruction in the American zone. Many of these recruits were experts in the areas of education, religion, and culture who the U.S. Army had commissioned into the Education and Religious Affairs (E&RA) subsection of the Allied Expeditionary Force. E&RA assessments frequently contradicted the spirit of JCS 1067, admonishing that

in the long run only the Germans could re-educate themselves; that any plan obviously imposed by foreigners relying almost exclusively on their own judgment would never take root in Germany and would therefore be scrapped the minute our troops were withdrawn. (Knappen, 1947, pp. 44-45)

In addition, political in-fighting between U.S. Treasury, State, and War Department officials ultimately resulted in E&RA assessments being dismissed as "too soft" on the Germans (Knappen, 1947). Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, for instance, whose plan for the deindustrialization of Germany was, for at least a brief period, approved by President Roosevelt, was especially critical of E&RA proposals (Kuklick, 1972). As a result, eliminating Nazi and militaristic doctrines from Germany's educational system, a process known as "denazification," became the U.S. military government's top priority, leaving E&RA personnel in a difficult position (Hearnden, 1974). Unable to persuade policy makers with their assessments of the needs of the German people and the infeasibility of the U.S. military government's strategy for German educational reconstruction, E&RA officers received orders to implement a denazification program in which they had little faith.

Denazification required removing educators who had been members of the Nazi Party from influential positions in Germany's educational system and eliminating Nazi propaganda from schools, colleges, and universities. Teachers and textbooks provided the initial targets for American denazification efforts. According to historian James F. Tent (1982), however, denazification proved "maddeningly difficult to execute." In the German town of Aachen, for instance, E&RA officers discovered that 80% of male teachers had been recruited for military duty during World War II, creating a significant teacher shortage. Moreover, because a large majority of Aachen's residents were displaced by the war, only 47 teachers remained to staff the town's 50 educational institutions. E&RA officials required these 47 to complete the *Fragebogen*, a questionnaire used by the Allies to determine the extent of German citizens' political involvement in the Nazi Party. Ultimately, only 26 of the 47 were deemed "untainted," mostly because they were housewives who substituted at the schools during the war and not professional educators who had been strongly encouraged to join the Nazi Party during Hitler's rule. As a result, Tent (1982) wrote, "the pool of politically acceptable teaching talent in Aachen was made up, for the most part, of forty-to-fifty-year-old women—a situation that would repeatedly occur throughout the U.S. Zone" (p. 42).

Providing a reasonable supply of textbooks for use in German schools also posed a significant problem for E&RA staff. As British historian Arthur Hearnden (1974) wrote, the textbook issue was crucial "for much of the re-education programme" relied on the components of the curriculum, "particularly in history." Many German school texts were destroyed in fires during the Allied assault, however, and almost all that remained had been printed following the Nazi rise to power in 1933. These newer books were infused with anti-Semitism and Nazi propaganda. One, for instance, posed the following question to students: "The moneylender charged the farmer's widow 12 per cent interest per year on a loan of six hundred marks for four years. Out of how much money did the Jewish swindler cheat the widow?" (Knappen, 1947, p. 65). Unable to delete such instances of Nazi bigotry from the texts (there were simply too many of them) and not having the luxury of time to contract for new texts, the U.S. military sought an adequate supply of pre-Nazi, Weimar Republic textbooks. Because most of these were destroyed prior to the war, E&RA officers obtained microform versions of 270 Weimar texts from collections in the United States. Upon reading them, however, the officers were disappointed to find the texts characterized by German nationalism and mili-

tarism (Zink, 1947). Having little alternative, they approved the least objectionable and sought potential publishers. Yet, here again, the officers confronted a vexing problem. E&RA staff proposed immediately publishing 4 million texts for use in the American zone of occupation (Knappen, 1947). American and British publishing facilities were strained to capacity, however, and many German printing presses had been destroyed. Moreover, a paper shortage limited the production capacity of German publishers. As a result, just under 1 million texts were printed in 1946 (Clay, 1950).

Equally troubling was the wartime destruction of Germany's school buildings. Of Aachen's more than 50 educational institutions, only 12 structures remained standing by 1945 (Tent, 1982). When E&RA personnel attempted to claim those buildings, they found that the U.S. military had begun using them for noneducational purposes, such as barracks, hospitals, and displaced persons camps (Clay, 1950). Shortage of physical space would pose a significant and continuing challenge in America's efforts to operate German schools. Nevertheless, by October 1, 1945, E&RA staff had secured sufficient space, teaching personnel, and school supplies to permit reopening elementary schools in the American zone of occupation. By year's end, approximately 1.8 million students—80% of Germans between the ages of 6 and 14—were attending class (Knappen, 1947).

The Education Mission

At the same time that E&RA was scrambling to reopen schools in Germany, the National Education Association was urging the U.S. State and War Departments to send a "small committee" of professional educators to Germany to make a firsthand study of both "the remaining evidence of the disastrous effect of Nazi education upon German youth and adults" and "the present situation and outlook for German education" (Tsuchimochi, 1993, p. 177). Given the difficulties confronting E&RA staff in reopening Germany's schools, it is hardly surprising that the U.S. military government initially resisted the idea of an education mission. E&RA chief John Taylor thought that such a body could have only one of two objectives: establishing a new educational program or evaluating an existing one. Taylor found neither goal appealing (Tent, 1982).

General Douglas MacArthur, however, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers in Japan, welcomed the idea of civilians offering assistance in the long-range planning of Japanese reeducation and invited a group of American educators to Japan in March 1946. Confronted with political pressure following the Japanese mission's well-publicized return to the United States (and not wanting to be unfavorably compared with his Pacific counterpart), General Lucius Clay agreed to permit a group of civilian educators to assess the achievements of the U.S. military government's education program in Germany (Tent, 1982).¹ Consequently, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State William Benton announced that a mission would travel to Germany "for the purpose of observing and evaluating" the U.S. military government's educational program in the American zone of occupation:

Since the reeducation of the German people from Nazism and militarism toward the acceptance of peace-loving, democratic ideals and ways of life is fundamental for the winning of the peace, the group of educators will be called upon to bear a responsibility of the highest importance. (*Report of the United States Education Mission to Germany* [hereafter *Report*], 1946, p. xiii)

Although the education mission to Japan consisted of 27 members, the U.S. military government requested that just eight educators travel to Germany in August 1946 to conduct the evaluation. As they had with the Japanese mission, State Department officials accepted primary responsibility for recruiting and selecting mission members, which they indicated would include men, women, and representatives of Catholic and Protestant denominations, as well as diverse geographic regions

within the United States (Tsuchimochi, 1993). The U.S. military government, however, expressed dissatisfaction with the State Department's initial list of candidates. Although accepting a proposed two-member increase, it criticized the group for including "no person with teacher training background," "no person with 'general' education [general college] background," and "no person active in public school administration" (Tsuchimochi, 1993, p. 183). In response, the State Department modified the list, eventually selecting, inviting, and receiving acceptances from:

- George F. Zook, President, American Council on Education, Chairman of the Mission
- Bess Goodykoontz, Director, Division of Elementary Education, U.S. Office of Education
- Henry H. Hill, President, George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, Tennessee
- Paul M. Limbert, President, YMCA College, Springfield, Illinois
- Earl J. McGrath, Dean, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa
- Reinhold Niebuhr, Professor, Union Theological Seminary, New York, New York
- Reverend Felix Newton Pitt, Secretary, Catholic School Board, Louisville, Kentucky
- Lawrence Rogin, Director of Education, Textile Workers Union of America, CIO, New York
- T.V. Smith, Professor, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois
- Helen C. White, Professor, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin. (*Report*, 1946, p. xiii)

The group was well qualified to conduct the evaluation. All were professional educators, and most had dedicated their careers to elementary, secondary, or higher education teaching and/or administration. Moreover, although from a contemporary evaluator's perspective, it might seem that the greatest challenge confronting this group was agreeing on a set of ideals that exemplified a democratic education, mission members shared a vision of schooling's social function that was both rooted in early-20th-century theories of Progressive education and characteristic of the American educational elite during the war era. Describing their intentions for Germany's postwar educational system, for instance, mission members employed Progressive rhetoric to define the schools' role in fostering democratic attitudes:

The school emerges as the common center of mutuality, where ideally all children meet all children as fellow-children before any have been narrowed by class or creedal bias. But even to approach this ideal we must have not merely the essentially negative safeguards of creed, race, and class toleration but have also exemplified in the school the positive *method* of living which democratic citizenship enshrines and climaxes. The goal of democracy is the democratic man. (*Report*, 1946, p. 14)

Reflecting principles of Deweyian educational theory, this description represented Progressive education's "conventional wisdom," to borrow historian Lawrence Cremin's classic phrase, and offered the mission a common discourse for use in conducting its evaluation (Cremin, 1961).

The education mission arrived in Berlin on August 24, 1946, and after spending several days conferring with U.S. military government officials, traveled to the three *Länder* under American occupation. The methods employed by the mission to conduct its formative evaluation were generally inclusive and resembled what today might be labeled democratic and deliberative. Although much of the data that mission members collected was suspect (having been compiled by the U.S. military government prior to their arrival), they visited German schools, colleges, universities, and informal educational groups, holding meetings not only with American military officials and E&RA staff but also with German teachers, students, and professors. Although their observations were circumscribed by time limitations, members reported substantive discussions with German educators regarding school and community needs (*Report*, 1946). Following their return to Berlin, mission members spent almost one fourth of their total time in Germany conferencing, analyzing, and interpreting their observations. Chairman George Zook submitted the mission's final report prior to

departing for the United States on September 26. On October 15, 1946, the State Department released 30,000 copies of the evaluation for distribution in the United States and another 20,000 copies of its German translation for distribution in Germany (Tsuchimochi, 1993).

The Mission Report

The evaluation began with an extensive overview of the development of German schooling, what mission members labeled “Factors Conditioning German Education” (*Report*, 1946). It is significant that neither of the factors identified as influential in German education involved Nazi ideology. Indeed, the mission observed that “the more perverse and obvious Nazi theories and practices” had already become “abhorrent to the German people themselves” (*Report*, 1946, p. 1). Instead, mission members held “the special character of German culture, with its peculiar defects and virtues” responsible for inhibiting German democratic development, especially in educational institutions. Conceiving of German history and culture as encompassing a central paradox, the mission reported, “No country—unless it be ancient Greece or Rome—has contributed more generously to the common treasures of our civilization.” Yet it also noted that “some of the deeper sources of recent perversities are to be found in this same culture . . . some of the perversions of Nazism were exaggerations of strains of thought and feeling, deeply rooted in German history” (*Report*, 1946, p. 1).

The second factor credited with conditioning Germany’s educational system resulted directly from the war—political, economic, social, and physical devastation. “Nowhere in the world,” mission members declared, “has it been possible to erect the structure of successful democratic self-government upon starvation and disorder” (*Report*, 1946). Members claimed that for German reeducation to succeed, “it is necessary that an economy exist, or be in the making, in which the democratic spirit can develop and democratic institutions be established” (*Report*, 1946). This challenge was complicated not only by the general disorder associated with Germany’s military defeat but by its division into zones of occupation, which in the summer of 1946 were already proving to be a point of contention between the Allied democratic leadership and the Soviet Union. Moreover, 2 million German refugees from Nazi annexed territories in Czechoslovakia and Hungary, expelled by international agreement following the war, returned to the American zone of occupation, making an already problematic situation especially difficult.

In the report’s second section, mission members described a number of tensions they encountered while conducting their evaluation. The first involved the paradox of the U.S. military government’s promoting cooperative, democratic principles in Germany through the use of coercive, undemocratic methods:

Military victory has committed the Allies to a task contradictory to democratic genius. This genius is to allow and even to encourage variety in thought and feeling. Far from this luxury, however, military success has obligated the democracies not only to an untoward recommendation of their own virtues but to a downright denial of the right of Axis ideologies further to propagate or even longer to live. (*Report*, 1946, p. 10)

Although generally dissatisfied with this strategy, the mission chose not to condemn the military government for its punitive policies but instead relied on the language of the Potsdam accords as a standard against which to evaluate America’s efforts.

Mission members understood the Potsdam agreement as consisting of a “double directive” composed of a “negative and positive aspect” of America’s “commitment to victory” (*Report*, 1946). They interpreted the negative aspect—“German education shall be so controlled as to completely eliminate Nazi and militaristic doctrines”—as justifying the military government’s “initial severity”

in denazifying teachers and textbooks (*Report*, 1946, p. 10). However, the mission took issue with the “rough and ready procedures” used to screen the German teaching force. According to the mission, the military government removed from their positions many teachers who had only a passing interest in the Nazi Party, creating an immense teacher shortage. Members argued that no productive system of democratic education could be developed when student-teacher ratios remained at 80 to 1, with students attending class only 2 hours in the morning before another shift of 80 students arrived to be taught by the same teacher. To prevent such missteps in the future, the mission urged devolving control over educational reconstruction to German civil authorities and recommended that “the respective [German] *Länder* ministries should be allowed to screen teachers whose dismissal was never mandatory and to reemploy at once on probationary status those found to be at once least politically unfit and most efficient pedagogically” (*Report*, 1946, p. 11).

Turning its attention to the positive aspect of the Postdam accord—“the successful development of democratic ideas”—the mission issued a harsh criticism of the organization and philosophical underpinnings of Germany’s educational system. Historically, Germany’s schools and curricula were severely tracked. By World War II, most children attended some preschool or *Kindergarten*, and beginning at age 5 or 6, lower elementary school, or *Grundschule*. This common elementary school experience lasted only 4 years. At the age of 9 or 10, children underwent examination for admission to secondary school. Ten percent of students gained entrance to institutions intended to prepare them for higher education, including the *Gymnasium*, which offered a classical curriculum, and the *Oberrealschule*, which offered a curriculum emphasizing sciences and modern languages. The *Aufbauschule*, a school designed to provide rural students and “late bloomers” a chance to “catch up,” allowed access to higher education or vocational training tracks (Tent, 1982). The other 90% of students proceeded to the upper grades of elementary school, known as the *Volksschule*, or to the *Realschule* for eventual business, technical, or other vocational training. When these students turned 14 or 15, they began 4 or more years of full-time vocational education (divided between classroom and practical training) in the *Berufsschule* or full- or part-time vocational training through the *Fachschule* (Hearnden, 1974; Tent, 1982). The outcome of this organizational structure was a caste system of education that determined, to a significant degree, students’ educational and career opportunities at a strikingly early age.

Perceiving the school as “a primary agency for the democratization of Germany,” mission members determined that this system “cultivated attitudes of superiority in one small group and inferiority in the majority of the members of German society, making possible the submission and lack of self-determination upon which authoritarian leadership has thrived.” It continued,

Nowhere is there the possibility of a common school life, nor in fact any place for that broad base of general education which in many other countries provides a common cultural and social experience. . . . It is clear that the educational system of a country may reinforce the foundations of a “class society,” or it may build a common culture for all citizens. For a democratic society, the second is the only possible choice. (*Report*, 1946, p. 19)

In place of the traditional system, the mission argued that an American-style educational system would better foster democracy in German education. Accordingly, the mission recommended uniting the nation’s elementary, secondary, and vocational schools into one comprehensive system. “The terms ‘elementary’ and ‘secondary’ in education,” mission members suggested,

should not primarily be conceived as meaning two different *types* or *qualities* of instruction . . . but two consecutive *levels* of it, the elementary one comprising grades 1 to 6, the secondary one those from 7 to 12. In this sense the *vocational* schools should be considered a part of the secondary school system. (*Report*, 1946, p. 22)

Mission members expected this typically American educational arrangement to promote democratic values over authoritarian ones in German schools. They noted, however, one significant difference between their proposed system and America's public schools—German law provided for no separation of church and state. As in the United States, the German school system had historically been separated into private parochial schools, or *Bekenntnisschulen*, and public community schools, or *Simultanschulen*. In Germany, however, both school systems received state support. Moreover, students received sectarian instruction in both systems, with teachers from either Catholic or Evangelical faiths instructing public school pupils with similar denominational affiliations.²

The mission credited “counsels of prudence no less than considerations of humility” (*Report*, 1946, p. 13) with preventing the U.S. military government from imposing separation of church and state on Germany following the war. Yet mission members also noted that it should not

in the name of democracy allow such arrangements in education as will deprive any religious claimants of equal opportunity or as will through continuous bickering for pious advantage depreciate the high claims of a free spiritual life upon the very generation whose magnanimity will condition the future of the democratic way of life in Germany. (*Report*, 1946, p. 13)

In other words, although willing to defer to tradition in this area of German educational life, mission members privileged developing democratic qualities over religious instruction in Germany's schools. “Toleration,” they concluded, “must be guaranteed not only for different believers but for disbelievers as well, and the school must be maintained as a place where the young have at least a chance to grow less sectarian than the old” (*Report*, 1946, p. 13). As sternly as it asserted this position, however, the mission recommended neither alternative structural arrangements for religious education nor guidance on how to provide a democratic education in a sectarian learning environment.

Unable to resolve the tension between educating for democracy and religious belief in German education, the mission targeted the school curriculum as the area with greatest potential for fostering democratic values. In contrast to the significantly different academic and vocational curricular tracks historically experienced by German students, the mission emphasized the need for the “whole school program” to “make a significant contribution to democratic experience.” Its proposals did not completely restrict curricular differentiation, however. Again using strikingly Progressive rhetoric, the mission described the German secondary school curriculum as “crowded with subjects, heavy with academic tradition, and in most respects remote from life and ill-adapted to the present and future needs of the pupils.” It recommended replacing this program with “an elastic organization of the curriculum in core subjects and elective courses,” permitting “the differentiation necessary with regard to the future vocational or professional intentions of the students.” (*Report*, 1946, p. 22) The “most important” component of this reform, according to the mission, involved instruction in democratic citizenship, especially in the “content and form” of the social sciences. Mission members believed that history, geography, civics, and *Heimatkunde* or “local history” would play crucial roles in nurturing democratic attitudes and values among German students. They insisted, moreover, that democratic principles infuse German teaching methods, including “cooperative class projects, classroom committees, discussion groups, school councils, student clubs,” and “community service projects” (*Report*, 1946, p. 23).

Following their evaluation of German elementary and secondary schools, mission members turned their attention to the universities and “higher schools,” teacher education, youth groups, adult education, films, radio, and libraries, highlighting the educational qualities of these areas as well as the contributions each could make to developing democracy in Germany. Among its recommendations, the mission suggested a longer period of teacher training and establishing “a separate pedagogical faculty” at German universities “for the teaching of the professional subject matter required

by the future teachers" (*Report*, 1946, p. 31). As with elementary and secondary education, the mission noted that denazifying German college and university staff was a necessary but not adequate condition for developing democratic approaches to higher education. "Instruction must be provided which will inform students about domestic and international affairs and teach them the habits and techniques of democratic living," mission members claimed. "It is recommended that all universities and higher schools include within each curriculum the essential elements of general education for responsible world citizenship and for an understanding of the contemporary world" (*Report*, 1946, p. 30).

Youth groups had played a highly visible role in Nazi propaganda during the 1930s and, according to the mission, had "special significance for the reeducation of the German people." Mission members affirmed their belief that "the attitudes and ideas of young people may be modified more readily than those of their elders in the direction of a democratic way of living" and suggested that the military government continue to encourage German youth to form voluntary associations "to provide for a constructive use of leisure time and to give training in democratic organization and procedures." Similarly, the mission proposed establishing education programs to provide adults with "training in self-government to give an understanding of its spirit as well as its techniques of operation." It also recommended providing adults with accurate information on the state of "world affairs" through adult education programs, by using film and radio, and by replacing library books burned during the Nazi era (*Report*, 1946, pp. 33-40).

The mission's evaluation ended with recommendations to significantly increase personnel in the E&RA branch of the U.S. military government, to continue American aid for reconstructing Germany's educational system, and to develop an extensive exchange program between the United States and Germany for "students, teachers, and other cultural leaders" (*Report*, 1946). Mission members concluded their report by reaffirming their essential faith in the power of education to catalyze change in Germany's political, economic, and social systems. "For this process of attaining democracy in Germany in this generation," members wrote,

education is the one best instrument to employ. . . . Hence, so long as the United States continues as an occupying power in Germany, it should encourage and use the instruments of education to attain its major purpose, namely the attainment both of a democratic spirit and form of government. (*Report*, 1946, p. 50)

Conclusion

Writing for *The Washington Post* 1 year following the education mission's return to the United States, Fred M. Hechinger (1947) declared that the German people had "glibly" rejected "American school reforms." "Today it is clear," Hechinger wrote, "that the run of the mill German education official, from the Minister down, does not intend to carry out any large-scale reforms whatsoever. At best, in the more progressive sections of the country, minor concessions have been made" (Hechinger, 1947, p. B8). Although differing in their analyses of the education mission's report, historians generally concur with Hechinger's assessment of American efforts to reconstruct Germany's educational system following World War II. Regarding the mission's evaluation specifically, Arthur Hearnden (1974) has written, "In the end their [mission members'] plans for restructuring the system made very little impact" (p. 37). Historian Gary Tsuchimochi (1993) has similarly noted that the mission had "little effect on German educational reform." Indeed, although the mission urged the reorganization of German elementary and secondary schools to reflect America's comprehensive system of public education, by 1950, Germany's school system remained essentially the same as it had been in 1933.

Given the United States' influential position in Europe following World War II, how did the U.S. military government and the U.S. education mission fail to infuse democratic principles into Germany's educational system? The central reason for U.S. failure was rooted in a paradox—how to implement democratic educational reforms without resorting to undemocratic methods such as coercion, imposition, and control. The education mission attempted to resolve this dilemma by acknowledging the “stern and corrective task” (*Report*, 1946, p. 2) comprising America's occupation and pacification of Germany and issuing its approval of the military government's denazification program. However, when addressing German educational reconstruction, mission members recommended “the most complete possible civilianization of educational authority and of military government and in the transference of functions of authority to German agencies of government” (*Report*, 1946, p. 2). In other words, rebuilding Germany's political and economic structures might necessitate long-term military intrusion, but reconstructing Germany's educational institutions required transferring authority away from coercive American military leaders toward cooperative German civilians. “This transfer of authority is a wise measure,” the mission urged, “creating democratic life by practice rather than precept” (*Report*, 1946, p. 43).

Members of the education mission trusted that the German people would adopt democratic educational reforms of their own free will. Doing so, according to the mission, would engage Germans in the practice of democracy. Germany's failure to embrace democratic reforms during the Weimar period following the First World War, however, suggests the extent to which the mission's optimism was ungrounded. Having uncovered a conservative ideology infusing Germany's educational system, mission members qualified their own recommendations, urging that the U.S. military government's “advisory function” be “supplemented by the right of veto, to be exercised whenever our stated objectives of developing a democratic education seemed imperiled” (*Report of the United States Education Mission to Germany*, 1946, p. 43).

Unable to resolve the tension between cooperation and control, the education mission left the U.S. military government without an alternative approach to German educational reconstruction. When Germans in the American zone of occupation resisted U.S. educational reform in the years following World War II, the military government, lacking clear guidance from the mission's evaluation, continued to focus on solving basic problems such as a shortage of teachers, buildings, textbooks, and supplies. As a result, Germany's education system remained essentially unaltered in the postwar era. The nation that evolved into the democratic state of West Germany was, ultimately then, not a product of educational transformation but of significant political and economic developments, including the cold war and the Marshall Plan.

As an organization trained in the practice of coercion, the U.S. military was not skilled in the art of cooperative educational reform. Following World War II, a clear mismatch between military expertise in fighting wars and U.S. foreign policy objectives in securing peace limited America's capacity to instill democratic principles in German schools, colleges, and universities. As one scholar observed at the time:

What we have done is to substitute for the Nazi and Japanese military dictatorships our own military dictatorship with our own equivalent of thought control. Because we are neither as thorough nor as ruthless as they, our model has been somewhat less efficient. It appears evident that authoritarian methods in attempting to teach democracy destroy their own goal. (Hall, 1948, p. 69)

How might the United States' post-World War II inability to constructively address the differences between winning wars and establishing peace illuminate current American foreign policy efforts? As with U.S. plans to reconstruct Germany's educational system, the Bush administration's publicly proclaimed goal of bringing democracy to the “broader Middle East” relies on that region's peoples to cooperate in their own reeducation even though the U.S. military wages combat

in Iraq's cities and the mountains of Afghanistan. As historians have demonstrated, the United States has repeatedly used pedagogy and educational reform to "soften" its use of military force to democratize foreign nations (Milligan, 2004). Evaluators should take note. American efforts to promote democratic education in nations with ideologically conservative cultures have historically been undermined by the paradox of democratic intent and authoritarian practice. Meaningful evaluations of these projects require that evaluators understand the nature of this paradox and its seemingly irreducible quality. Through an explicit, albeit politically unpopular, acknowledgment of the tensions associated with achieving democratic educational objectives through military means, evaluators may be able to develop new frameworks for assessing the success or failure of democratic educational reforms in environments traditionally hostile to cooperative and inclusive methods.

Notes

1. The purpose of the education mission to Japan was "to assist and advise" the U.S. military's education program in that nation. In contrast, the purpose of the mission to Germany was to observe and evaluate. Whether mission members were to assess the assumptions underlying the U.S. military government's educational program in Germany or simply evaluate its success in achieving a set of previously determined objectives was never precisely clarified, leading to some confusion over the mission's actual role.

2. The mission estimated that 96% of Germans living in the American zone of occupation belonged to either Catholic or Evangelical denominations.

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