

## ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: SOMEONE ELSE'S TEXTBOOKS: GERMAN EDUCATION 1945-2014

Ann Abney, Master of Arts in History, 2016

Thesis Directed By: Professor Piotr Kosicki, Department of History

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, German education repeatedly transformed as the occupying Americans, Soviets, and western-dominated reunification governments used their control of the German secondary education system to create new definitions of what it meant to be German. In each case, the dominant political force established the paradigm for a new generation of Germans. The victors altered the German education system to ensure that their versions of history would be the prevailing narrative. In the American Occupation Zones from 1945-1949, this meant democratic initiatives; for the Soviet Zone in those same years, Marxist-Leninist pedagogy; and for the *Bundesrepublik* after reunification, integrated East and West German narratives. In practice, this meant succeeding generations of German students learned very different versions of history depending on the temporal and geographic space they inhabited, as each new prevailing regime supplanted the previous version of “Germanness” with its own.

SOMEONE ELSE'S TEXTBOOKS: GERMAN EDUCATION 1945-2014

by

Ann Abney

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Advisory Committee:  
Professor Piotr Kosicki, Chair  
Professor Jeffrey Herf  
Professor Marsha Rozenblit  
Professor James H. Williams

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# Dedication

*Dedicated to*

*Dr. Hendrix and Maggie –*

*For believing that I could do this long before I did*

## Acknowledgements

This thesis was a journey that began, naturally, with a book. But it ended with people, and those are the ones that deserve all the thanks. Thanks first go to my advisor, Dr. Piotr Kosicki, who shepherded this project from the bare bones idea to a full draft and beyond. His comments and patience have helped me immensely both with this project, and my own growth as a scholar.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis examines changes in German identity by examining education in two different eras. It puts into conversation the transition out of World War II into a divided, post-Hitlerite Germany, with the transition in 1990 from two Germanys into a unified *Bundesrepublik*. The Americans, Soviets, and *Bundesrepublik* Germans used their control of the German secondary education system to create a new model of what being “German” meant. In all three cases, be it in two different halves of a Germany divided after the Second World War, or a single, reunified Germany, the dominant political force set the definitions of “Germanness” for a new generation of school-age Germans.

In both the postwar and post-reunification periods, the victors replaced the prior German education system to ensure that their version of history would become the prevailing narrative. In the American Occupation Zone from 1945-1949, this meant initiatives to encourage pluralism and liberal democracy; for the Soviet Zone in those same years, Marxist-Leninist pedagogy; and for the *Bundesrepublik* after reunification, integrating East and West German topics in history textbooks. In practice, this meant that the postwar history learned by successive generations of high schoolers differed depending on the temporal and geographic space they inhabited. This thesis, then, illuminates the process of creating a national identity through education.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> James H. Williams, “Nation, State, School, Textbook,” in *(Re)Constructing Memory: School Textbooks and the Imagination of the Nation*, ed. James H. Williams, (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2014), 1.

The total defeat of the German Reich in World War II left Germans in the summer of 1945 seeking stability in the chaotic mess of wartime destruction. The Allied occupations brought Germany a chance to start afresh and create a stable political and cultural order, with a democratic state. One of the ways to achieve this goal was to redesign the education system. By remaking German education in the image of their own systems, the Allied victors could effectively shape what it meant to be German.

In the 1930s, the Third Reich had instituted racially motivated methods of education that infiltrated every aspect of the curriculum, from calculating square meters to the policies of Otto von Bismarck. Education in the Third Reich was a system that could not stand in a postwar Germany; however, it did inform the new system on how not to educate German youth. Having learned from both the Weimar and Nazi experiences, the federal Ministry of Education and *Länder* (state) Ministries of Education could work together to shape an education structure and curriculum that would promote free and participatory thinking.

American official John Taylor wrote that, “At the present time the social climate of Germany is not conducive to the development of a strong program of education,” as a warning that what remained of the Germany Ministry of Education was in no position to enact the sweeping reforms needed to rid the education system of the taints of Nazism.<sup>2</sup> These taints included the ideology of the Aryan master race,

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<sup>2</sup> Report of the United States Social Studies Committee to Germany, April 1947; Reports by Visiting Consultants on Education; Records Pertaining Primarily to Cultural Exchange and School Reopenings, 1945-1949; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, Records of the Education Branch ; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP. Brian Puaca, *Learning Democracy: Education Reform in West Germany, 1945-1965*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), 15.

the notion that Germany had been the victim in World War I, opposition to both communism and capitalism, and virulent antisemitism. In each of the four Zones of Occupation, the responsible Allied occupation government began instituting its own reforms. The American sector implemented changes using a liberal approach, based on its own educational system. This included civic education, to educate students on their role in selecting political leaders and discussion-based learning meant to inspire critical thinking by pushing students to develop independent opinions instead of memorize facts by rote. The American Zone decentralized education, placing the decision-making bodies in the *Länder* instead of one institution for the whole sector. This was, in fact, a return to pre-Nazi practice; education had been decentralized in Germany since 1871 except for the years of the Third Reich. This decentralization would remain in force after the American, British, and French Zones joined together in 1948 to create the Trizone.

Meanwhile, the Soviet sector's reforms were founded on practical education, intended to lead to an industrial job, thereby growing the ranks of the working classes. The heightening of tensions among the powers occupying Germany – between the Soviet Union and the Western powers -- led to an accelerated implementation of Soviet-style education. In 1949, with the creation of the German Democratic Republic (*Deutsche Demokratische Republik*, DDR), the education system finished its transition to Marxist-Leninist education with its focus on building socialism, after the Soviet model.

By then the Soviets had established their authority by handpicking and then training East Germans for positions within the East German state. Their reforms

taught East German students the evils of the fascist state they had replaced.<sup>3</sup> The education system also looked toward the future. Through efforts at a centralized secondary school system as well as the work of Marxist-Leninist propaganda in the textbooks, the East German state could firmly place itself as a Soviet satellite state. Through these education reforms, East German children learned that their “Germanness” was dependent on the Soviets, who had liberated them from the “rule of the monopolists and the fascist bureaucrats” and placed them “firmly in the camp of peace, democracy, and socialism.”<sup>4</sup>

Four decades later, when Germany reunified in 1990, *Bundesrepublik* Germans once more faced the need for education reforms, looking to dismantle the communist education system that the Soviets had built. This system hailed from the late 1940s, when the Soviets transitioned their Zone into a satellite state complete with Marxist-Leninist principles of class revolution. The East German system had markedly departed from its West German neighbor, not just in ideological but also in institutional terms. The 1965 Law on the Unified Socialist Education System had created a school system based heavily on the ten-grade *Allgemeinbildene Polytechnische Oberschule* (General Secondary Polytechnic School, POS), with over ninety percent of students continuing on to vocational training.<sup>5</sup> The West Germans, however, continued their three-track secondary school system with the *Hauptschule*,

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<sup>3</sup> John Rodden, *Repainting the Little Red Schoolhouse: A History of Eastern German Education, 1945-1995*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 34.

<sup>4</sup> Gerhard Mannschatz, *Geschichte 12, Erweiterte Oberschule*, [East] Berlin: Volk und Wissen Volkseigener Verlag, 1963, 215.

<sup>5</sup> "Gesetz über das einheitliche sozialistische Bildungssystem vom 25. Februar 1965," *Verfassungen*, December 9, 2004. <http://www.verfassungen.de/de/ddr/schulgesetz65.htm>.; Rosalind O. Pritchard, *Reconstructing Education: East German Schools and Universities after Unification*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999), 29.

*Realschule*, and *Gymnasium*.<sup>6</sup> In 1990, both eastern and western Germans thought education could become truly German – erasing any influence from outside actors such as the Americans or Soviets who had each tried to implement their own version of “Germanness.” Initially, the results of this new German identity were based on the dominant political forces – those who had previously been West Germans.

It would take almost a decade after reunification to achieve an integrated “Germanness.” Former East Germans became a strong minority political force that promoted an inclusive German identity.<sup>7</sup> Second, East and West German postwar histories began to receive an equal treatment to reflect the burgeoning inclusive German identity. This thesis, then, argues, that while the number of East and West German topics achieved even treatment in the textbooks, the primary sources did not, reflecting a pro-West bias.

### Historiography

Each chapter of this thesis has its own historiographical stakes, but a few key historians have shaped its narrative arc. Because it covers variously defined territories (the American and Soviet Zones, and Germany as reunified in 1990) in two different eras -- one postwar (1945-1949), and one post-reunification (1990-2014) --there is no single author who covers the entirety of this thesis.

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<sup>6</sup> *Hauptschule* goes to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade with vocational training for two years afterward. *Realschule* is the middle level, ending after grade 10, historically it was a school for those entering a technical college, in particular engineers. More recently, *Realschule* is for students entering jobs that do not require a university degree, such as shopkeepers and bank tellers. *Gymnasium* is the longest and highest form of German high school. It goes to the 13<sup>th</sup> grade, and ends with an examination known as the *Abitur*, which permits students to attend university. Puaca, *Learning Democracy*, 42.; Merle Ingenfeld, Interview by author, June 14, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Martin Blum, “Remaking the East German Past: *Ostalgie*, Identity, and Material Culture,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 34, no. 3 (2000): 229-253.

The author relies on Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* for the theoretical framework of the thesis.<sup>8</sup> Anderson's argument that nationalism is constructed through a model of inclusion and exclusion is apt to describing the periods of German division. Additionally, Anderson argues that this model was made possible by "print-capitalism" allowing "people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways;" this frames well the argument that high-school history textbooks have the ability to create a narrative of "Germanness" for students.<sup>9</sup>

For the American Occupation, among others, Brian M. Puaca's *Learning Democracy* covers the American Zone from 1945 to 1949, as well as the first steps of the Federal Republic of Germany. Puaca pays particular attention to the American efforts to establish student governments and other student-focused initiatives. The heart of his story is the Education Branch of the U.S. Occupation Military Government (OMGUS). He argues that the reforms that the Education Branch initiated significantly shaped postwar democracy in the Federal Republic of Germany.<sup>10</sup> The emphasis on student involvement, such as organizing an after-school student government organization,— a push that the Education Branch hoped would teach students the nuts and bolts of the democratic process, as well as to emphasize that their political decisions could have lasting repercussions.

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<sup>8</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>10</sup> Puaca, *Learning Democracy*, 3.

James Trent in *Mission on the Rhine* has a broader scope than Puaca, emphasizing the lack of direction OMGUS showed in the first postwar months.<sup>11</sup> Trent's argument is that there were many factors – from differing educational cultures to an underestimation of the variety of needs German schools had – that caused the Education Branch to pursue competing goals of German involvement and American control over the German historical narrative. Trent suggests that, if the Education Branch had had a clearer goal from the outset, its mission to democratize and establish a stable German education system would have been more successful.<sup>12</sup>

For the Soviet Zone, *The Antifascist Classroom* by Benita Blessing argues that the Soviet Zone's educational reform efforts produced both a new German understanding of the Nazi Regime, and an education system based on the founding narrative of Soviet antifascism.<sup>13</sup> This thesis builds on Blessing's work, understanding "antifascist education" as an emphasis on first teaching the students the evils of fascism, and later, as tensions heightened between the Soviet and Western Zones, weaving in a narrative that placed capitalism on par with fascism, and therefore at odds with the Marxist-Leninist principles that guided the Soviet Zone.<sup>14</sup>

This thesis also draws on John Rodden's *Repainting the Little Red Schoolhouse*.<sup>15</sup> Rodden examines East German education from the closing days of

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<sup>11</sup> James F. Trent, *Mission on the Rhine: Reeducation and Denazification in American-Occupied Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>13</sup> Benita Blessing, *The Antifascist Classroom: Denazification in Soviet-occupied Germany, 1945-1949* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 4.

<sup>14</sup> Jens Gieseke, "Review," Review of Benita Blessing, *The Antifascist Classroom: Denazification in Soviet-occupied Germany, 1945-1949*, *Central European History* 43, no. 3 (September 2010): 560.

World War II to the fifth anniversary of reunification in 1995. The book argues that East German education had many coats of “paint” – from Nazism, to antifascism based almost exclusively on denouncing the Nazis, to Marxism-Leninism based on the communist principles of a worker’s revolution, to the West German system that the former East German *Länder* adopted in 1990 with reunification.

Rosalind Pritchard’s *Reconstructing Education* tells the story of post-reunification German education. Pritchard begins with an overview of the events of reunification going from the Fall of the Wall in November 1989 to the official reunification on October 3, 1990, posing the question, “Did education in the New *Bundesländer* have to change as quickly as it did?”<sup>16</sup> Pritchard argues that it did: without the rapid-fire changes in education that she uses the rest of the book to examine, eastern Germany would have collapsed even further into an economic, cultural, and educational depression. She bases her argument on the changes in both the old and new *Bundesländer* (her terms for the former West and East Germany) in order to see how reunification affected the German education system and its pupils, and by extension, German society as a whole. These changes showed the disconnect between East and West Germans based on which *Länder* required more changes than others based on the education laws built into the Reunification Treaty.

For the first few years after the war, both Americans and Soviets taught the Holocaust as part of current events, since the Nuremberg Trials were then underway. To teach the Holocaust as part of the greater narrative of what being “German” meant, the Zones first had to redefine Germanness on their own terms. Jeffrey Herf’s

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<sup>15</sup> Rodden, *Repainting the Little Red Schoolhouse*.

<sup>16</sup> Pritchard, *Reconstructing Education*, 14.

*Divided Memory* argues that East and West German society handled the memory of the Holocaust through the lens of a Cold War context, leading to differing depictions of the Nazi Regime.<sup>17</sup> *Divided Memory* is the linchpin of the historiography on all postwar German memory policy -- not just in education -- concerning World War II and the Third Reich. Herf provides a foundation for understanding the creation of a new Germanness, to be passed from generation to generation. The first and second chapters of this thesis build on that foundation, showing how the victors' control of the education system was instrumental in creating two competing German histories.

And yet, these authors focus specifically on one geographic and temporal space. They do not put the different postwar occupation zones -- the birth of a divided Germany -- into conversation with the process of the country's later reintegration. That is the task of this thesis. The historiography already establishes how the victors -- be it American, Soviet, or *Bundesrepublik* German -- established legitimacy within the framework of the new state. This thesis goes one step further by showing how the legitimacy, created through education, established a new version of "Germanness." This new version of "Germanness" was propagated throughout the schools and the government-approved texts, depended on the ruling party and their goals for Germans. Whether it was promoting a generalized system of liberal democracy, the worker's revolution, or that of one, unified Germany, each victor specifically chose the elements included in education and the textbooks to make sure the next generation defined itself as the victors wished.

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<sup>17</sup> Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

### Sources and Methods

The American chapter is based on sources from the US National Archives at College Park, Maryland. Record Group 260, Records of U.S. Occupation Headquarters, World War II, provided the primary source material for the chapter. OMGUS's Education Branch produced several archival series that informed the author's research on their efforts.

Meanwhile, the Soviet chapter used materials from the German *Bundesarchiv* (Federal Archives) at Berlin-Litcherfelde. The record group DR 2 showcased the *Ministerium für Volksbildung* (Ministry for National Education) and its work in the Soviet Zone. The author relied heavily on several series of microfilm containing official orders, correspondence, reports to the Soviet Military Administration, Germany (SMAD) headquarters about the reeducation efforts in the *Länder*, and other reports within the *Länder*.

For Chapter Three, the author examined history textbooks from 1945 to 2014, looking at both individual *Land* editions and general German editions. The Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research only includes textbooks that have been approved by either a *Land* or the federal Ministry for Education, so the examined textbooks' narrative in each case is one that has been state-sanctioned as official memory.<sup>18</sup> The selection includes textbooks for school years nine through thirteen – the last five years of *Gymnasium*. The reasoning behind this was to be able to compare the books of a similar grade level.

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<sup>18</sup> Each individual *Land* produces its own list of approved textbooks for each subject. Some textbooks are produced exclusively for one *Land* (e.g., Saxony), and others are written so that multiple *Länder* can approve them.

Because of the length of time between writing and publication, the 2014 textbook represents a look at German history up to almost twenty years after reunification. In Patricia Pardiñas-Barnes's longitudinal study of Spanish textbooks, she noted that this was the average timeframe for a generation of textbook usage to come into its own.<sup>19</sup> The year 2014 was used as the cut-off point because it was the cut-off date for textbooks at the Georg Eckert Institute, and the year in which the author started research. The twenty-four year span allowed the author to examine how reunification changed textbooks. Additionally, the time span showcases the discussions around German history after reunification up to the present day.

Since the majority of East German children used the same texts during the forty years of East German governance, the author chose only one edition per decade for the DDR's selection of history textbooks. This thesis chose West German textbooks as pairings of one *Land* book and one German-wide book for each of the decades between 1945 and 1989. There are very few textbooks for the 1945 to 1949 period, so the author selected one from that period, and then selected textbooks from each of the remaining decades between 1950 and 1989.

With these limiting factors in mind, the author chose one or two examples for each decade. For the analysis of post-reunification textbooks, the author used eleven textbooks published from 1990 to 2014. There were six textbook editions for the specific *Länder* – four for former East German areas (Berlin, Saxony, and Thuringia), and two for former West German areas (Lower Saxony and Baden-Württemberg). The other five either did not specify use in a particular *Land* or noted approval for

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<sup>19</sup> Patricia Pardiñas-Barnes, "Twentieth-Century Spanish Textbooks: A Generational Approach," *Hispania* 81, no. 2 (May 1998): 232.

general use throughout Germany. The availability at the Georg Eckert Institute imposed an additional factor in choosing textbooks based on *Länder*.

Additionally, the author tried to pick textbooks published in a variety of cities. Cornelsen, a combined East-West German publisher since 1991, published three textbooks in Berlin.<sup>20</sup> Klett published two textbooks in the former East German city of Leipzig, and various publishers produced the remaining six textbooks in western cities – Bamberg, Braunschweig, Neusäß, Stuttgart, and Würzburg. The author picked these specific textbooks for their variety of years, publishers, and publishing locations (See Table 1.1).

**Table 1.1: Post-Reunification Textbooks Used in Analysis**

<b>Textbook Name</b>	<b>Year Published</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Publication City</b>	<b>Where Used</b>
<i>Deutschland nach 1945</i>	1990	Klett	Stuttgart	General
<i>Geschichte</i>	1999	Kieser	Neusäß	General
<i>Kursbuch Geschichte</i>	2000	Cornelsen	Berlin	General
<i>Geschichte und Geschehen</i>	2003	Klett	Leipzig	Baden-Württemberg
<i>Geschichte Plus</i>	2003	Cornelsen	Würzburg	Sachsen
<i>Geschichte und Geschehen</i>	2005	Klett	Leipzig	General
<i>Anno Neu 10</i>	2008	Westermann	Braunschweig	Berlin
<i>Zeit für Geschichte 9/10</i>	2010	Schöningh Winklers GmbH	Braunschweig	Niedersachsen
<i>Buchners Kolleg 12 – Geschichte</i>	2011	C.C. Buchner	Bamberg	Baden-Württemberg
<i>Geschichte und Geschehen 9/10</i>	2013	Klett	Stuttgart	Thüringen
<i>Forum Geschichte</i>	2014	Cornelsen	Berlin	Thüringen

### An Overview by Chapter

Chapter One examines changes to the German education system from 1945 to 1949 in the American sector, using sources from the Education Branch of OMGUS.

With the help of German textbook writers, the Education Branch revised and

<sup>20</sup> "Über Volk und Wissen: Der Ostdeutsche Schulbuchverlag," *Volk und Wissen*, Accessed February 26, 2016, <http://www.cornelsen.de/volk-und-wissen/1.c.3248321.de>.

commissioned new textbooks to help Germans along what the Branch considered a safe path to democracy. Likewise, teaching staffs were thoroughly vetted for taints of National Socialism, with OMGUS purging those considered too committed to the Nazi cause – in some towns, this consisted of 90 percent of the teaching staff – and creating new teaching courses to train replacements for the purged educators.<sup>21</sup> The Education Branch did this in spite of personnel and supply shortages in order to get children back in school right away. The reeducation of the German youth was more important than the availability of materials. The chapter ends by reviewing the transformation of education in the Federal Republic between 1949 and reunification in 1990, focusing mostly on the 1964 Hamburg Agreement concluded by all West German *Länder*. This chapter concludes that the American Zone's Education Branch created a new version of Germanness through targeted efforts to expel the racially and ideologically motivated curriculum of the Third Reich, replacing it with an American-derived model for the newly democratic German state.

Chapter Two recounts how Soviet occupation forces sought to transform German education. Like the Western Zones, the Soviet Zone did not initially push sweeping structural reforms. The SMAD and its subordinate, the German Educational Administration (*Deutsche Verwaltung für Volksbildung, DVV*), argued that Germans would be neither prepared for, nor accepting of, changes by a foreign state. They were right to assume so, as German teachers initially resisted Soviet reforms. Therefore, while the SMAD did implement some Soviet initiatives (namely, the introduction of Russian language instruction) into the new, vetted curriculum, the majority of the propaganda would be implemented after 1949.

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<sup>21</sup> Puaca, *Learning Democracy*, 15.

In 1949 with the creation of the DDR, the DVV, previously an organization with little power in the face of SMAD decisions, became the leading voice on education for East Germany, though it would continue to be led by Soviet-trained administrators. The previous anti-fascist education system with only trace elements of Communist ideology gave way to unbridled Marxist-Leninist education. This, in turn, promoted a unified school structure and sourcebooks featuring Marx, Engels, and Lenin.<sup>22</sup> The 1965 Law on the Unified Socialist Education System cemented ideas implemented in 1949: comprehensive education for all, science- and math-based lesson plans, and a priority on vocational education as a way in which to build the communist utopia.<sup>23</sup> This chapter argues that the Soviets' initial pedagogical reforms were not exclusively ideologically based. Rather, heightening Cold War tensions moved SMAD to enact change in their zone, establishing education as a bastion of Marxist-Leninist ideology.

Chapter Three leaves the postwar period behind, transitioning the reader across four decades to another story of reconstruction and transformation: the *Wende* (the term for the transition between a divided Germany and a reunified one) and its aftermath. It begins with a look at the West German 1964 Hamburg Agreement and the East German 1965 Law on the Unified Socialist Education System as turning points in German education writ large. While the Law on the Unified Socialist Education System abolished the three-track high school system and replaced it with a unified school system, the Hamburg Agreement standardized West German education

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<sup>22</sup> Sonja Guhr and Marianne Janke, ed., *Dokumente und Materialien: Geschichte 11* ([East] Berlin: Volk und Wissen Volkseigener Verlag, 1980), 3-4.

<sup>23</sup> "Gesetz über das einheitliche sozialistische Bildungssystem vom 25. Februar 1965," *Verfassungen*, December 9, 2004. <http://www.verfassungen.de/de/ddr/schulgesetz65.htm>

in terms of school structure, grading scales, and school year length. The chapter examines textbooks prior to reunification, arguing that East and West German history education were, respectively, bent on either demeaning the other (in East Germany), or switching the focus to Europe as a whole (in West Germany) before schools began educating the first generation to grow up in a reunified Germany.

The chapter then turns to a didactic, or quantitative, analysis of German textbooks after reunification. The chapter analyzes the number of topics covered by the books that were exclusive to the history of either the East or the West, breaking down the results by percentage of one, or the other, or combined historical topics. Such an analysis shows the emphasis textbook writers placed on East and West German events.<sup>24</sup> The results reveal a sharp distinction between textbooks produced between 1990 and 1999, and those published between 2000 and 2014. Textbooks published in reunified Germany's first decade sported a higher percentage of formerly West German topics, while by 2000 this balance had shifted towards topics presenting East and West German events together. Thus began an integrated discussion in German textbooks on both sides of postwar German history – East and West. The discussions resulted in a new definition of “Germanness” based on the reintegration of former East and West in order to create a single German narrative.

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<sup>24</sup> Falk Pingel, *UNESCO Guidebook on Textbook Research and Textbook Revision*, (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 2010), 67.

## Chapter 2: A Teachable Moment: American Reforms to German Education during the Postwar Occupation

As the American OMGUS administration established itself in Germany after the military surrender of the Axis Powers and the defeat of National Socialism, U.S. forces faced a long task list in their quest to rehabilitate Germany. OMGUS had multiple branches to handle the transition – everything from demilitarization to education. Almost all German schools had been shut down since 1944, partially from lack of teachers, and part in the chaos at the end of the war. The U.S. Military Government’s Education and Religious Affairs Branch’s task was to first denazify the schools in advance of opening them. They started this work by bringing in a university administrator from Columbia University Teachers’ College, John Taylor. He would be succeeded in 1947 by his mentor Richard Alexander, the founder of the Columbia University Teachers; College.<sup>25</sup> In each of the three *Länder* (states) of the U.S. Zone -- Bavaria, Hessen, Württemberg-Baden -- OMGUS established a separate *Land* Education Branch that reported first to Taylor, then to Alexander.<sup>26</sup>

OMGUS’ structure was one based on the *Land* within the American Zone. Underneath the Education and Cultural Affairs Branch (referred to in this thesis as the Education Branch) was each *Land*’s Education Branch. Each *Land* had at least three

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<sup>25</sup> Trent, *Mission on the Rhine*, xvi, 23-24.

<sup>26</sup> Education and Cultural Relations Division – OMG Bavaria, 30 August 1948; Organizational Charts OMG; Records of the Educational Services Section; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, Records of the Education Report; Office of Military Government for Germany (U.S.)(OMGUS); Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.; Education and Cultural Relations Division Land Hesse, n.d.; Organizational Charts OMG; Records of the Educational Services Section; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, Records of the Education Report; Office of Military Government for Germany (U.S.)(OMGUS); Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

sections: public education, vocational education, and teacher education. Some *Länder* also had a section on university education. From there, each of these categories were broken down into sections – educational research, student activities, textbooks (the Textbook Section), lay participation, and buildings and equipment to name a few.<sup>27</sup> Each *Land* Education Branch was also in charge of the Textbook and Curriculum Centers scattered through the U.S. Zone. OMGUS did not act alone, however. The Occupation Statute had given OMGUS the power to change the education system, but it was only to be done after they had “formally advise[d] the appropriate German authorities of their decision and the reasons therefore,” and taken the German authorities’ opinions into account when making their decisions.<sup>28</sup>

All schools – from primary level all the way up to the universities – in the three *Länder* of the U.S. Zone had to undergo a rigorous vetting process. Textbooks, staff, and syllabi were scrutinized for taints of Nazism and extreme nationalism.<sup>29</sup> However, Education Branch officials quickly realized that the Nazification of the education system was such that they would have to overhaul the methodology behind the curriculum, as well as the assumptions, methods, and philosophy that had gone into creating the curriculum. Therefore, since they would be starting almost from

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<sup>27</sup> Proposed Functional Organization Chart of the Education Branches, n.d.; Organizational Charts ERA Branch; Records of the Educational Services Section; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, Records of the Education Report; Office of Military Government for Germany (U.S.)(OMGUS); Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

<sup>28</sup> Henry P. Pilgert, *The West German Educational System, with Special Reference to the Policies and Programs of the Office of the U.S. High Commissioner for Germany* (Bad Godesberg-Mehlem, Germany: Historical Division, Office of the U.S. High Commissioner for Germany, 1953), 11.

<sup>29</sup> Württemberg-Baden was the American sector of the state Baden-Württemberg split between the French and American Zones. Extreme nationalism was not a trait unique to the Nazi period. Since nearly the beginning of German comprehensive education, textbooks and curriculum had advocated an exclusively German viewpoint. Textbooks preached the strength of the German Reich, and its superiority culturally over other nations. Arthur Hearnden, *Education in the Two Germanies*, 25.

scratch, the officials decided they would need to promote independent thinking by leaving the interpretation of sources up to the teachers and students and pluralism, as well as make the education system more transparent. Thus for German primary and secondary schools, the OMGUS Education Branch focused on first, denazification, and later more modern pedagogical issues, because OMGUS and its American education consultants believed that dual focus was key to preventing a potential fascist revival: "Naturally, any acceptable program of education can not go forward ... until the worst of the ravages of war are repaired."<sup>30</sup> Only then could the Americans and Germans work on "discarding that which is proven worthless or evil."<sup>31</sup>

#### *The Basics: Buildings, Books, and Teachers*

Before the OMGUS Education Branch could modernize Germany pedagogically, it needed to secure the basics: supplies, vetted teachers, and appropriate textbooks. The plan was ambitious – Taylor wanted to tackle all three of these areas at the same time. Although the school system had almost completely collapsed by the time the war ended, there were still a few schools open.<sup>32</sup> OMGUS recognized that, as of summer 1945, Nazi ideals still shaped the schools' curriculum. To accomplish its agenda, OMGUS therefore had first to close the schools that had survived the war. The changes the Education Branch needed to make would be so

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<sup>30</sup> Report of the United States Social Studies Committee to Germany, April 1947; Reports by Visiting Consultants on Education; Records Pertaining Primarily to Cultural Exchange and School Reopenings, 1945-1949; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, Records of the Education Branch ; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Pilgert, *The West German Educational System*, 8.

disruptive that it was unlikely that the schools could have functioned during the process. After all, one of the orders declared that:

No courses or teaching materials seeking any of the following ends are tolerated:

1. Glorification of militarism, expounding the practice of war or of mobilization or preparation for war, whether in the scientific, economic or industrial fields, or the study of military geography

...

3. The favoring of a policy of discrimination on the grounds of race or religion

4. The creation of hostility or disturbance between any of the United Nations. ...

(c) No textbooks or other specific teaching aids are used unless specifically approved by Supreme Headquarters<sup>33</sup>

With schools closed, the after-school activities that went with them followed suit. All of the Zones had a large population of children and no way to keep them busy and out of trouble.<sup>34</sup> Tara Zahra estimated that 13 million children lost at least one parent in World War II, and many of these children fled to Germany where a majority of postwar displaced persons (DP) camps were located.<sup>35</sup> The Education Branch initially believed that keeping the children occupied was the parents' job. In the January 1945 report on "The Closure of Schools," the Education Branch mentioned that children "should in no way impede the military effort. Under German law parents or guardians of children are responsible [...] for the good behavior of the

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<sup>33</sup> Appendix I Education and Religion, 2 January 1945, Page 2; Versailles Conference, 11 January 1945; Records Relating to Policy and Planning, 1945-1949; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, Records of the Education Branch; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, Record Group 260; NACP.

<sup>34</sup> Trent, *Mission on the Rhine*, 46.

<sup>35</sup> Tara Zahra, *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families after World War II*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 6.

children. This should be made clear at a very early stage through the German authorities.”<sup>36</sup>

This was not the most practical solution for a variety of reasons, namely the number of orphans or children separated from their parents. Therefore, the Education Branch developed a solution that involved the schools. This idea was to put the students into groups and contribute to the rebuilding effort by “collect[ing] school salvage, gardening, keeping the premises clean and cleaning up operations in the vicinity.”<sup>37</sup> While this might have worked in the short term, the Education Branch recognized that this was only a temporary solution, and schools needed to be opened as soon as possible.<sup>38</sup>

OMGUS recognized that teacher vetting would be difficult. It would involve the use of questionnaires and interviews, and the restoration of an acceptable number of faculty. US education experts hoped the other fundamentals of German education would come more easily, so that they would have a solid foundation for their true mission: liberalization of the education system.

They were, in the end, sadly mistaken. There was limited paper in the American Zone – the Soviet Zone held the stores, pulp, and chemicals needed to make paper – and, as the Cold War intensified the Soviets became even less willing to

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<sup>36</sup> Chapter III, The Closure of Schools, Education Technical Manual Advanced Edition, January 1945; Versailles Conference. 11 January 1945; Records Relating to Policy and Planning, 1945-1949; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division; Records of the Education Branch; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

share than they had been in 1945.<sup>39</sup> While there were some Weimar-era textbooks available for use, the Education Branch denounced them as needing vetting just as much as the Nazi-era texts. Arthur Hearnden, a scholar stationed temporarily with the British counterpart of the Education Branch, said “The three R’s [reading, writing, and mathematics] would have made more progress had the three P’s been available – pens, pencils and paper.”<sup>40</sup>

This applied just as much to OMGUS. In Bavaria among the local civic organizations there had been talk of a secret supply of paper. In Munich, the *Land* Education Branch received letter after letter asking if they could spare some paper for religious education books, or even for novels or poetry. Each time, the Bavarian OMGUS office sent the same reply: that they did not have enough paper to cover their needs, let alone give it away.<sup>41</sup> Since the French and British Zones faced similar shortages, the Western Zones created an allocation system to make sure that the *Land* with the greatest need would receive the most. However, availability of paper could not even meet these allocation quotas. For example, from October 1945 to April 1946, the British Zone received 956 tons, over 25 percent less than they were allotted.<sup>42</sup> OMGUS, too, would struggle throughout the first two years of the

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<sup>39</sup> George Murray, “The British Contribution,” In *The British in Germany: Educational Reconstruction after 1945*, ed. Arthur Hearnden (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978), 75-76.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>41</sup> Letter from John Riedl to Mr. Paulus, December 28, 1950; Chronological File 1 January 50 – 31 December 50; Records Relating to Textbooks and Other Publications, 1947-1951; Office of Military Government for Germany (U.S.) (OMGUS); Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

<sup>42</sup> Kathleen Southwell Davis, “The Problem of Textbooks,” In *The British in Germany: Educational Reconstruction after 1945*, ed. Arthur Hearnden (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978), 112.

occupation with these shortages, as well as others like chalk, food, and heating materials.<sup>43</sup>

While the Education Branch sorted out its classroom material shortages, it also had another significant shortage – usable buildings. One report made by George Geyer, Deputy Chief of the Education and Religious Affairs Branch estimated that 30% of all schools in the American Zone were either damaged, or being used to house soldiers.<sup>44</sup> Paul Shafer, Chief of the Education Branch in Berlin, noted that in Berlin sixty-six of the city’s schools were being used for other purposes, 11% of schools were completely destroyed, and an additional 35% needed “major repairs.”<sup>45</sup>

It was not just the American Occupation forces that had repurposed available school buildings. The U.S. Army had allowed the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) and German housing authorities to take control of a good portion of the schools that had escaped the bombings or subsequent fires. In September 1946, the Chairman of the U.S. Education Mission to Germany, George Zook, reported that, “For the elementary schools alone it was found on the first of September of this year that three-hundred and forty-nine schools were still

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<sup>43</sup> Weekly Military Government Report, 26 August 1945; Weekly Reports – E & CR; Weekly Reports, 1945-1947; Office of Military Government, Wuerttemberg-Baden; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP; Brian Puaca, *Learning Democracy: Education Reform in West Germany, 1945-1965* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), 25.

<sup>44</sup> George Geyer, Statistics on Schools in the U.S. Zone, 21 January 1946; School Conditions & Survey; Records Relating to the Work of the Educational Services Section, 1945-1959; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division; Records of the Education Branch; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

<sup>45</sup> Paul Shafer, School Survey – U.S. Sector, Berlin; School Buildings; Records Relating to the Work of the Educational Services Section, 1945-1959; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division; Records of the Education Branch; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

being used for other purposes than education in the United States Zone.”<sup>46</sup> These surveys brought dismal news: the Allied bombing campaign had decimated many school buildings and made many others unusable. The Education Branch acknowledged that it would have to look beyond school buildings to house the newly reopened schools.

Nevertheless, OMGUS and German education officials needed a solution to get the children in school for at least a few hours a day in time for the reopening of schools in autumn 1945.<sup>47</sup> That solution was something called *Schichtunterricht*, or teaching in shifts. Children from several schools would attend the same physical school, but in shifts. One school would have classes in the morning; a different one, in the afternoon or evening. In some of the more densely populated areas – as well as those more affected by bombing – the Education Branch divided school days into thirds to accommodate everyone.<sup>48</sup> While this did put children in seats, the quality of education was diminished since they had shorter school days than if enough buildings had been available.<sup>49</sup>

### *Getting the Teachers: Fragebogen and New Recruits*

While some sections of the Education Branch, such as the Textbook Section, had a formalized method for deciding which textbooks to keep, the group vetting the teachers had to make decisions case by case. Since teachers’ lives hung in the balance

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<sup>46</sup> Report of the Education Mission, Sept. 20, 1946; 1912 – Report Education Mission, Sept. 1946; Education Reports, 1947-1948; Records of Office of Military Government, Hesse; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

<sup>47</sup> Puaca, *Learning Democracy*, 15.

<sup>48</sup> Chapter IV Textbooks and Teaching Materials; RG 260; NACP.

<sup>49</sup> Puaca, *Learning Democracy*, 27.

in the course of the vetting process, such work had to be taken with extreme care. Too many dismissed educators, and the system would not be able to restart itself; too few dismissed, and Nazi propaganda would continue to infiltrate the minds of impressionable children. The branch needed at least a bare minimum of educators to reopen and run schools. The result would be a drop in the average pupils per teacher from seventy-seven to forty or less from early 1945 to January 1946.<sup>50</sup>

One report by Württemberg-Baden *Landesdirektor* Franz Schnabel stated that any educator who had been a NSDAP party member could not teach. This decision left Germany with very few teachers – at least initially. Schnabel did concede that after a time “this wild and corrupt period [of few teachers] will have elapsed, much will be forgotten, that detains such teachers from entering a class.”<sup>51</sup> While party membership had not been required of Germans under the Third Reich, the education system had been nationalized under Hitler, as had the teacher’s union. Membership cards for the National Socialist Teachers’ League accounted for 97% of all teachers during the course of the Third Reich.<sup>52</sup> Of teachers who belonged to the League, almost 23% had joined the NSDAP.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Statistics on Schools in the U.S. Zone, 21 January 1946; School Conditions & Survey; Records Relating to the Work of the Educational Services Section, 1945-1959; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division; Records of the Education Branch; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

<sup>51</sup> Speech of *Landesdirektor* Prof. Dr. Franz Schnabel; Papers on German Reconstruction; Records Relating to the Work of the Educational Services Section, 1945-1949; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, Records of the Education Branch; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

<sup>52</sup> Konrad H. Jarausch and Gerhard Armingier, “The German Teaching Profession and Nazi Party Membership: A Demographic Logit Model,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 20, no. 2 (Autumn 1989): 199.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

OMGUS had already gone through one round of denazification in 1945; removing anyone who had joined the NSDAP before 1937. This had removed about fifty percent of teachers in the U.S. Zone.<sup>54</sup> In some towns, that number was as high as ninety percent.<sup>55</sup> In 1947, this left the teaching profession in the American Zone with two groups of people – teachers in their 60s and 70s, or young, untrained teachers who made up a third of all educators. Both groups presented problems. The older group belonged to a generation that had seen two World Wars, and many believed “the expenditure of energy to rebuild a second time, without more definite promise for the future, to be useless.”<sup>56</sup> However, despite their physical weariness from their “heavy teaching loads and the lack of food, clothing, and adequate shelter,” an Education Branch consultant, Harold Shielde, maintained that the teachers were “carrying on with fortitude and are devoting themselves tirelessly to giving German children the best education possible under existing circumstances.”<sup>57</sup> While the Education Branch could have dismissed all the older teachers and relied exclusively on new teachers, the Branch acknowledged that those with prior teaching experience were needed to help the new teachers get on their feet in a challenging environment.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> The definition of a Nazi changed three times between March and October 1945. Initially, it was anyone who had joined the NSDAP before 1933, or had held a rank or leadership position. In June, this changed to removing anyone who had joined the NSDAP at any time, or held public office after 1933. On June 29, a Nazi was considered someone who joined the party before May 1, 1937 (after that German professionals had to join, or lose their job). Trent, *Mission on the Rhine*, 50-51.

<sup>55</sup> Puaca, *Learning Democracy*, 15.

<sup>56</sup> Social Education in Germany, September 26, 1947: Conflicting Factors; Reports by Visiting Consultants; Records Relating Primarily to Cultural Exchange and School Reopenings, 1945-1949; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, Records of the Education Branch; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

<sup>57</sup> Social Education in Germany, September 26, 1947: Conflicting Factors; RG 260; NACP.

<sup>58</sup> Puaca, *Learning Democracy*, 39.

The senior teachers were nonetheless a source of worry for the Education Branch: after all, many would soon retire. Since there was a lack of middle-aged professionals, only freshly trained, young teachers could replace their elders. What made matters worse was the traditional age-based hierarchy within the German education system, which made it a struggle for the younger teachers to advance quickly to positions of higher authority in education. Though OMGUS had the opportunity to appoint younger faculty members to higher authority positions, the Education Branch did so cautiously so as not to fly in the face of the German tradition.<sup>59</sup>

And yet the young teachers were most responsive to OMGUS's agenda. The few teachers in their 20s and 30s who did reach the upper ranks of education administration were the most likely to enact the changes that OMGUS wanted. The young teachers had no stake in the methodologies and information their older colleagues had used during the Weimar Republic. They also were the most likely to point out the mistakes – both political and pedagogical – made by German educators in the past.<sup>60</sup> In the end, the Zone-wide initiatives were at least partially successful: some younger faculty did get involved in administration, but the majority of schools remained in the hands of older teachers.

Even though, by the late 1940s, the number of teachers had returned to prewar levels, shortages persisted as refugees settled in occupied Germany, having streamed into the U.S. Zone in 1945 as the Soviet Army had advanced westward.<sup>61</sup> The

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<sup>59</sup> Social Education in Germany, RG 260, NACP.

<sup>60</sup> Puaca, *Learning Democracy*, 39.

German education system could not have reached even the moderate staffing success it did by 1950 if not for the addition of women as teachers. Since many male teachers had been drafted and maimed or killed during the war, the only way to get the numbers back to pre-war levels was to encourage women to enter the teaching profession.<sup>62</sup> Likewise, the denazification efforts disproportionately affected male teachers. By 1947, women represented sixty-five percent of teachers in the U.S. Zone – an increase from 30 percent in 1939. By bringing in women, not only did the Education Branch encourage a new set of voices and ideas on how to make education work for a war-torn nation, but they also helped to democratize a portion of the German economy, creating more opportunities for women in the labor market.<sup>63</sup> This was one way for OMGUS to redefine “Germanness” by shifting the gender and age balance in the educational system.

### Applying to Reopen Schools

The more schools that opened and the more teachers that joined the workforce, the sooner the *Schichtunterricht* policy of teaching in shifts could end. However, reopening a school was not a quick or easy process. The application process required of the school administrators was long, the forms incredibly detail-oriented, but schools in the American Zone were not allowed to reopen without going through this process. The application included several documents – a list of teachers and their positions; a numbers-based form called the Educational Situation Form;

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 38-39. For more on women’s role in the reshaping of postwar Germany, see Donna Harsch, “Public Continuity and Private Change? Women’s Consciousness and Activity in Frankfurt, 1945-1955,” *Journal of Social History* 27, no. 1 (Autumn 1993): 29-58.

token approval from the German Ministry of Public Worship and Education in the relevant state; the curriculum, timetable, and textbooks to be used in each class; and a statement of purpose.<sup>64</sup> These were all compiled and sent to the Office of the Military Government in the school's town or county, then to the Military Government for the proposed school's state.<sup>65</sup> The German Ministry and the American Military Government had to approve the curriculum and timetable before schools could submit an application. If everything checked out in the application, OMGUS allowed the school to reopen, months after the school had initially submitted the application.<sup>66</sup>

James Trent has showcased Aachen, a city on the border of Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands, as typical of the process of reopening schools. Its level of destruction and amount of children was on par with other similar-sized cities across Germany. As of autumn 1944, Aachen had had over fifty schools of varying levels. By the end of the war eighty-five percent of the city's buildings – including schools – had been destroyed by the Allied bombing campaigns.<sup>67</sup> With assistance from a five-member panel of Aachen citizens, the Education Branch began the vetting process of the forty-seven teachers left in the city. On June 4, 1945, ten of Aachen's

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<sup>64</sup> The Educational Situation Form, also called the "Report before the opening of schools to be delivered on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of each month," included questions about how many teachers the school employed, how many had filled out the questionnaire (*Fragebogen*), how many had been vetted, among others about conditions of school supplies, caretakers for the buildings, anticipated date of opening, and any special problems that needed OMGUS' help in solving. Report Before the Opening of Schools; Reorganization of Schools Vol. II; Records Relating to the Work of the Educational Services Section, 1945-1949; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, Records of the Education Branch; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

<sup>65</sup> Applications to Reopen Schools; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division. Records of the Education Branch; Records of U.S. Occupation Headquarters, World War II, 1923-1972; RG 260; NACP.

<sup>66</sup> Trent, *Mission on the Rhine*, 54.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

schools reopened, with twenty-three thoroughly vetted teachers catering to over 1,300 students.<sup>68</sup>

While OMGUS did allow religious schools to open, it preferred secular education and approved those schools' applications more easily than those of confessional institutions. Harold Shielde of the Education Branch wrote that he hoped the "Education Branch [would] follow a rigorous policy which will support and encourage public non-denominational schools rather than so-called confessional schools."<sup>69</sup> Shielde goes further to say that he, and the Branch he represented, were not against religious instruction in the schools. They were opposed to "church control of tax-supported schools."<sup>70</sup> Shielde ended by saying, "I believe in all matters of policy our support should be given to a system of public education much akin to that which we have developed in America."<sup>71</sup> Although OMGUS did not want to follow Shielde's wish for Americanizing the German education system, the changes did impart a distinct American viewpoint on a German population in need of a new definition of "Germanness" after the Third Reich's own disastrous definition.

### *Keeping the Structure and Grounding the Changes*

Successive Education Branch directors John Taylor and Richard Alexander had sought to democratize German education— but not to change it so significantly

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 41-43.

<sup>69</sup> Memo to Mr. G.B. McKibbin, Director IA&C Division, OMGUS; Reports by Visiting Consultants; Records Relating Primarily to Cultural Exchange and School Reopenings, 1945-1949; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, Records of the Education Branch; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. Emphasis in original.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

that it could not be maintained after the Occupation ended.<sup>72</sup> One of the principle ways they did not alter the education system was to retain the Weimar reforms and preserve the structure of the schools. During the Weimar Republic, Germany had adopted a system of an elementary school (*Grundschule*) from grade 1 to 4, followed by three different tracks of middle and high school. The three tracks of middle and high school, the *Hauptschule*, *Realschule*, and *Gymnasium*, reflected various career paths.<sup>73</sup> *Hauptschule* went to grade 8, *Realschule* to grade 10, and *Gymnasium* to grade 13.<sup>74</sup> *Gymnasium* represented a more specialized form of secondary education, culminating in an exam and diploma that allowed students to attend university. There were different types of *Gymnasium*: some focused on the classics, others on mathematics and the sciences, other still on languages and literature.<sup>75</sup> All of these continued after the Education Branch made its changes. What did not exist were the special Nazi training schools, the “Adolf Hitler Schools,” *Napolas* (*Nationalpolitische Lehranstalt* – National Political Institution of Teaching), and *Ordensburgen*.<sup>76</sup>

The US-controlled German education system differed from the American one, in how class-based it remained. The three levels of secondary education traditionally

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<sup>72</sup> Social Education in Germany: Conflicting Factors; RG 260; NACP.

<sup>73</sup> The lower and middle level of secondary education were renamed during the Occupation. *Volksschule* became *Hauptschule*, and *Mittelschule* was renamed to *Realschule*.

<sup>74</sup> Puaca, *Learning Democracy*, 42.

<sup>75</sup> Arthur Hearnden, ed., *The British in Germany: Educational Reconstruction after 1945* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978), 316.

<sup>76</sup> All three types of schools were boarding schools either set up by the Nazis, or modified by them (as in the case of Adolf Hitler Schools). *Napolas* and *Ordensburgen* focused on the training of future Nazi leaders, while Adolf Hitler Schools were more focused on a regular education, but the students were all hand-selected for their future leadership potential to the Nazi Party. Chapter III: The Closure of Schools; RG 260; NACP.

reflected the three levels of economic prosperity: those in the upper class went to *Gymnasium*, the poorest to the vocational *Hauptschule*. To American officials, this was “undemocratic.”<sup>77</sup> However, the Education Branch let German education remain in that structure because it was familiar, and it had successfully shepherded students into careers for decades.<sup>78</sup> Vocational education needed to be shored up, but otherwise, the structure of the German education system would be able to stand on its own after the American occupation ended.

In 1946, as the Education Branch consulted with the newly appointed education ministers from the American *Länder*, they knew they needed to ground their changes in more than just the idea that this was how it had been done in the U.S. So, OMGUS spoke of its plans in terms of broader European pedagogical trends. There was one problem with this: Germany’s educational woes were unique, as was the American rebuilding effort. They had branded their mission as “reeducation” of the Germans. But as historian Brian Puaca has pointed out, OMGUS was not entirely sure what that meant. Through trial and error, the Education Branch chose a definition of “Germanness” that fit their goals of restructuring the education system to reflect more liberal ideas. It was something that Alonzo Grace, the head of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, believed should have happened earlier: if only Americans had stepped in during the Weimar Republic to restructure the education system, maybe Hitler would not have come to power.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Puaca, *Learning Democracy*, 39.

<sup>78</sup> Memo to Mr. G.B. McKibbin, Director, From Harold G. Shielde, 26 September 1947; RG 260; NACP.

<sup>79</sup> Puaca, *Learning Democracy*, 40.

*A New Subject – Political Science and Civics*

Such a new definition called for new subjects, the principle of which was social studies. However, it was not just OMGUS that called for the new subject of social studies. The Hessian culture minister, Erwin Stein, recognized that large, fundamental changes needed to be made both to what was taught and how it was taught. In his 1948 *Lehrpläne für den politischen Unterricht in den Schulen des Landes Hessen* (Curriculum for Political Education in the Schools of the State of Hessen), Stein outlined a plan that would have political science and civics taught to all students in all schools.<sup>80</sup> While Hessen had, in 1946, required political education to start in seventh grade, Stein's plan placed such education in every track of secondary schooling and gave it the chance to shape children's minds at a younger age (previously such education had started in the later years of the high schools) as an integral part of the curriculum.<sup>81</sup>

The Education Branch did not just propose new subjects like political science and civics classes. It also strongly suggested student government and debates within the classroom. However, for this to work, a few things needed to happen: German educators needed to put aside past ways of teaching, surrendering order in favor of free-form discussions on controversial topics and rewarding creativity in solving examples and problems posed in the textbooks. More fundamentally, the mindset of German students needed to change from days filled with rote memorization and a

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

lack of independent thinking. This kind of a mindset, the Education Branch and its consultants believed, had helped lead to the Second World War.<sup>82</sup>

In addition to OMGUS and its subsidiary organizations in Germany, educators back in the United States offered their assistance in matters of pedagogy. One such organization was the United States Social Studies Committee to Germany, made up of men and women from public schools and colleges of education, as well as government officials from the Office of Education, the precursor to the U.S. Department of Education. The Committee based its recommendations on a previous Commission on Social Studies led by the American Historical Association, and its 1934 report.<sup>83</sup> The Committee said that its goal of historical education was more than just memorizing dates and facts, “It must also contribute to an understanding of the present and give some preparation for the future. [...] It must come through a recognition and understanding of historic trends and developments.”<sup>84</sup> The way the Committee proposed for teachers to accomplish this feat was to base their education on the principles of democracy understood as the American ideal: mutual respect, equal social and political privileges, freedom of thought and expression, and popular sovereignty.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Social Education in Germany: Conditioning Factors; RG 260; NACP.

<sup>83</sup> Susanne M. Shafer, “American Social Studies in West German Schools,” *Comparative Education Review* 8, no. 2 (October 1964): 146.; Puaca, *Learning Democracy*, 44, 94.

<sup>84</sup> Report of the United States Social Studies Committee to Germany, April 1947; Reports by Visiting Consultants on Education; Records Pertaining Primarily to Cultural Exchange and School Reopenings, 1945-1949; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, Records of the Education Branch; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

<sup>85</sup> Report of the United States Social Studies Committee to Germany, April 1947.

But the Education Branch wanted to change more than the subject matter. It wanted to change the mindset around teaching. It wanted independent thinkers who could hold their own in a debate, knowing that they could speak their mind without fear of reprisal.<sup>86</sup> For example, the President of the State Teachers' College in North Dakota, Chas Scott, wrote in an OMGUS report that independently thinking students were inspired by their interactions with the teachers. In his words, there had not yet been enough effort put into child development, and instead,

Where student responses are secured, they are too frequently repeated by the teacher, thus leaving the impression that nothing is right unless the teacher says so, and depriving the students of the privilege of and satisfaction of evaluation. By daily practice they learn to be submissive rather than to be self-reliant and independent [in their] thinking.<sup>87</sup>

Scott believed that, starting in the *Grundschule*, Germany needed to educate children who were not “afraid to exercise initiative, originality, and independent thinking.”<sup>88</sup> Only thus could Germany become democratic.

As the reforms started to be realized, students took notice of the changes. A student in a Ludwigsburg *Gymnasium* wrote to the Office of the U.S. High Commissioner for Germany (HICOG) in 1949 saying that “Our teachers show their reception of the new methods by allowing us to express our own opinions in class discussions.”<sup>89</sup> Some of the older students reported back with “open hostility” to the

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<sup>86</sup> Brief Report on Teaching of Citizenship and the Preparation of Vocational School Teachers in Wuerttemberg-Baden; Reports – Education; Records Relating to the Work of the Educational Services Section, 1945-1949; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, Records of the Education Branch; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> *Grundschule* is a primary school. Ibid.

changes that required their active participation, but these were the exceptions: the general tone seemed one of enthusiasm for greater participation.<sup>90</sup>

OMGUS suggested student government as a way to increase student engagement. The Education Branch believed that if the students thought that their opinions about their school mattered, they would be more freely given. Students were encouraged to effect change. Conversely, German parents were beginning to demand a say in their children's education, and by 1947 *Schulräte* (school boards) started to pop up in the smaller towns in the American sector.<sup>91</sup>

After OMGUS's success with student government, HICOG encouraged a more active learning environment by changing the focus of education. In learning about politics and civics, the teachers were not to focus on the politics of the Reich, or the politics of the *Land*. Instead, they were to focus on the individual. Henry Pilgert, a historian stationed with HICOG, believed that a non-student-focused education system had emphasized the subject "rather than the person and perhaps to define justice as rendering a man his due as member of [a] particular class of society."<sup>92</sup> Focusing on the student made it personal, encouraging mutual understanding and respect, as opposed to continuing to propagate harmful stereotypes.

The older faculty who remained in schools presented another problem as OMGUS tackled current events and contemporary history (*Zeitgeschichte*)

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<sup>89</sup> HICOG replaced the Allied Control Council in 1944. It was separate from OMGUS which was the American authority in their Zone. Noble Hiebert, "Classroom Discussions," In *Information Bulletin*, ed. Office of the High Commissioner (US) for Germany, (Frankfurt a.M., Germany: Office of the High Commissioner [US] for Germany, 1950), 39.

<sup>90</sup> Puaca, *Learning Democracy*, 95.

<sup>91</sup> Pilgert, *The West German Educational System*, 14, 31.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

curriculum. Those educators close to retirement felt that forgetting anything that had happened after the start of World War I was the easiest and safest option. Some of the newer teachers refused to teach *Zeitgeschichte*, declaring it too sensitive a topic to be properly handled by a newly-minted teacher. Still others scheduled their lesson plans so that there was no room to include post-World War I topics.<sup>93</sup> The younger teachers worried that they would teach the events incorrectly, biased in a way that would be detrimental to their students' development as citizens of the world.<sup>94</sup> Because of this, OMGUS hosted several teacher-training conferences, starting as early as December 1945 in Frankfurt and going as late as June 1949 in Bremen, featuring sessions on how to present World War I, the Weimar Republic, and the country's most recent defeat in World War II.<sup>95</sup>

### *Rewriting the Textbooks*

Textbooks were crucial to shaping the American's new definition of Germanness because of their ability to influence the next generation of Germans. However, textbooks were a scarcity in postwar Germany, although this was not the fault of the War, but of the infiltration of National Socialism into all aspects of the education system in the 1930s. Henry Pilgert has noted that, "In the first postwar years, if a German child had access to one reader per year, he was fortunate."<sup>96</sup> The

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<sup>93</sup> Puaca, *Learning Democracy*, 16-17

<sup>94</sup> Pilgert, *The West German Educational System*, 71.

<sup>95</sup> Trent, *Mission on the Rhine*, 70.; Puaca, *Learning Democracy*, 44; The Training of Elementary Teachers in Germany, Fall 1946; Teacher Training Volume 1; Records Relating to the Work of the Educational Services Section, 1945-1949; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, Records of the Education Branch; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

rewriting of textbooks and the creation of new ones would come later for the Education Branch. First, they needed to get the schools up and running as quickly as possible with textbooks that had been vetted to remove nationalistic or militaristic overtones. Initially, this was not possible. Columbia University Teachers' College offered up its collection of Weimar German school textbooks as stopgaps.<sup>97</sup>

At the same time as the Textbook Section began furiously vetting textbooks, it was also having discussions through reports and correspondence on how to create better textbooks. These discussion topics ranged from research on how to select content, to how textbooks should be relatable to contemporary life. The Section also reflected on how to structure textbooks – should a given book be broken into narrow chronological units, or broader thematic ones? These discussions and the guidelines that would result from them would be used to help German authors create new, unsullied teaching materials.<sup>98</sup>

By the end of 1945, OMGUS had reviewed more than 5 million textbooks.<sup>99</sup> This number includes every copy of an edition the Textbook Section could procure, and so the number of editions was actually much lower. Since the individual textbooks were going to the students, they needed to vet each individual textbook as opposed to one per edition. The vetting process consisted of filling out a form with the basic information on the book – subject, author or editor, title, school and grade,

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<sup>96</sup> Pilgert, *The West German Educational System*, 56.

<sup>97</sup> Puaca, *Learning Democracy*, 26.

<sup>98</sup> Suggested Procedures to be Followed in the Preparation of Manuscripts for Textbooks; Writing of Textbooks; Records Relating to Policy and Planning, 1945-1949; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, Records of the Education Branch; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

<sup>99</sup> Puaca, *Learning Democracy*, 30.

publisher, year, etc. Then came comments about objectionable features, if any modifications were necessary, and how the book was classified. There were three classifications. “A” meant “Approved,” which sometimes contained an additional note that said “For emergency use only.” “B” meant “Not Approved” and “C” meant “Approved with above changes.”<sup>100</sup> This initial vetting left the Textbook Section with twenty editions: eight readers, five mathematics texts, three history books, and four science editions.<sup>101</sup> These *Lesenbogen*, or emergency textbooks, were a start.

However, five million books vetted was only the beginning of the Textbook Section’s task. Even math textbooks contained Nazi propaganda such as this problem: “If it takes 50,000 members of the *Wehrmacht* 3 days to conquer Holland [area of the country stated], how many days will it take 80,000 men to conquer England [area stated]?”<sup>102</sup> This total infiltration of Nazi propaganda into the textbooks not only produced more work for the Textbook Section, but it allowed it the opportunity to include OMGUS’ new definition of “Germanness” in every aspect of education.

As the Education Branch’s subordinate Textbook Section found out, the Weimar textbooks, too, were faulty in their own ways.<sup>103</sup> In fact, according to a report by the U.S. Social Studies Committee to Germany, Weimar Republic textbooks “foreshadowed” Hitler’s rise to power with page after page filled with “class-

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<sup>100</sup> Textbook Evaluation Sheet, 3 October 1946; German Readers Manuscripts; Records Relating to the Work of the Educational Services Section, 1945-1949; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, Records of the Education Branch; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

<sup>101</sup> Puaca, *Learning Democracy*, 30.

<sup>102</sup> Davies, “British Policy and the Schools,” 102.

<sup>103</sup> One such example, from an exercise to analyze grammar, contained this sentence: “For years after the war, foreign troops dominated German territory on the Rhine – they occupied towns and villages, filled barracks with black soldiers, took over dwelling-houses, interfered with shipping, spied on friends of the fatherland ... women were importuned, monuments desecrated...” Ibid., 118.

consciousness, traditionalism, and militarism, and ... [a] provincial attitude regarding the outside world.”<sup>104</sup> In the Textbook Section’s vetting of one history textbook entitled *Volk und Wissen (People and Knowledge)*, one objectionable feature was that the expressions “die for the emperor and for the fatherland” and “war hero” littered the manuscript, presenting a glorified version of war.<sup>105</sup> Another book this time from the Third Reich, was characterized as a “nauseatingly Nazi reader imposed on conquered territory.”<sup>106</sup> The vetting process also made it abundantly clear that textbooks and the education system at large needed an overhaul to prevent another German-led war. One consultant said exactly that: the German people “should not delude themselves into thinking” that only a few changes here or there or “lip service to democratic slogans” would save them from the nationalistic fervor that had so recently gripped, and destroyed, their nation.<sup>107</sup> While German education had been seen favorably – as a sort of pinnacle for education standards – the Education Branch and visiting education consultants reached the conclusion this had been an illusion.<sup>108</sup>

The “Textbook Evaluation Sheet” that accompanied every vetted textbook contained suggestions about more than removing nationalistic and fascist language. There were comments such as “pictures ... are not the best for children’s books” or

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<sup>104</sup> Report of the United States Social Studies Committee to Germany, April 1947; RG 260; NACP.

<sup>105</sup> Textbook Evaluation Sheet, 3 October 1946; German Readers Manuscripts; Records of the Educational Services Section, 1945-1949; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, Records of the Education Branch; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

<sup>106</sup> Textbook Evaluation Sheet, 30 August 1945; German Readers Manuscripts; Records of the Educational Services Section, 1945-1949; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, Records of the Education Branch; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

“The population of Washington increased greatly during the war and was at the peak over 1,000,000.”<sup>109</sup> They were looking for spelling and factual mistakes, but also for outdated ways of teaching. One textbook’s evaluation sheet noted,

Explanations for the students are almost totally absent. ... Equally lacking are suggestions to help the teacher in his task. Learning activities intended to integrate the material are not provided for. Student participation is not even mentioned nor is there any reference to study activities.<sup>110</sup>

These, and other examples such as the guidelines that the Education Branch published for the rewriting and writing of textbooks, showed the Branch’s intention to truly change how German children learned.

After 1945, once textbooks had been vetted, those that were approved went through further printings, increasing the number of copies in students’ hands. Those that had not been approved were sent to the Education Branch’s libraries as an example of how not to write a textbook. Those in the middle category, approved with changes, could be edited and resubmitted for approval. Some OMGUS-approved textbook authors did this; others chose to start from scratch.

The Education Branch, starting in 1946, set up Curriculum and Textbook Centers in the larger cities of the Zone to help educators either editing texts, or

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<sup>109</sup> Textbook Evaluation Sheet; German Readers Manuscripts; Records Relating to the Work of the Educational Services Section, 1945-1949; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, Records of the Education Branch; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

writing entirely new ones.<sup>111</sup> These centers were stocked with basic supplies, a heated office, a library, and the opportunity for informal conversations with colleagues also writing textbooks. OMGUS had hoped that the Centers would increase textbook production – and they did. In 1946, 63 percent of revised textbooks were approved, compared with 33 percent in 1945.<sup>112</sup>

The Education Branch could have solved the dire textbook situation more quickly if they had allowed German émigrés to the United States to write textbooks. OMGUS, however, wanted at least the appearance of trying not to “Americanize” the German education system. The Americans knew they would leave soon enough, and the education system would have to continue under the *Länder*, as it had during the Weimar Republic.<sup>113</sup> To change too much and leave lasting evidence of the American efforts to retool Germany in its own image, through textbooks written by émigrés, was to spell future distrust between Germany and the United States.<sup>114</sup> In trying to prevent this, Brian Puaca has argued, the Education Branch delayed the publication of a sufficient number of textbooks until the late 1940s.<sup>115</sup> However, the delay of the publication of textbooks did not prevent OMGUS from pushing reforms that did leave

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<sup>111</sup> In 1949, there were 10 Education Service Centers – 3 in Bavaria (Munich, Nurnberg, and Augsburg); 3 in Württemberg-Baden (Stuttgart, Karlsruhe, and Heidelberg); 2 in Hessen (Wiesbaden and Weilburg); and 1 each in the Berlin Sector and Bremen. Weekly Report from Länder on Education Service Centers (Week of 10 through 16 August 1949); Weekly Attendance Reports; Records Relating to Policy and Planning, 1945-1949; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, Records of the Education Branch; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

<sup>112</sup> Puaca, *Learning Democracy*, 31.

<sup>113</sup> Robert Birley, “British Policy in Retrospective,” In *The British in Germany: Educational Reconstruction after 1945*, ed. Arthur Hearnden (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978), 52.

<sup>114</sup> Puaca, *Learning Democracy*, 29.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

a lasting American version of “Germanness” in the American Zone, and later West Germany. Although OMGUS had tried not to appear as “Americanizing” German education, they did implement enough reforms based on American education principles, that it altered the definition of “Germanness.”

OMGUS had help though, in their mission to get safe, sensible (to American officials) texts to the students of Germany. This help came in the form of books from the British Zone and Switzerland. In general, those textbooks coming from the British Zone did not have to be vetted by the Military Government since the British had already vetted them.<sup>116</sup> This agreement between the British and American Zones, solidified in summer 1947 did not, however, prevent the British and American Education Branches from reexamining any new textbooks that had been shipped if they felt the sending Zone had not thoroughly vetted a text. The books from Switzerland came in exchange – German books for Swiss scientific texts – but with the acknowledgment from both sides that only certain materials and subjects could be exchanged.<sup>117</sup>

### Education Service Centers

In 1948, the Textbook and Curriculum Centers gradually began to turn into Education Service Centers. These intended to serve the education and information needs of all Germans, not just the school age children on whom OMGUS had been

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<sup>116</sup> Answer to Questions Raised at Meeting of the Zone Textbook Committee in Stuttgart 22 May 47, 2 June 1947; Zonal Textbook Committee; Records Relating to Policy and Planning, 1945-1949; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, Records of the Education Branch; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

<sup>117</sup> Working Group on Scientific Libraries, 13 August 1947; Working Group on Textbooks; Records Relating to Policy and Planning, 1945-1949; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, Records of the Education Branch; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

focusing. They included audiovisual materials, sample educational and psychological tests, and most importantly current periodicals and newspapers. Hearnden noted that “There was obviously a widespread and insatiable hunger for news amongst the German reading public, not only for the foreign press ... but for German press.”<sup>118</sup> The German people had been starved of foreign newspapers for twelve years under the Nazi rule, and their own news had been censored to the point where, according to one German, it became good for little more than rolling cigarettes.<sup>119</sup>

The Education Service Centers were so well-used that the Education Branch helped the German authorities with the transition to solely German control.<sup>120</sup> In one week of August 1949, the Karlsruhe branch had 1493 visitors. Karlsruhe had attendance numbers far beyond other Education Service Centers in the American Zone: by comparison, Munich had 341 visitors and Wiesbaden had 265, yet the centers were still averaging more than 200 visitors in a one-week period. And they were loaning out books at a consistently high level: for that same week in August, the Bremen Center loaned 406 books, and Wiesbaden loaned 305.<sup>121</sup>

The Education Service Centers wrote letters to OMGUS Headquarters, asking for periodicals and books on modern teaching methods to help bolster their reference and lending libraries. In January 1949, the Centers requested 2929 individual titles on all aspects of pedagogy for the use of textbook writers, as well as the general

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<sup>118</sup> Hearnden, *Education in the Two Germanies*, 89.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>121</sup> Weekly Report from Länder on Education Service Centers (Week of 10 through 16 August 1949); Weekly Attendance Reports; Records Relating to Policy and Planning, 1945-1949; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, Records of the Education Branch; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

public.<sup>122</sup> The pedagogical magazines they included were not just American ones like *The Journal of Education* or *Teachers College Record*, but also Swiss and French titles.<sup>123</sup> These magazines allowed teachers to read the newest trends in instruction to better serve their students.

### *New Media: Radio and Film*

One of the suggestions the training courses brought about at the beginning of 1947, was the use of radio programs and films, among other methods as media to use in the teaching of *Zeitgeschichte*, and for use in the Education Service Centers.<sup>124</sup> One memo, “Teaching with Radio Programs and Transcriptions,” said that:

Radio programs and transcriptions can be used to convey useful knowledge to listeners, to sharpen their discernment of social significance, to fortify socially-desirable attitudes with rationally-based value concepts, to enhance aesthetic appreciations, to stimulate systematic inquiry, and to implement convictions with an impelling urge to action.<sup>125</sup>

With such an endorsement, education via radio programs was something the Education Branch had to try. To measure its success, the Education Branch polled

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<sup>122</sup> Memorandum for Quartermaster General: Approved Program for Civilian Supplies, Quartermaster Section, 5 January 1949; Libraries II; Records Relating to Textbooks and Other Publications, 1947-1951; Office of the Military Government for Germany (U.S.) (OMGUS); Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

<sup>123</sup> Lists of Magazines, Regularly Received, 7 December 1948; Library I; Records Relating to Textbooks and Other Publications, 1947-1951; Office of Military Government for Germany (U.S.) (OMGUS); Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

<sup>124</sup> Memorandum to Dr. Franklin J. Keller from H.G. Shielde, 20 March 1947; Radio Education; Records Relating to the Work of the Educational Services Section, 1945-1949; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, Records of the Education Branch; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

<sup>125</sup> Teaching with Radio Programs and Transcriptions, February 10, 1947; Radio Education; Records Relating to the Work of the Educational Services Section, 1945-1949; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, Records of the Education Branch; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

3268 Germans in the American Zone, the British Zone, and the American sector in Berlin over a period of two weeks in October 1946. Both students and teachers enjoyed these programs as a new and exciting way to learn of current events – so much so that the poll showed German adults believed that radio gave the most accurate news.<sup>126</sup>

While some films were shown in classrooms, those instances were extremely rare. Instead, films and slides were carefully selected and vetted before being shown at the Education Service Centers. The films were American creations with titles such as “In the Heart of Philadelphia,” and “How a law is created.”<sup>127</sup> They dealt with topics like the founding of the United Nations, or the American school system and its importance to democracy.<sup>128</sup> While all were informative in nature, not all were such weighty topics – there were also films with titles such as “The Bus Driver.”<sup>129</sup> This film series, called the Natco Film Program, reached a large portion of Germans in the American sector. In a span of little more than a month in 1947, the Education Service Center in Heilbronn hosted 143 showings to 11,980 people.<sup>130</sup> The film showings were such a success that Germans asked for more on specific topics, like this elementary principal in Frankenbach:

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<sup>126</sup> Radio Listening in the American Zone and in Berlin, Report Number 45, 17 February 1947; Radio Education; Records Relating to the Work of the Educational Services Section, 1945-1949; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, Records of the Education Branch; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

<sup>127</sup> Pilgert, *The West German Educational System*, 125.

<sup>128</sup> Re-Education and Re-Orientation Film Program, 8 September 1947; Training Films; Correspondence, Memorandums, and Lists Relating to Educational Films, 1948-1949; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, Education Branch, Textbooks and Materials for Instruction Section; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

<sup>129</sup> Pilgert, *The West German Educational System*, 125-126.

<sup>130</sup> Re-Education and Re-Orientation Film Program, 8 September 1947; RG 260; NACP.

I suggest that more films be shown telling about life in the United States. I think the kids will like best to learn of life and economy in New York City, California (oranges and lemons), Louisiana (cotton fields), Pansylvania [sic] (petrol), as well as of the areas located in the vicinity of large lakes and rivers, such as the Michigan lake [sic] and the Mississippi.<sup>131</sup>

In the end, OMGUS considered the film series one of the most successful methods they used to “reeducate” the German people, and in particular German students, in a way that the people enjoyed.<sup>132</sup>

### Overall Impact

Little by little, more power over the education system was transferred from the Education Branch to the *Länder*. This transition was helped by the agreement between the British and American Zones that created a Bizone in Western Germany in 1947, and then with the addition of the French in June 1948, the Trizone. By the time the Federal Republic of Germany was created in 1949, the system was wholly German. The system had been placed in the hands of the *Länder*, de-centralized from the times of the Third Reich. But even though the Occupation had ended, American support for German education had not ended. There would still be educational exchanges for American and German teachers, and many of the Education Service Centers, now under German command, continued to receive American periodicals for teachers.

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Report on 16 mm Natco Film Program, 6 October 1948; Training Films; Correspondence, Memorandums, and Lists Relating to Educational Films, 1948-1949; Records of the Education and Cultural Relations Division, Education Branch, Textbooks and Materials for Instruction Section; Records of the United States Occupation Headquarters, WWII, RG 260; NACP.

After the occupation ended in 1949, former OMGUS head General Lucius Clay acknowledged that not all of the restructuring efforts would survive the combination of the Western Zones into the Federal Republic of Germany. However, the result at the end of the Occupation was something much more democratic than Germany had previously experienced. Clay hoped, though, that OMGUS had laid the groundwork for lasting reform.

In the realm of education, this meant that the changes the American Education Branch had made would give the German authorities a stable foundation on which to build their own education system.<sup>133</sup> Clay believed that “lasting reform in Germany must come from within,” though OMGUS’ policies did not reflect this wishful thinking.<sup>134</sup> In other words, the Germans needed to see how racist their previous education system had been, and how different the new order could be. The future did not have to be the American way, but it had to be one that acknowledged the inherent worth and dignity of every person, as well as the mistakes Germans and Germany had made in the past – something the West German constitution (Basic Law or *Grundgesetz*) enshrined in May 1949.<sup>135</sup> However, many of the reforms OMGUS initiated – social studies classes, student government, and an emphasis on civic participation to name a few – stayed in the German classrooms long after the American Occupation had ended.

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<sup>133</sup> Puaca, *Learning Democracy*, 193.

<sup>134</sup> Lucius Clay, *Decision in Germany*, (Garden City, NY: Heinemann, 1950), 305.

<sup>135</sup> “Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland vom 23. Mai 1949,” *Document Archiv*, March 3, 2004, <http://www.documentarchiv.de/brd/1949/grundgesetz.html>

The Hamburg Agreement, 1964

After 1949, West German education officials continued implementing reforms, tweaking policies that OMGUS had initiated. One of the major reforms came in 1964 at a meeting of the Western *Länder* education ministers. The resulting regulations, described as the Hamburg Agreement, were broken into five sections.<sup>136</sup> The second section, “Uniform Designations on Schools,” required that there be three levels of secondary schooling: *Hauptschule*, *Realschule*, and *Gymnasium*.<sup>137</sup> The Agreement went into further detail about what each school should look like, and how many years it should cover. The Agreement also contained information on foreign-language learning – what languages should be learned, i.e. English as the first second language, and when. Additionally, in the fourth section, the Ministers of Education agreed on grading scales in order to establish a national standard.

The Hamburg Agreement, though a landmark decision, did not radically alter the education structure in the Federal Republic. What it did, however, was standardize it. Prior to the Hamburg Agreement, each individual *Land* could set its own standards and structures. A 1950s student with an *Abitur* from North Rhine-Westphalia (*Nordrhein Westfalen*) had a different education than one from Bavaria.<sup>138</sup> These differing experiences were due, in part, to the three separate western Zones which had created their own reforms from 1945 to 1949. The

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<sup>136</sup> Officially, the “Agreement between *Länder* of the Federal Republic on Standardization in the Field of Education, 28 October 1964). "Abkommen zwischen den Ländern der Bundesrepublik zur Vereinheitlichung auf dem Gebiete des Schulwesens," *Kultusminister Konferenz*, September 25, 2015, [http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen\\_beschluesse/1964/1964\\_10\\_28-Hamburger\\_Abkommen.pdf](http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/1964/1964_10_28-Hamburger_Abkommen.pdf).

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Merle Ingenfeld, Interview by author, June 14, 2015.

Hamburg Agreement changed this. This federal, but not centralized, education agreement would stand until 1990.<sup>139</sup>

Not all of OMGUS' re-education efforts would remain after the end of the American Occupation. Some would be erased as newer educational theories took hold, others as German educational authorities focused on writing and implementing the Hamburg Agreement. However, OMGUS' work to redefine "Germanness" based on an American system of liberal democracy would remain the prevailing definition of what being German meant up until reunification in 1990.

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<sup>139</sup> "Abkommen zwischen den Ländern der Bundesrepublik zur Vereinheitlichung auf dem Gebiete des Schulwesens."

## Chapter 3: Anti-fascist Education in the Soviet Zone

While OMGUS focused on replacing the militaristic overtones in German education with critical thinking and democratic participation, its Soviet counterpart pursued a dramatically different agenda.<sup>140</sup> In the Soviet Zone of occupation, the “Soviet Military Administration in Germany” (*Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland*, SMAD) had its own version of the Education Branch: the German Educational Administration (*Deutsche Verwaltung für Volksbildung* or DVV).<sup>141</sup> From 1945 to 1949, the focus of the DVV was on remolding German education into “anti-fascist education” – something that did not automatically make for Communist propaganda, but still began the process of converting the Soviet Zone to a Soviet satellite. With the creation in 1949 of the German Democratic Republic (*Deutsche Demokratische Republik*, DDR), this focus would shift from anti-fascist education to one of overt propaganda designed to advance the “proletarian revolution” through a system of Marxist-Leninist education. At the core of that education – more than anything “German” – was a Soviet definition of “Germanness” that included loyalty to the Soviet Union and the great proletarian revolution.

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<sup>140</sup> Udi Greenberg argues that such reeducation was not an act to prevent a third World War, but to prevent the spread of communism by creating a strong democratic, and liberal elite. Udi Greenberg, *The Weimar Century: German Emigres and the Ideological Foundations of the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 56.

<sup>141</sup> The Soviet Zone consists of five *Länder*: Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (renamed Mecklenburg in 1947), Brandenburg, Saxony-Anhalt, Thuringia, and Saxony. In 1952 the *Länder* were disestablished and reorganized into fifteen *Bezirke* (administrative districts). *Geschichte und Geschehen*, (Leipzig: Klett, 2005), 300.

The DVV was the German Central Educational Administration until 1946 when it dropped “Central” from the title. Blessing, *The Antifascist Classroom*, 43.

Starting in July 1945, the German Educational Administration appeared to be making most of the decisions about German education in the Soviet Zone. According to Order No. 40 of the SMAD, the administrators in the DVV, led by Soviet-trained Paul Wandel, oversaw “syllabi and curricula of schools [...] the textbooks and printed materials [...] and curricula for the teacher retraining courses.”<sup>142</sup> It was their name and letterhead over the official documents that set out plans and procedures for Soviet Zone education. However, the DVV was firmly under the control of the Soviet Military Administration, which had the ultimate say in decisions regarding policy. Practically, this meant the SMAD could review all DVV regulations before their implementation in the *Länder*.<sup>143</sup> This was similar to OMGUS’ review process, though in practice the *Länder* in the American Zones had more say than in the Soviet Zone.

In reality, the SMAD only intervened selectively, doing so only in cases where it deemed the DVV had not done enough to promote antifascist education.<sup>144</sup> After the end of the Third Reich’s collapse, the *Länder* ministries for education scrambled to rebuild themselves. While the *Land* ministries had existed uninterrupted throughout the war, they had first been made moot by Hitler's centralization of the education ministries, and thereafter were sparsely staffed. The *Land* ministers had definite opinions about how their ministry should be run, and how rebuilding German education should take place. And yet, they did not have enough political influence

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<sup>142</sup> Blessing, *The Antifascist Classroom*, 43; BArch DR 2/411, Befehl 40, Die Vorbereitung der Schulen zum Schulbetrieb, August 25, 1945.

<sup>143</sup> Blessing, *The Antifascist Classroom*, 43.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

with the SMAD to make their ideas policy.<sup>145</sup> Instead, the SMAD assigned to the directors jobs that involved little else than confirming local heads of schools.<sup>146</sup> After the German Democratic Republic was born in 1949, this policy of top-down governance continued; the only difference was that the DVV survived the SMAD, leaving an organization with German administrators and Soviet ideals.

### *The First Few Months in the Classroom*

Having been closed since 1944, when schools in the Soviet Zone officially reopened in October 1945, it was a grim sight, worse than in the American Zone. There were significantly fewer schools due to the destruction of the war; those that were still standing needed major repairs. In Leipzig, a key example in the work of Benita Blessing, there were only 20 intact schools out of 105 school buildings in 1945. In Frankfurt an der Oder, bombing had destroyed 95 percent of the school buildings.<sup>147</sup> It was autumn, and as the weather grew colder, school administrators wondered how they were going to heat their classrooms that had only window frames, no windowpanes with what little fuel they had.<sup>148</sup> Students shared textbooks, having, on average, one textbook apiece, an insufficient amount for the seven plus classes required for their schooling.<sup>149</sup> The classes were History, Math, two sciences, English, German, and Art. There were few supplies of any kind to be had, so students

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<sup>145</sup> BArch DR 2/4702, Tätigkeitsbericht der Landesregierung Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Ministerium für Volksbildung, für das Jahr 1946, February 17, 1949.

<sup>146</sup> BArch DR 2/411, Befehl 40, Die Vorbereitung der Schulen zum Schulbetrieb, August 25, 1945.

<sup>147</sup> Rodden, *Repainting the Little Red Schoolhouse*, 29.

<sup>148</sup> Blessing, *The Antifascist Classroom*, 81.

<sup>149</sup> Gottfried Uhlig, *Der Beginn der Antifaschistisch-Demokratischen Schulreform, 1945-1946, Momenta Paedagogica*, (Berlin [East]: Akademie, 1965), 74.

wrote their essays on the backs of Nazi propaganda posters, and teachers used broken bits of plaster of Paris for chalk.<sup>150</sup>

In addition to supplies, children needed heated, enclosed buildings. The Soviet Zone had sustained heavy damage from both the American and British bombing campaigns. There had also been physical and psychological damage done by the advancing Red Army; many school buildings were completely destroyed, while others were practically unusable, with broken windows and no heating source.<sup>151</sup> In 1946 the Saxony State Administration's Education Division reported that Saxony needed more than 54,000 square meters of glass just to cover the schools in the six largest cities.<sup>152</sup> The report stated that, in one county school district:

Around 23,000 windows have been damaged, in which about 60,000 windows have been sealed with makeshift cardboard, wood, and other substitutes. Exposure places a heavy burden on heating the classroom. A prosperous, sufficient class requires light to read, write, and draw, but behind [...] boarded windows, this is hardly possible.<sup>153</sup>

While the Saxon education authority had men and women willing to work to repair the schools, there simply was not enough building material.<sup>154</sup> The SMAD, Blessing has shown, decided to reopen the usable schools in the autumn of 1945, and

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<sup>150</sup> Blessing, *The Antifascist Classroom*, 54.

<sup>151</sup> Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, 32.

<sup>152</sup> BArch DR 2/411, Landesverwaltung Sachsen, Volksbildung, Glasbedarf der Schulen, August 23, 1946, 24.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> The women who cleaned the debris from the city, collecting any reusable building material they could were called Trümmerfrauen, or "rubble women." DR 2/4702, Tätigkeitsbericht der Landesregierung Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Ministerium für Volksbildung, für das Jahr 1946, February 17, 1947.

then relocate students to shared schools when winter arrived.<sup>155</sup> Saxon education authorities explained, “In some cases you have to make do with temporary [solutions].”<sup>156</sup> Due to mismanagement and antiquated wood-stoves, the “temporary” solution for heating classrooms would last well into 1947. However, despite the amount of repairs that needed to be done, the Soviet Military Administration was clear about one thing: “Not a single school may adjust or shorten the lessons due to shoddy repairs or the absence of fuel.”<sup>157</sup>

And so, in 1947, the DVV called in the parents as reinforcements, loosely creating an organization called *Freunde der neuen Schule*, or Friends of the New School.<sup>158</sup> One of this organization’s aims was to “actively work to improve the material conditions of the school.” For parents, this meant transporting coal, collecting money for a new radio for their children’s classrooms, or procuring nails for the rebuilding effort. One “friend” donated lightbulbs; another, equipment for gym class.<sup>159</sup>

While the Friends of the New School worked to rebuild the physical structures, the SMAD began examining textbooks for Nazi ideology. The elimination of unsuitable textbooks started with Order 40 of 25 August 1945, banning the use of pre-1945 textbooks. The individual school administrators were allowed, however, to

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<sup>155</sup> Blessing, *The Antifascist Classroom*, 81.

<sup>156</sup> BArch DR 2/411, Anfragen bzgl. Schulraum bzw. Schulbau, Schr. Nr. 2230/46, September 27, 1946.

<sup>157</sup> BArch DR 2/411, Befehl des Chefs der Verwaltung der SMA des Landes Brandenburg Nr. 191 vom 14. November 1947 über die Ergebnisse einer Nachprüfung hinsichtlich der Bereitschaft der Schule für den Winter, December 1, 1947.

<sup>158</sup> BArch DR 2/407, “Freunde der neuen Schule” demokratisieren das Schulwesen, March 14, 1949.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

use pre-1933 books if the SMAD had vetted them, and all incendiary passages were removed.<sup>160</sup> The vetted textbooks were to contain no trace of “the propaganda of the Nazis, militaristic, or racist theories.”<sup>161</sup> The order also requested lists of “published pre-1933 school literature submitted by 15 September to the Soviet Military Administration for confirmation.”<sup>162</sup> Soviet-trained education administrators promised to check that the old textbooks had not snuck into the supply, serving up severe punishment to the school directors who let that happen.<sup>163</sup> The leftover textbooks, for the most part, concerned the subject Nazi propaganda affected the least: mathematics.<sup>164</sup> Although extremely limited in number, the books would have to do until the DVV could get enough supplies and people together to print new editions.

Lesson plans were supposed to be sent for approval to the Directorate of the Central Administration for National Education by 15 September 1945.<sup>165</sup> However, as Benita Blessing argues, there were too many moving parts for this to happen on schedule. Before school administrators could create curricula, they needed to know what textbooks they were using and what key concepts students needed to learn. These were decisions that, for the most part, were made later in 1945, or even

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<sup>160</sup> BArch DR 2/411, Befehl 40, Die Vorbereitung der Schulen zum Schulbetrieb, August 25, 1945.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Siegfried Baske, “Grund- und Rahmenbedingungen.” In *Die Deutsche Demokratische Republik und neue Bundesländer*, eds. Christoph Führ and Carl-Ludwig Furck (Munich: Beck, 1998), 13.

<sup>164</sup> No subject was without Nazi taint; however, the Soviet Zone’s textbook purges left mostly mathematics textbooks. Blessing, *The Antifascist Classroom*, 56.

<sup>165</sup> BArch DR 2/411, Befehl 40, Die Vorbereitung der Schulen zum Schulbetrieb, August 25, 1945.

1946.<sup>166</sup> And so, the administrators submitted curricula built around practical concepts – how to calculate the square meterage of glass needed to replace the windows in their schools, the combustion rate of coal versus wood in the stoves, or how sunlight helped plants in the school gardens grow.<sup>167</sup>

The SMAD had both practical and ideological reasons for wanting to open as many schools as possible, as soon as possible. Practically, the Soviet Zone was overrun with people – both those forcibly expelled from their homes, and those who had left Eastern Europe by choice in hope of a future more stable and more prosperous. John Rodden has estimated that the Soviet Zone absorbed three million people, which included both Eastern Europeans and Germans forcibly expelled from those territories.<sup>168</sup> Norman Naimark puts the number of German expellees from Poland and Czechoslovakia at just over five million, total, with a majority of Czech expellees – for example -- going to Bavaria in the American sector.<sup>169</sup> The number of expellees in the Soviet Zone was much higher than in the other sectors due to its shared borders with the countries (i.e. Poland and Czechoslovakia) that most refugees were leaving.

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<sup>166</sup> Blessing, *The Antifascist Classroom*, 37.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>168</sup> Expelled Germans came from former German territories such as Danzig, Königsberg, and Breslau, as well as from countries that no longer wanted their German minority. Benes' Czechoslovakia is one example of the forcible expulsion of a German minority. Rodden, *Repainting the Little Red Schoolhouse*, 29-30; "Excerpts from the Report on the Potsdam Conference (Potsdam Agreement) (August 2, 1945)," *German Historical Documents Index*, [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=2299](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=2299) (accessed January 10, 2016).

<sup>169</sup> Norman Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 111.

Those numbers included the 500,000 children who arrived in 1945 and the 319,000 who came in 1946.<sup>170</sup> Many of these children were orphaned, starving, psychologically battered, and ill-equipped for the coming winter. One refugee camp worker described the children as “tired, wan, broken little old men and women.”<sup>171</sup> Schools could, at the very least, provide shelter and some warmth for a part of the day. A regional education conference in October 1945 went one step further by recommending that schools provide warm clothing and lunches at school:

Because today it is not at all only about saving our youth intellectually. For the coming winter especially it is about saving them physically. ... Their [administrators’, parents’, etc.] duty must be to help our youth get through this difficult time with warm classrooms, school lunches, and warm clothes.<sup>172</sup>

While there were many practical (and humanitarian) reasons to provide warm clothing and food, these actions were also opportunistic ones. Parents would send their children to school to get nutrition they might not have been able to receive at home. In return, the DVV could win the children’s trust. It then shaped the students’ interpretation of the war, giving them a pro-Soviet framework to understand the victors and losers of the war. It was the perfect opportunity to begin educating the inhabitants of the Soviet Zone about “antifascism” and why the Soviets (and, more broadly, the Allies) had won the war.<sup>173</sup>

During the postwar occupation, the Americans, French, and British all worked on denazifying the school system – from the textbooks, to the teachers. However,

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<sup>170</sup> Rodden, *Repainting the Little Red Schoolhouse*, 30.

<sup>171</sup> Tara Zahra, *The Lost Children*, 9.

<sup>172</sup> Blessing, *The Antifascist Classroom*, 54.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

their efforts would not take the same ideological shape as the Soviet approach. Anti-fascist education meant more than denazification of the “the barbaric character of the Nazi race theory” and democratization.<sup>174</sup> Antifascism meant restructuring education so that every student, regardless of birth or circumstance, had the opportunity to become a well-informed and productive member of society.<sup>175</sup> This goal was not exclusively Soviet in nature; both the Prussians and the Weimar government had proposed comprehensive schooling in the past.<sup>176</sup>

What was Soviet in nature were the ideological underpinnings of this restructuring and rebuilding. Antifascism’s ideological foundation – a watered-down version of the Soviet Marxist state based on German, rather than Soviet, pedagogy and educational traditions – allowed eastern Germans to rebuild their society with Soviet work without the need to sell the Soviet system completely to Germans.<sup>177</sup> This could be achieved by having Soviet-trained Germans make the educational restructuring decisions so that it appeared German ideas were remaking the education system. The great social revolution that would provide equality for all, and give power to the workers, was not initially the goal of the SMAD. For the first few years, the emphasis was on German educational traditions. The German Communist Party (KPD) declared in June 1945 that “it would be wrong to impose the Soviet system on Germany, because this way does not correspond to the present conditions

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<sup>174</sup> Herf, *Divided Memory*, 32.

<sup>175</sup> Blessing, *The Antifascist Classroom*, 5.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

of development in Germany.”<sup>178</sup> In the sphere of education, Blessing argues, this meant using German pedagogical texts and emphasizing practical experience, instead of Soviet pedagogy that had yet to be translated.<sup>179</sup> This decision showcased the Soviet Zone's decision to shape their own definition of "Germanness" instead of imposing the Soviet's definition onto Germans.

As tensions between the Western and Soviet Zone administrations increased, so did the presence of Soviet methods in the classroom, allowing the SMAD to further push a redefinition of "Germanness" that fit the Soviet context of the brewing Cold War.<sup>180</sup> As early as the 1948-1949 school year, Soviet pedagogy books had replaced Weimar era texts. With the creation of the German Democratic Republic in the summer of 1949, the SMAD transformed the Eastern Zone antifascist education into a Marxist-Leninist one based on the Soviet Union. With the 1965 Law on the Unified Socialist Education System, it would become a model of Marxist-Leninist education.

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 24. The KPD and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) merged in 1946, to create the Socialist Unity Party (SED). The SED would rule over East Germany up until free elections in 1990.

<sup>179</sup> Rodden, *Repainting the Little Red Schoolhouse*, 58-59.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 37.

*Educating and Reeducating the Educators: Purges and Neulehrer*



Figure 3.1: An advertisement for the Neulehrer Programs. The poster reads "New teachers for the new schools"<sup>181</sup>

In October 1945, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern estimated that eighty to ninety percent of its teaching staff had somehow been involved with the Nazi Party.<sup>182</sup> This contrasted with the Americans' zone-wide estimates of fifty-percent involvement with the NSDAP.<sup>183</sup> Given the need for teachers, it made sense that the *Länder* might be less stringent than the occupiers in purging the schools of "fascist elements."<sup>184</sup> If

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<sup>181</sup> "'New Teachers for the New Schools' (1945)," German History in Documents and Images. Accessed February 10, 2016, [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_image.cfm?image\\_id=2606](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_image.cfm?image_id=2606)

<sup>182</sup> BArch DR 2/421, Säuberung der Lehrerschaft von faschistischen Elementen, October 31, 1945.

<sup>183</sup> Puaca, *Learning Democracy*, 15.

<sup>184</sup> BArch DR 2/421, Säuberung der Lehrerschaft von faschistischen Elementen, October 31, 1945. In addition to the practical side of the non-purges, Walter Ulbricht wanted to leave the memory of the Nazis in the past and strive toward building a "National Front." Herf, *Divided Memory*, 110.

they had completely dismissed everyone with ties to the Nazi Party, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern would have instantly needed over 4,000 new teachers.<sup>185</sup> Practically, almost no purge could be comprehensive. Nonetheless, some purging officials tried eliminating even “nominal” NSDAP members – but then school administrators had to rehire one-time nominal party members to meet basic levels of staff.<sup>186</sup> Nevertheless, Zone and *Länder* administration alike took this task seriously, calling it their “battle task.”<sup>187</sup>

One way DVV education ministers could boost staff numbers while still completing a purge was through the parameters for who would be dismissed and who would remain:

- 1) Active members of the Nazi Party are not permitted, even the lowest position
- 2) former members of the Nazi Party, as well as members of the former German National People’s Party [DNVP], are not in leading positions at all.<sup>188</sup>

Another order issued in July 1946 created a loophole that would make it appear that the SMAD was being harsh towards former Nazi party members by initially barring them from employment, while also allowing SMAD to retain more teachers. The order continued that, for teachers “capable and willing to actively participate” in the rebuilding effort, “a job in the teaching profession is possible.”<sup>189</sup> The order warned

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<sup>185</sup> The breakdown of the teachers after the purge was this: 3,751 teachers survived the purge; of those 2,014 were former NSDAP members, and 1,737 were non-members. There was a deficit of 2,399 teachers. Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Rodden, *Repainting the Little Red Schoolhouse*, 48.

<sup>187</sup> BArch DR 2/421, Säuberung der Lehrerschaft von faschistischen Elementen, October 31, 1945.

<sup>188</sup> The German National People’s Party (*Deutschnationale Volkspartei* or DNVP) was a conservative party during the Weimar Republic with racist and anti-Semitic tones. Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> BArch DR 2/421, Die Aufgabe, die Schule frei vom faschistischen Geiste zu halten, July 15, 1946.

that the educators who chose this route would face a more stringent DVV-led investigation of their backgrounds.<sup>190</sup>

As in the American Zone, the educators in the Soviet Zone who survived the postwar purges were mostly young or old. Those too young had been born too late -- i.e. 1929 or later -- to have been fully indoctrinated by Hitler's plan for the schools. Those too old had been teaching during the Weimar Republic. The SMAD estimated that 35 percent of its teachers were in the 55-to-60 age range.<sup>191</sup> This was hardly ideal, as the SMAD wanted younger teachers. There was a fear that Weimar-era teachers would slip back into imperialistic and racially-charged terminology despite being reeducated as to what materials should be taught, and how.<sup>192</sup> However, the ratio of teachers to students was already high. At the end of 1945, the Soviet Zone as a whole had one teacher for every 23 high school (*Oberschule*) students.

It is also important to note that these are aggregate numbers of teacher-to-student ratios for provinces, the *Länder*, and the Soviet Zone. Ratios in the Zone ranged from the low end of 18 students per teacher in Brandenburg, to 25 students per teacher in Thüringen, with an average of 22 students per teacher for the Soviet Zone.<sup>193</sup> There was dramatic variation from one town to the next based on a number of factors, such as how thorough the local purging authority had been, how many Nazi party members the region had had, what the student-teacher ratio was before the war,

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> BArch DR 2/1059, Einteilung der Lehrkräfte nach dem Lebensalter, verglichen mit dem Stand, March 1, 1947.

<sup>192</sup> Puaca, *Learning Democracy*, 39.

<sup>193</sup> BArch DR 2/1060, Zahlenmäßige Entwicklung der Oberschulen, December 2, 1946.

and how many refugees resettled in a particular area. By October 1946, the Soviet Zone average had decreased to 17 students per teacher, a twenty-two percent decrease since the end of the war.<sup>194</sup>

The solution to the SMAD's problem of large student-to-teacher ratios at the end of 1945 was a series of short courses in pedagogy, current affairs, and ideological training that churned out teachers known as *Neulehrer*, or new teachers. The first set of classes held at the beginning of 1946 lasted only four weeks, but later that year, the DVV extended their length to eight months, and then again to one year at the beginning of 1947 following criticisms that the *Neulehrer* were unprepared for their posts.<sup>195</sup> The changes included "leaving more room for practical methodical instructions and exercises," such as mock teaching, and how to write lesson plans.<sup>196</sup> The Minister of National Education for the *Land* of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Dr. Rosenow, noted that he would have preferred a longer course because, in "the development of the new teachers with part-time pedagogical and methodological instruction, three years could not be considered" enough time. As it was, teachers were only being trained for eight months to a year.<sup>197</sup> Nevertheless, even Rosenow acknowledged that his *Land* needed 981 additional teachers by the start of autumn 1947, and so he concluded by recommending a teacher's course of one year.<sup>198</sup> More

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Rodden, *Repainting the Little Red Schoolhouse*, 31; BArch DR 2/4702, Tätigkeitsbericht der Landesregierung Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Ministerium für Volksbildung, für das Jahr 1946, February 17, 1947.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> BArch DR 2/4702, Tätigkeitsbericht der Landesregierung Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Ministerium für Volksbildung, für das Jahr 1946, February 17, 1947.

newly-trained teachers allowed the Soviet Zone to push their concept of "Germanness" at a quicker pace than a slower teacher training course would have allowed.

Getting Everyone on the Same Page – Curriculum

Curriculum was an area where the evolution of the SMAD's plan for antifascist education came through most clearly. From discrediting the Nazis, to pushing the publication of Russian language primers, very few decisions concerned with curricula could be apolitical. While Russian language, mathematics, and science instruction would become a core tenet of the new curriculum, it also included new priorities such as teaching current events, and it allowed students to learn about the shameful conduct of Germans in the Third Reich.<sup>199</sup>

The DVV emphasized that, no matter how different the new curricula may have been, they were to be consistent across grades and schools. Speaking of the newly-redesigned *Oberschule* in 1948, the DVV official Wilhelm Scheidt said that it did "not correspond in many ways to reality."<sup>200</sup> Going further, the DVV argued that in order to extricate the schools from their romanticizing of German society, there needed to be a focus on "technical-scientific" and "social-scientific training."<sup>201</sup> However, the DVV recognized that there had been progressive elements within the Prussian-tiered education system. Germany had been known worldwide for its education system, featuring some of the oldest universities in the world, even if the

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> BArch DR 2/411, Durchführung von Massnahmen zur Förderung aller auszeitbedingten Ursachen, n.d.; Herf, *Divided Memory*, 28-29.

<sup>200</sup> BArch DR 2/659, Die Neue Oberschule, 1948, 91.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

system had been mangled by extreme nationalism during the Third Reich. The DVV wanted to “bring new matters into the curriculum” to make sure Germany’s “educational heritage” was based off of a Soviet model of an ideal educational state.<sup>202</sup>

Extracurricular organizations were no foreign concept to Germans who had once been forced into Hitler Youth or the League of German Girls. When the Soviets introduced the Free German Youth (*Freie Deutsche Jugend*), the SMAD wanted to show it was an organization distinct from the mandatory nation-building ones of the past regime.<sup>203</sup> They started by making it optional, and went further by encouraging other youth organizations to help create the democratic student-body they wished to see.<sup>204</sup> These organizations were to promote “sports, games, gymnastics,” and home economics in cooperation with the vocation-based schooling.<sup>205</sup>

The Soviet-trained educators taught the Third Reich in history classes and the Nuremberg Trials in current events, seeking to prevent the emergence of a “betrayal myth” – a tendency to glorify those Germans on trial as “national martyrs.”<sup>206</sup> There would be no resurgence of German nationalism. For the youth, the “steel helmet and

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Rodden, *Repainting the Little Red Schoolhouse*, 62.

<sup>204</sup> While membership in the FDJ and its younger affiliate, the Pioneers, was not mandatory, by the 1960s any student that was not a member had a hard time gaining admittance into a university, and their parents could suffer reprisals at work. BArch DR 2/411, Durchführung von Massnahmen zur Förderung aller auszeitbedingten Ursachen, n.d.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> BArch DR 2/216, Nürnberg und die Schule, n.d. 176.

swastika” were to become “disreputable symbols.”<sup>207</sup> These were symbols that German youth needed to recognize “in order never to succumb to them.”<sup>208</sup>

The SMAD emphasized teaching these topics with primary source material. Eventually, this would come to mean including the works of Marx, Lenin, Engels, and Stalin into every history textbook.<sup>209</sup> However, from 1945 to 1949 this meant giving students sources to read from the Nuremberg Trials. The SMAD in 1945 defined these sources as

firsthand witness reports that represent current events in detail, and therefore appeal directly to students. Because they are properly closer and more realistic, they attract the active interest of minors... This not only arouses an inner sympathy, but also develops the understanding of the essential historical events and phenomena of an era, and sharpens the past by making it more realistic and vivid.<sup>210</sup>

Promoting such sources, allowed the SMAD to portray the Marxism-Leninism as the natural and right successor from fascism, and thereby shape a definition of "Germanness" that was first antifascist (Hitler had been wrong) and later Marxist-Leninist (the Soviet Union had been right).

That sympathy is something the SMAD believed was crucial to getting German children to question their past. The Nazis had accomplished “shattering achievements,” and the Soviets conceded that students and faculty might interpret them as impressive in their ability to garner support so quickly by taking Germany

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> *Dokumente und Materialien: Geschichte 11* ([East] Berlin: Volk und Wissen Volkseigener Verlag, 1980), 3-4.

<sup>210</sup> BArch DR 2/216, Nürnberg und die Schule, n.d. 174.

out of a depression.<sup>211</sup> Evoking sympathy for the Nazis' victims, the SMAD believed they could eliminate Nazism as an aspiration.<sup>212</sup> It was not going to be an easy task – rewriting the interpretation of an entire generation's memories – but one that the Soviets prioritized. The DVV had harsh words for anyone who believed the Nazi influence had been eliminated from the school by 1945: “Only an ignoramus... can deny that these threats to the younger generation are already banned or overcome.”<sup>213</sup>

Teaching about current events, and in particular the Nuremberg Trials, was thus a priority for the SMAD. In the document, “Nürnberg und die Schule,” the SMAD relates how and why educators might teach their students about the Nuremberg Trials. Although schools might not be able to “gauge its [the Nuremberg Trials] full extent,” at the end of 1945 and the beginning of 1946, the SMAD recognized there were reasons for teaching the Trials other than to prevent the “betrayal myth” from establishing itself.<sup>214</sup> One of these reasons was the making of history itself: “For the first time in history, those [individuals] are in front of a world criminal tribunal because they have prepared and unleashed the worst war of aggression to subjugate other peoples. This fact is in itself meaningful enough.”<sup>215</sup>

However, simply to repeat the indictments without context would not engage the students enough for the lesson to stick. Instead, the SMAD recommended the creation of new historical wall maps, pictorial histories, historical atlases, and other

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> BArch DR 2/216, Nürnberg und die Schule, n.d., 175

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

visual aids to help students comprehend their nation's troubled recent history.<sup>216</sup> The SMAD also recommended that teachers use the daily newspaper as a source for assigned reading material because they were "so convincing and illustrative of a historical and political contemplation that they provide valuable sources and notes for teaching."<sup>217</sup>

The Soviet-backed newspapers, in particular, were said to offer a "clear, compelling, and deliberate condemnation of the past regime."<sup>218</sup> Requesting that teachers use these newspapers also provided a subtle way of introducing Soviet propaganda into the schools since a majority of newspapers were controlled, at least initially, by the SMAD and its propaganda arm.<sup>219</sup> Such use of the propaganda allowed the SMAD to teach German students the correct interpretation of current events that would promote the Soviet version of "Germanness." The report on "Nuremberg and the School," for example, declared one of the aims of teaching the war tribunal to be showcasing "the conquest of world domination by German financial capital."<sup>220</sup>

One of the challenges the SMAD encountered in creating new curricula for its schools was the wide range of ages for students in one class. Since the schools had

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<sup>216</sup> BArch DR 2/650, Lehrmittel für den Geschichtsunterricht, 1946, 73.

<sup>217</sup> BArch DR 2/216, Nürnberg und die Schule, n.d., 178

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> The SMAD censored heavily those newspapers that had previous been associated, or published by, the German Social Democratic Party (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* SPD), even after its merge with the Communist Party (KPD) in 1946. Those newspapers from the Communist Party (*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*, KPD), or the new Socialist Unity Party (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, SED) were not censored as heavily. BArch DR 2/216, Nürnberg und die Schule, n.d., 178.; Martin McCauley, *Marxism-Leninism in the German Democratic Republic: The Socialist Unity Party (SED)*, (London: MacMillan Press, 1979), 10.

<sup>220</sup> BArch DR 2/216, Nürnberg und die Schule, n.d., 178.

been shut down during 1944, children of the same age were often not in the same grade when the schools reopened. Some students were able to continue their schooling at home. In other cases, parents had already pulled their students from school earlier because of political or religious affiliation and fear of reprisal by the Nazis. In Brandenburg in 1948, first-grade classes had an age range from six to fifteen years old.<sup>221</sup> A few lucky teachers did have students all the same age. However, even they had vast challenges to overcome due to the immense emotional and physical toll the war had taken on the students. There were students who were missing limbs or parents due to the bombing campaigns.<sup>222</sup> Some of the older male students exhibited symptoms of psychological trauma resulting from violent actions during the campaigns.<sup>223</sup>

Prior to World War II, German high schools' foreign-language offerings consisted mostly of Latin, Greek, English, or French.<sup>224</sup> German schools taught so little Russian that the SMAD had to scramble to create an introductory primer for the elementary schools and find teachers to teach it.<sup>225</sup> Even though there were other critical textbook shortages, the SMAD chose to focus on Russian textbooks in their curriculum for Saxony in early 1946. By 25 February 1946, high-school Russian

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<sup>221</sup> BArch DR 2/1059, Einteilung der Schüler des Landes Brandenburg nach Lebensalter und Schuljahrgängen, September 15, 1948.

<sup>222</sup> Rodden, *Repainting the Little Red Schoolhouse*, 30.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> The German school system was a three-tier system with three levels of high schools, *Hauptschule*, *Realschule*, and *Gymnasium*. While every student started a foreign language around the fifth grade, those who wished to continue had to attend the higher two levels of secondary school. Arthur Hearnden, *Education in the Two Germanies* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1974), 48.; BArch DR 2/659, Über den Stand der Oberschulen, 1947.

<sup>225</sup> BArch DR 2/664, An die Sortimentsbuchhandlungen und die Schulbücher führenden Papier- und Schreibwarenhandlungen der Provinz Sachsen, February 20, 1945.

primers were to have arrived at the central textbook distribution hall; by 3 March 1946, they were distributed to the schools in the *Land*.<sup>226</sup> This came in direct contrast with a report from the publisher Volk und Wissen:

For the school year 1946-47 approximately 15 million school books will be needed. Of these, 8 million will be delivered in the last months of 1946, 7 million more to follow then in the first months of 1947. All [...] 150 titles are represented. Reading and computing books, Russian, English, and French language, science and history, and geography textbooks will be available in the new school year.<sup>227</sup>

The textbook shortages, combined with the teacher and supply shortages did not stop the SMAD from making plans for their Zone. Administrators continued to churn out regulations and reports with demands and suggestions for the new school. They varied from “Purge the Faculty of Fascist Elements” to “About the State of the *Oberschule*.” The emphasis across the board was on ideologically rebuilding the German education system in the Soviet model.<sup>228</sup>

#### *Planning for Life after the Zone*

In 1948, when tensions between occupied zones were rising during the Berlin Blockade and talk of reunifying the two zones had died down, the SMAD announced two unique plans for education in the Zone. One plan was for 1948, and it assumed a priority of continuing the reconstruction that had begun in 1945. The second plan, however, was a two-year plan intended to cover only the 1949-1951 school years.<sup>229</sup>

The two-year plan was to bring East Germany even closer ideologically to the USSR

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<sup>226</sup> BArch DR 2/664, An die Sortimentsbuchhandlungen und die Schulbücher führenden Papier- und Schreibwarenhandlungen der Provinz Sachsen, February 20, 1945.

<sup>227</sup> BArch DR 2/664, Die neuen Schulbücher des Verlages, 1946, 53.

<sup>228</sup> BArch DR 2/421, Säuberung der Lehrerschaft von faschistischen Elementen, October 31, 1945.; BArch DR 2/659, Über den Stand der Oberschule, 1947.

<sup>229</sup> BArch DR 2/412, Unterstützung des Zweijahresplanes durch die Schulen, July 28, 1948.

than during the transitional occupation period, and to distance it from the western areas. The plan declared Russian to be the first foreign language that students would learn in primary school; only in the *Oberschule* could they pick a second foreign language (typically French).<sup>230</sup>

There was a larger emphasis on vocational training, to “create an increase in production in all sectors of the economy.”<sup>231</sup> Since the postwar East German economy was to be based on industrial workers, it made sense to promote apprenticeships and other training that would lead the students to their jobs.<sup>232</sup> There were also the beginnings of the social safety net for East Germans: “What is needed is the proliferation of kindergartens to relieve the working mothers.”<sup>233</sup> If kindergartens became more prevalent, with fully-trained staff and a solid curriculum, the plan argued, working mothers could focus on their contributions to the economy instead of worrying over their children’s early education.<sup>234</sup>

From the beginning of their occupation, the Russian education ministers believed the German education system to be bourgeois and class-based.<sup>235</sup> It was a system where those with more economic opportunity were afforded spots in the

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<sup>230</sup> BArch DR 2/412, Unterstützung des Zweijahresplanes durch die Schulen, July 28, 1948.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation: A History of Germany, 1918-1990*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 235.

<sup>233</sup> For a discussion of some of the social protections female workers enjoyed, see Mary Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation*, 239-241. Inga Markovits lists the extensive protections East Germans enjoyed by 1989 in her book, *Imperfect Justice*. Some that she mentioned included “health care, child care, organized vacations, [and] a collective subscription to the theatre.” Inga Markovits, *Imperfect Justice: An East-West Diary*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 20.; BArch DR 2/412, Unterstützung des Zweijahresplanes durch die Schulen, July 28, 1948.

<sup>234</sup> BArch DR 2/412, Unterstützung des Zweijahresplanes durch die Schulen, July 28, 1948.

<sup>235</sup> BArch DR 2/659, Die neue Oberschule, 1948, 91.

highest level of German secondary education, and then admission into university. In a state built on the concept of the working-class majority having the power, such a system could no longer function.<sup>236</sup> The SMAD's May 1946 Law on the Democratization of the German School System reflected harshly upon the old education system:

For the sons and daughters of the common people, the gates of the high school and the university were closed as a rule, not because of the ability of the children, but the financial situation of their parents and their educational background.<sup>237</sup>

The solution came later in the text of the Law. The school system, the Russians argued,

must be constructed so that it guarantees that all young boys and girls, urban and rural, without distinction of the assets of their parents, have the same right to education and its realization according to their aptitudes and abilities. ... It will start from the needs of society, give each child and young person irrespective of ownership, of faith, or his lineage, full training that corresponds with his inclinations and abilities.<sup>238</sup>

By the beginning of the 1946 school year, the SMAD had closed all private and religious schools.<sup>239</sup> While OMGUS had preferred secular schooling but allowed the religious schools to remain open, the SMAD ensured all confessional schools were closed. The SMAD had also eliminated the three-tier secondary school system,

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<sup>236</sup> Hearnden, *Education in the Two Germanies*, 66.

<sup>237</sup> "Gesetz zur Demokratisierung der deutschen Schule vom Mai/Juni 1946" [Law for the Democratization of the German School System from May/June 1946], DDR Schulrecht, last modified March 2, 2005, accessed January 9, 2016, <http://www.ddr-schulrecht.de/Schulrechtssammlung%20-%20DDR-Dateien/pdf/1946-a.pdf>.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> BArch DR 2/411, Befehl 40, Die Vorbereitung der Schulen zum Schulbetrieb, August 25, 1945. While private schools continued to be banned by the Soviet Military Administration, the Law on the Democratization of the German School System acknowledged that the religious schools were matters for the religious communities. The spring 1946 law proclaimed that that was to be a forthcoming decision. "Gesetz zur Demokratisierung der deutschen Schule"

replacing it with a generalized *Oberschule*.<sup>240</sup> This, the SMAD argued, would allow students of all economic backgrounds, from rural as well as urban areas, to attain the highest level of education possible. Of course, the resources invested in vocational training for students vastly outweighed those put into post-secondary education.<sup>241</sup> Discrimination against some students did occur for political reasons. Children of religious leaders, those with a white-collar background, or those whose parents spoke out against the Party, found themselves without opportunities to further their studies.<sup>242</sup> It was an education system far from its stated goals of equality for all.

#### *From the DDR to the Wende*

By 1948, communication and relations between the Western democracies, as Churchill referenced them in his “Iron Curtain Speech,” and the Soviet Zone had significantly deteriorated.<sup>243</sup> U.S. Marshall Plan aid had reached the Western *Länder*, and the Bizone appeared to be getting back on its feet. On June 20, 1948, the Western Zones introduced a currency reform that created the Deutsche Mark (DM).<sup>244</sup> Two days later, the Soviet Zone issued its own currency (also called the Deutsche Mark) in

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<sup>240</sup> This would change again in 1959 with the *Grundschule* (elementary school) changed to the 10-grade *Allgemeinbildene Polytechnische Oberschule*, with the 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade now called *Erweiterte Oberschule*. The *Erweiterte Oberschule* was reduced to only 11<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades in 1965. Arthur Hearnden, “Inter-German Relations and Educational Policy,” *Comparative Education* 9, no. 1 (March 1973): 11.

<sup>241</sup> BArch DR 2/2172, Anlage Nr. 1 zum Befehl des oberaten Chefs der SMAD Nr. 200 vom 8.7.1946 Haushaltsplan der Provinz Brandenburg für das dritte Vierteljahr 1946, July 8, 1946.

<sup>242</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *The People’s State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 36.

<sup>243</sup> Winston Churchill, “The Sinews of Peace,” Speech, Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri, March 5, 1946, <http://www.winstonchurchill.org/resources/speeches/1946-1963-elder-statesman/120-the-sinews-of-peace>.

<sup>244</sup> “Currency Reform (June 20, 1948),” *German History in Documents and Images*, Accessed February 6, 2016, [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_image.cfm?image\\_id=1018&language=english](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_image.cfm?image_id=1018&language=english)

response to the West's currency reform "dictated by the lords of Wall Street in conjunction with their German accomplices."<sup>245</sup>

In July of the same year, the Americans, French, British, and West Germans had begun framing a (West) German constitution at meetings in London. While there was hope for "the eventual re-establishment of German unity at present disrupted," the Bizone's leadership recognized that Stalin was not going to relinquish his grip on his Zone.<sup>246</sup> By May 1949, the Parliamentary Council had written a constitution – the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany. The *Länder* ratified it, and on 23 May 1949, the Western Zones became the Federal Republic of Germany (*Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, BRD).<sup>247</sup>

On 7 October 1949, the Soviet Zone ratified its own constitution, and the German Democratic Republic (*Deutsche Demokratische Republik*) was born.<sup>248</sup> Some of the first education acts for the newly formed country would include moving away from anti-fascist education, with its focus on redemption and equal opportunity for all by following previous Prussian education ideals. The education system would move towards Marxist-Leninist education – a system that focused on education as part of

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<sup>245</sup> "Excerpt from the Currency Reform Resolution Passed by the Central Committee of the SED (June 22, 1948)," *German History in Documents and Images*, Accessed February 6, 2016, [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=2994&language=english](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=2994&language=english) For more on the history of post-1945 Germany, see Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation*, or Fulbrook, *The People's State*.

<sup>246</sup> United States Department of State, "The London Documents (July 1, 1948)" In *Germany 1947-1949: The Story in Documents* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950), 275.

<sup>247</sup> John Golay, *The Founding of the Federal Republic of Germany*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 217-262.

<sup>248</sup> "Die Verfassung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik [vom 7. Oktober 1949]," *Document Archiv*. March 3, 2004, <http://www.documentarchiv.de/ddr/verfddr1949.html>; For more on the founding of the German Democratic Republic, see Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, 55-60.

the great proletariat revolution.<sup>249</sup> This new focus brought renewed attention to the Russian language, shifting weight from German pedagogy to Soviet-style pedagogy.<sup>250</sup>

DVV officials wrote the 1949-1950 education plan understanding that the future DDR would function as a separate country from the Western Zones. In some ways the transition to the DDR changed very little of the education system. Soviet-approved personnel still ran the Ministry for Education. The school structure had remained the same since 1946, and the antifascist curriculum stayed much the same as well. It would take a few years, until 1951, before the switch from anti-fascist education with its focus on denazification, to Marxist-Leninist education, with its focus on a great “socialist” nation, would become evident.

However, this switch had been many years in the making. Curriculum decisions made during the tenure of the SMAD connected the Soviet Zone with Moscow. Once the Soviet Zone was cut off from the Western Zones and declared sovereign, the connection paradoxically only grew stronger. It was a connection, historian Benita Blessing has noted, that brought East Berlin to “Moscow time.”<sup>251</sup> The connection between East Germany and the Soviet Union would only truly be broken in 1990 with the reunification of the two Germanys ending “four decades of self-righteous and misleading ‘antifascism.’”<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Blessing, *The Antifascist Classroom*, 197.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>252</sup> Herf, *Divided Memory*, 354.

Education in the German Democratic Republic continued on the trajectory that the Soviets had put in place: education for the deserving children, as part of the great socialist revolution.<sup>253</sup> This was yet another example of equal opportunity for some, but not all, unlike the rhetoric the Soviet Zone had propagated about educational equality. Even while the West German definition of "Germanness" moved away from the American one imposed during the Occupation, the East German definition remained Soviet in nature. For the most part, educational curricula and structure stayed the same from 1949 to 1989. The year 1965 did bring some restructuring of the secondary school system. Namely, the eight-year *Allgemeinbildene Polytechnische Oberschule* (General Secondary Polytechnical School, POS) established in 1950 expanded to ten years, and the top level of secondary education, the *Erweiterte Oberschule* (Advanced High School, EOS) shrank to only the eleventh and twelfth grades.<sup>254</sup> This was a change born of "proletarian" logic – additional years in the POS allowed students to transition directly into the workplace, while the shortening of the EOS allowed those students selected for higher education to begin their careers earlier.<sup>255</sup>

Early in 1965, the DDR Parliament (*Volkskammer*) also passed the Law on the Standard Socialist Education System. The Law declared that East Germany had "entered the new socialist era, after the victory of the socialist relations of

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<sup>253</sup> "Gesetz über das einheitliche sozialistische Bildungssystem vom 25. Februar 1965," *Verfassungen*, December 9, 2004. <http://www.verfassungen.de/de/ddr/schulgesetz65.htm>.

<sup>254</sup> Hearnden, *Education in the Two Germanies*, 255.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*

production.”<sup>256</sup> The first goal of education, it declared, “is a high level of education of the whole citizenry... [and] developed socialist personalities [...] living a full, happy life with dignity.”<sup>257</sup> It would accomplish this through a variety of measures, including the ten-year POS. This was where students:

Are to be imparted a thorough knowledge of Marxism-Leninism. They should recognize the laws of development of nature, society, and human thought and understanding to apply and gain firm socialist convictions. [In order to] comprehend the meaning of life in our time to think socialist, to feel and to act and to fight for the overcoming of contradictions and difficulties in solving tasks.<sup>258</sup>

No group within the school system escaped some share of responsibility for German communist education. The law mentioned teachers, students, parents, and workers throughout its entirety.<sup>259</sup> Even though the law enumerated more specifics than had previously been written down, its contents were not new. They continued the work the German Education Administration had been doing since 1949. Education in East Germany would rely on the Law on the Unified Socialist Education System as its guidepost for training students in Marxist-Leninist ideal of “everything with the people, everything by the people, everything for the people.”<sup>260</sup> Of course, this promise of “everything for the people” only included those “loyal to the German Democratic Republic, their socialist fatherland.”<sup>261</sup> And because of that, it was not a

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<sup>256</sup> “Gesetz über das einheitliche sozialistische Bildungssystem vom 25. Februar 1965,” *Verfassungen*, December 9, 2004. <http://www.verfassungen.de/de/ddr/schulgesetz65.htm>

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

fair and equalized system for all; only a minority of East German children went on to university compared with the higher West German levels.

Education in the Soviet Zone and later, East Germany, had quickly evolved beyond the initial tumult of 1945. The SMAD started by creating antifascist education – the foundations of a communist education system that would redefine what being German meant. In 1949, the German Democratic Republic took up the mantle and transformed what had been in its infant stages to a fully-realized Soviet definition of "Germanness."

## Chapter 4: Creating a “German” Past: A History Textbook

### Analysis, 1988-2014

Like the postwar period, the period following reunification in 1990 involved shifts in power over who controlled the educational narrative. For former East Germans, the Law on the Unified Socialist Education System had stood for twenty-five years as a guiding law based on Marxist-Leninist principles. The Reunification Treaty replaced this with West Germany’s guiding law on education, the 1964 Hamburg Agreement. This effectively reestablished the three-track high-school system in a reunified Germany.<sup>262</sup> While the restructuring of the school system represented the most dramatic change in education, the corpus of available textbooks also underwent a shift after reunification. The newly unified *Bundesrepublik*’s goal was to promote a new definition of “Germanness” – one that included both the East and West German narratives. The goal of the new textbooks was to include all Germans and their history, but to privilege through the selection of primary sources, the “winning” narrative of West Germans.

Textbooks are strong indicators of the prevailing narrative of a given state in a given era. Stuart Foster and Keith Crawford classify textbooks as “official

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<sup>262</sup> The Hamburg Agreement was formally known as the “Agreement between the *Länder* of the Federal Republic on the Standardization in the Field of Education.” “Abkommen zwischen Den Ländern Der Bundesrepublik zur Vereinheitlichung auf dem Gebiete des Schulwesens,” Kultusminister Konferenz, Accessed 20 February 2016, [http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen\\_beschluesse/1964/1964\\_10\\_28-Hamburger\\_Abkommen.pdf](http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/1964/1964_10_28-Hamburger_Abkommen.pdf); Ulbricht, Walter, “Gesetz über das Einheitliche Sozialistische Bildungssystem,” DDR Schulrecht, July 26, 2004, <http://www.ddr-schulrecht.de/Schulrechtssammlung-DDR-Dateien/pdf/1965-a.pdf>.

knowledge” – texts that promote the information the state expects students to know.<sup>263</sup> Chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis have demonstrated how the Americans and Soviets created their own versions of “official knowledge” in order to replace existing definitions of being German. In the American Zone, OMGUS tried to preserve German education traditions while the Soviet Zone fused German traditions with Marxist-Leninism to create a unique definition of "Germanness." These two definitions would come together after 1990 by taking some of the American definition of "Germanness," and creating Germany's own, new traditions, in order “Germanness” be defined by Germans again.

Following reunification in 1990, Germany found itself in need of yet another definition for “Germanness.” Unlike the postwar narratives, the task was to integrate: to be inclusive, rather than emphasize difference – either from prewar Germans, or from the US or the USSR. The history textbooks chosen for the upper levels of *Gymnasium* in the quarter-century following reunification reflect the conscious decisions over time to create that narrative. This chapter measures the extent of West and East Germany's integration into a single narrative in terms of the relative coverage received in textbooks by postwar topics described here either as West German, East German, or combined.<sup>264</sup> In the 1990s, textbooks still had a Western bias in terms of the amount of coverage West German history received. However, by the year 2000, a new generation of German students, whose conscious memory may

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<sup>263</sup> Stuart Foster and Keith Crawford, “The Critical Importance of History Textbook Research,” in *What Shall We Tell the Children?: International Perspectives on School History Textbooks*, eds. Stuart Foster and Keith Crawford, (Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing, 2006), xiii.

<sup>264</sup> See Dierkes for more on nationalism as taught through textbooks. Julian Beatus Dierkes, "Teaching Portrayals of the Nation: Postwar History Education in Japan and the Germanys," PhD diss, Princeton University, 2003.

not have even included the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, had entered high school. For their generation, raised mostly in a reunified Germany, the narrative had changed to one that presented – in terms of the topics covered – East and West German history on equal terms.

For German students after reunification, an equalized approach was necessary to indicate that East and West Germany had played roles in the shaping of united Germany. While politically, the former “Westerners” were the obvious victors (something they made clear throughout the reunification discussions between East and West), German textbook writers after 2000 felt the need to replace the negative portrayal of East German history with something more neutral that included sources from the everyday in addition to the leaders.

#### *Educational Laws, East and West*

The major turning points in the history of education in East and West Germany alike came in the 1960s. The 1964 Hamburg Agreement in West Germany and the 1965 East German Law on the Unified Socialist Education System gave the respective education systems the form they would maintain until their reintegration into one Germany in 1990.<sup>265</sup> The Law on the Unified Socialist Education System based the system for educating “socialist citizens” so strongly in the schools that one teacher in Erfurt would remark decades later, “If you want to understand us [East Germans], go to the schools. Nowhere will the rise and fall of the DDR be more

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<sup>265</sup> "Abkommen zwischen Den Ländern Der Bundesrepublik zur Vereinheitlichung auf dem Gebiete des Schulwesens," *Kultusminister Konferenz*, Accessed 20 February 2016, [http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen\\_beschluesse/1964/1964\\_10\\_28-Hamburger\\_Abkommen.pdf](http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/1964/1964_10_28-Hamburger_Abkommen.pdf); Ulbricht, Walter, "Gesetz über das Einheitliche Sozialistische Bildungssystem," *DDR Schulrecht*, July 26, 2004, <http://www.ddr-schulrecht.de/Schulrechtssammlung-DDR-Dateien/pdf/1965-a.pdf>.

sharply [...] revealed to you than in relation between the school and the state.”<sup>266</sup> In other words, the definition of "Germanness" in East Germany was very much tied in with the educational system. This law would stand until West German laws -- in particular, the Hamburg Agreement -- replaced it after reunification. However, the forty-year division could not be erased overnight. High-school history textbooks continued to perpetuate this division, even as other aspects of German society reintegrated.

In the Western *Länder*, the 1964 Hamburg Agreement had standardized education creating a system with more balance so that children across the *Bundesrepublik* would receive a basic education regardless of in which *Land* they lived. It standardized not only grading scales and hours of instruction, but school structure as well, continuing the tradition of a three-track high school for students of varying interests.<sup>267</sup> The Agreement, with some slight modifications over the years, still stands today as the guiding force behind a standardized German education system.

The 1965 Law on the Unified Socialist Education System proved durable like its Western counterpart. The Law had promised free and comprehensive education to any student within East Germany. The reformed system allowed many more working class students to earn their *Abitur*, the certificate needed to enter university:

The universities are, for the first time in German history, open to the children of workers and peasants. The universities, colleges, and

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<sup>266</sup> Rodden, *Repainting the Little Red Schoolhouse*, 9.

<sup>267</sup> "Abkommen zwischen den Ländern der Bundesrepublik zur Vereinheitlichung auf dem Gebiete des Schulwesens," *Kultusminister Konferenz*, Accessed 20 February 2016, [http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen\\_beschluesse/1964/1964\\_10\\_28-Hamburger\\_Abkommen.pdf](http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/1964/1964_10_28-Hamburger_Abkommen.pdf)

technical schools have become veritable educational institutions of the people, because the German Democratic Republic has proclaimed not only the right to education, but also has created the material conditions for the exercise of this right by all strata of the population.<sup>268</sup>

And yet, in practice, the East German system was not fair to all – only 9.5 percent of students in 1984 were selected for the higher level of high school, known as the *Erweiterte Oberschule* (EOS). This compared with between thirty and forty percent of West German students. Universities were almost exclusively blue-collar workers' children – on paper, that system looked to be a much more equitable solution than the tracked system in the Federal Republic.<sup>269</sup> Historian Mary Fulbrook has noted that discrimination for positions within the EOS was mainly for political reasons. Those who were eligible because of grades and promise were excluded because of their parents – be they religious leaders, outspoken critics of the party, or white-collar workers.<sup>270</sup>

By the early 1970s, relations between the Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic began to normalize under the guidance of Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik*, culminating in the signing of the Basic Treaty (*Grundlagenvertrag*) on 21 December, 1972.<sup>271</sup> The Treaty assured that West Germany and East Germany would respect each other's sovereignty and autonomy. It also stated that both Germanys

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<sup>268</sup> Walter Ulbricht, "Gesetz über Das Einheitliche Sozialistische Bildungssystem," *DDR Schulrecht*, July 26, 2004, <http://www.ddr-schulrecht.de/Schulrechtssammlung-DDR-Dateien/pdf/1965-a.pdf>.

<sup>269</sup> Pritchard, *Reconstructing Education*, 29, 51.

<sup>270</sup> Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 36.

<sup>271</sup> Officially the "Treaty concerning the basis of relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic." "The Basic Treaty (December 21, 1972)," *German History in Documents and Images*, accessed February 27, 2016, [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/print\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=172](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/print_document.cfm?document_id=172).

would settle “any disputes between them exclusively by peaceful means.”<sup>272</sup> Not only did the Basic Law have broad implications for East and West Germany in terms of economics and politics, but also for education. In West Germany, textbook authors eliminated quotes around the German Democratic Republic, and there was a shift in focus to the Federal Republic as a part of Europe. This would become increasingly important as West Germany began to discuss matters of European integration.<sup>273</sup>

This was also true, to a lesser extent, in East Germany after the beginnings of normalization where the 1972 *Geschichte* text included a wider worldview than simply Europe. With topics such as “The Emergence of National Democratic States in Europe and Asia,” and “The National Liberation Struggle of the Asian and Arab Peoples,” any mention of the greater world came with a Communist viewpoint.<sup>274</sup> It was an aspiration for global history, to be sure, but one still completely framed by the Communist narrative.

### *Defining East, West, and Reintegrated Germany*

For textbooks published after 1990, German history topics covering the forty-year period of division are handled differently. Some textbooks address East German events separately from West German events. This approach is driven by events, not themes or ideas. One example of this is *Geschichte (History, 1999)*, which covers West German topics from 1949 to 1990, and then moves on to East German topics, before ending the book with “unified” German history.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> “The Basic Treaty (December 21, 1972),” *German History in Documents and Images*, accessed February 27, 2016, [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/print\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=172](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/print_document.cfm?document_id=172).

<sup>273</sup> Pritchard, *Reconstructing Education*, 3.

<sup>274</sup> Eckhard Jander, ed., *Geschichte 10* ([East] Berlin: Volk und Wissen Volkseigener Verlag, 1972), 3.

Some textbooks, such as *Geschichte und Geschehen (History and Events, 2013)*, cover German historical events both chronologically and thematically.<sup>276</sup> These topics can be broad such as “Foreign Policy in East and West” if they discuss German history between 1949 and 1990. Conversely, they can be narrow if the topic is one that covers German history after reunification (See Table 1). While there are still strictly East or West topics in the coverage of reunified German history – some *Länder*-specific topics, some broader – the majority of the topics covered after 1990 have been combined East-West topics.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> *Geschichte* (Neusäß: Kieser, 1999), 4-5.

<sup>276</sup> *Geschichte und Geschehen 9/10, Thüringen* (Stuttgart: Klett, 2013).

<sup>277</sup> Some *Land*-specific topics include “The Sorbs in Saxony – A Story of Minority Awareness,” or “Saxony after German Reunification,” both in Gertrud Deutz, Walter Funken, and Birgit Scholz, *Geschichte Plus Sachsen* (Würzburg: Cornelsen, 2003), 6.; *Geschichte und Geschehen* (Leipzig: Klett, 2005), np.

East Examples	West Examples	Combined East-West Examples
“Decline and Decay: The DDR 1983-1988” <sup>278</sup>	“The Parties in West Germany” <sup>279</sup>	“Women in the BRD and DDR” <sup>280</sup>
“The German Democratic Republic under Construction” <sup>281</sup>	“The Beginnings of the ‘Adenauer Era’ – Western Integration of the Federal Republic” <sup>282</sup>	“Society is Changing” <sup>283</sup>
“The SED Loses Its Power Monopoly” <sup>284</sup>	“The Social-Liberal Coalition, 1969-1982” <sup>285</sup>	“Eastern and Western Policy Towards Germany in the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Half of the Fifties.” <sup>286</sup>

It should be noted that while the combined topics were not always even-handed in outlook, a combined East-West topic implies that German history is to be studied comprehensively – not the history of West and East German separately. A combined East-West topic takes two different stories and melds them into one. For example, the section “Society in a Divided Germany” in *Geschichte und Geschehen 9/10, Thüringen (History and Events 9/10, Thuringia, 2013)* begins by saying, “Both the Federal Republic of Germany as well as the German Democratic Republic

<sup>278</sup> *Kursbuch Geschichte* (Berlin: Cornelsen, 2000), 6.

<sup>279</sup> Gertrud Deutz, Walter Funken, and Birgit Scholz, *Geschichte Plus Sachsen* (Würzburg: Cornelsen, 2003), 6

<sup>280</sup> Maximilian Lanzinner and Thomas Ott, ed., *Buchners Kolleg 12 – Geschichte, Baden-Württemberg* (Bamberg: C.C. Buchner, 2011), np.

<sup>281</sup> Kerstin Meyer and Jens Sieberns, ed., *Zeit für Geschichte 9/10 Niedersachsen* (Braunschweig: Schöningh Winklers GmbH, 2010), 5.

<sup>282</sup> *Geschichte und Geschehen* (Leipzig: Klett, 2005), np.

<sup>283</sup> *Geschichte und Geschehen 9/10, Thüringen* (Stuttgart: Klett, 2013), np.

<sup>284</sup> Hans-Otto Regenhardt, ed., *Forum Geschichte 9/10, Thüringen* (Berlin: Cornelsen, 2014), 5.

<sup>285</sup> Ulrich Baumgärtner and Wolf Weigand, ed. *Anno Neu, Berlin* (Braunschweig: Westermann, 2008), 3.

<sup>286</sup> Walter Göbel, *Deutschland nach 1945* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1990), 104.

claimed to be democracies. How was this justified to the people in the two German states?”<sup>287</sup>

This textbook goes on to explain the rhetoric used in both East and West Germany to convince the citizens of each country that they were correct. In the West, the argument followed that “Both the move to Western values and anticommunism were shared by most citizens. But above all, the economic success of the Federal Republic increasingly secured the foundation of a democratic state.”<sup>288</sup> The Eastern point of view came a few paragraphs later:

When the GDR was founded, the enthusiasm for the great goal of socialism was strong and genuine among the youth of the ‘reconstruction generation.’ ... [However] it soon became apparent that democratic participation of the population was not desirable. The Parliament of the German Democratic Republic, the *Volkskammer*, was completely dominated by the SED. ... A citizen could not legally defend himself against the state because there was neither an administrative nor a constitutional court.<sup>289</sup>

In such a section of combined East-West topics, it shows that there was a set topic – a divided Germany. This was an important approach to take, because there had been a forty-year period of division. The fact that the democratic ideals of West Germans did not align with the Communist ones of the DDR did not mean East German history needed to be glossed over. Instead, a balanced approach with combined East-West topics acknowledged that East German citizens had their own history, and it was worth learning about. Indeed, both Germanys had a legitimate history.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> *Geschichte und Geschehen 9/10, Thüringen*, 252.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>289</sup> The “reconstruction generation,” were those students who had helped with the rebuilding efforts after the end of World War II, and finished the majority of their education after the 1949 DDR founding. *Geschichte und Geschehen 9/10, Thüringen*, 252-253.

*Publishing Textbooks in the Two Germanys*

The German Democratic Republic published textbooks centrally with one textbook run by the state. The *Ministerium für Volksbildung* approved all textbooks published through the state-sanctioned East Berlin publisher *Volk und Wissen Volkseigener* (People and Knowledge Enterprise of the People). There were only two versions of textbooks any given year. One was the standard German textbook distributed to students all over the DDR. The other was a version in Sorbian with foreign language instruction in German.

Sorbs were a minority group in Germany and Czechoslovakia, then who speak a language similar to Czech. Since they had been persecuted under the Nazis, the Soviet Military Administration and then the DDR government made a special point of getting Sorb children education in Sorbian.<sup>291</sup> To do so, they argued, helped achieve a greater emphasis on pan-Germanism – an acceptance and promotion of all subcultures within East Germany. For, if the East German government created policies favorable to the Sorbs that acknowledged their unique cultural status within Germany, they would be less likely to promote a separatist dialogue.<sup>292</sup> Moreover, if East Germany recognized there were different cultures within its society that needed protecting, by being inclusive the government set the example for its people of

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<sup>290</sup> Katrin Kohl, "Conceptualizing the GDR – 20 Years After," *Oxford German Studies* 38, no. 3 (2009): 266.

<sup>291</sup> In 1952, the East German government made school in Sorbian mandatory for those living in historically Sorb land. Cora Granata, "The Ethnic 'Straight Jacket': Bilingual Education and Grassroots Agency in the Soviet Occupied Zone and the German Democratic Republic, 1945-1964," *German Studies Review* 29, no. 2 (May 2006): 333.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, 336.

tolerance towards peoples of different background, if only the Sorbs benefitted in practice.

For West Germany, the individual *Länder* approved textbooks for use in their *Land*. The main textbook publishers, Klett (based in Stuttgart) and Cornelsen (based in West Berlin), sent copies of their textbooks to the respective *Land* Ministries of Education for approval. Each *Land* then produced a list of acceptable textbooks from which school districts could choose.<sup>293</sup> Publishers created editions for the individual *Länder* to accommodate regional differences in German from Saarland – which had been under French control until 1955, when the citizens voted to rejoin West Germany – or Bavaria’s strong *Land* identity. Publishers also created general editions for the entirety of West Germany. Additionally, publishers created source books for teachers and students, atlases, pictorial histories, and study guides for the *Abitur* exam.

#### East German Textbooks Prior to 1990

East German textbooks prior to 1990 were products of the ideologically-driven state. A 1956 preliminary history curriculum for the 11<sup>th</sup> grade put out by the Ministry of Education included topics such as “Imperialism as the Highest and Last Stage of Capitalism” and “The Second World War: An Anti-fascist Liberation War.”<sup>294</sup> The 1972 *Geschichte* edition for the 10<sup>th</sup> grade explained the North Atlantic

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<sup>293</sup> Ministerium für Bildung, Jugend und Sport. "Neuzulassungen nach Erscheinen des SBK 2015/2016." *Thüringer Schulportal*. July 29, 2015. Accessed January 18, 2016. [http://www.schulportalthueringen.de/documents/1\\_O\\_113/466001/Neuzulassungen\\_nach\\_Erscheinen\\_des\\_SBK\\_29\\_07\\_2015.pdf/b19adb52-9f14-4143-a2aa-8472e15c717a](http://www.schulportalthueringen.de/documents/1_O_113/466001/Neuzulassungen_nach_Erscheinen_des_SBK_29_07_2015.pdf/b19adb52-9f14-4143-a2aa-8472e15c717a).

<sup>294</sup> Ministerium für Volksbildung, *Direktive (vorläufiger Lehrplan) für den Geschichtsunterricht* ([East] Berlin: Volk und Wissen Volkseigener Verlag, 1956), 38, 58.

Treaty Organization (NATO) as “the restoration of imperialist rule.” Going further, it stated that,

The history of the West German Federal Republic in the 1950s was closely intertwined with the overall strategy of the aggressive imperialist camp. The West German state shall spearhead the anti-socialist camp, and the policy of NATO will serve as one of the most important staging areas for the troops of the USA, Great Britain and France. ... The Federal Republic supported this concept of NATO in every possible way. They hoped that as a representative of NATO, as an imperialist superpower, they could undo the results of World War II.<sup>295</sup>

Even after normalization and the Basic Treaty in 1972, there was a focus on communism against capitalism as evidenced by a 1988 primary source book for eleventh graders meant to supplement the standard *Geschichte* textbook. The book, *Dokumente und Materialien (Documents and Materials)* was a collection of sources from Communist “founding fathers” – Marx, Engels, and Lenin – as well as party programs published during the Party Congresses. The introduction written by party officials Sonja Guhr and Marianne Janke claimed the book was a compilation of “classical texts” for German students to study – but there was no Bismarck, no Goethe, and no Schiller.<sup>296</sup>

#### West German Textbooks Prior to 1990

In the first two decades after its creation in 1949, West German textbooks focused on what had happened during the war – both in military and domestic policy terms – including their own opinion on what had caused the separation of Germany into two states. A 1967 eleventh grade textbook for the *Gymnasium, Grundzüge der*

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<sup>295</sup> Stefan Doernberg, ed., *Geschichte 10* ([East] Berlin: Volk und Wissen Volkseigener Verlag, 1972), 134.

<sup>296</sup> Sonja Guhr and Marianne Janke, ed., *Dokumente und Materialien: Geschichte 11* ([East] Berlin: Volk und Wissen Volkseigener Verlag, 1988), 2.

*Geschichte von Urzeit bis zur Gegenwart* (*Outline of History from Ancient Times to the Present*) included evidence of Cold War rhetoric in the section on postwar German occupation: “The resistance of the Russians against the reunification of Germany prompted the Western powers to take independent action.”<sup>297</sup>

Later in the unit, phrases such as “people’s democracy” and “so-called German Democratic Republic” were encapsulated in quotes, as if to say these were not real concepts to East Germans.<sup>298</sup> It was the Soviet Union, and by proxy East Germany, that prevented German reunification after a period of occupation. The textbook stated that “The Soviet Union insisted on continuing its standpoint that the existence of two German states was a reality [...] Khrushchev’s actions in 1961 (building the Berlin Wall) intensified the Berlin crisis, and created a serious international situation.”<sup>299</sup> Ending the section, the textbook authors added that German reunification was still a priority for West Germans, as was “the reduction of tensions in the world.”<sup>300</sup>

After 1970 and *Ostpolitik*, a focus on German history in the context of Europe replaced the ideologically driven language regarding the DDR.<sup>301</sup> The three authors of the 1972 *Zeiten und Menschen* (*Times and People*), Robert Tenbrock, Erich Goerlitz, and Walter Grütter, included a lengthy section on the “Western integration of the Federal Republic,” which included a discussion on the history of European

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<sup>297</sup> Hans-Georg Fernis and Heinrich Haverkamp, *Grundzüge der Geschichte von der Urzeit bis zur Gegenwart*, (Frankfurt a.M.: Verlag Moritz Dieserweg, 1967), 346-347.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, 347.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, 348.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>301</sup> Mitter, “Educational Reform in West and East Germany in European Perspective,” 333.

unification, and Germany's part in it: “It was clear that without the German industrial power, Western Europe would be left behind. [...] The European Idea had many followers, especially in Germany, since it offered the chance to overcome the status of vanquished.”<sup>302</sup> This was an offer Germany did not want to refuse, and so they adjusted their textbooks to promote this Western European mindset.

### Reunification in Terms of Education

Shortly after the fall of the Wall in November 1989, representatives from the previously underground citizens’ movements within East Germany met with both the SED and with West Germany’s major parties met to discuss Germany’s political future. Initially, the 43-member body discussed issues such as human rights, the first free elections in the DDR, and the mass exodus of East Germans into the Federal Republic.<sup>303</sup> When the Round Table met to discuss articles within the Reunification Treaty, they were not all coming to the table on equal footing. Of the five “old” (i.e. older than the lead-up to 1989) parties, the SED had the most members and the most influence over East Germany. However, they were only given one vote, just like the other parties.<sup>304</sup>

Minister of the Interior for West Germany, Wolfgang Schäuble, met with East German Prime Minister Lothar de Maiziere to work out ideological differences that

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<sup>302</sup> Robert Tenbrock, Erich Goerlitz, and Walter Grütter, *Zeiten und Menschen*, (Hannover: Schöningh & Schroedel, 1972), 156.

<sup>303</sup> The Round Table consisted of forty-three members from nineteen groups, including the SED, the major West German political parties (SPD, CDU, and Greens), a conglomerate of citizens’ movements from the peaceful revolution in November 1989, representatives from the Protestant, Methodist, and Catholic churches within Germany, and a Sorbian representative. Ulrich K. Preuss, “The Roundtable Talks in the German Democratic Republic,” In *The Roundtable Talks and the Breakdown of Communism*, ed. Jon Elster, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 104-105; Gertrud Deutz, Walter Funken, and Brigit Scholz, *Geschichte Plus 10, Sachsen* (Berlin: Cornelsen, 2003), 158.

<sup>304</sup> Preuss, “The Roundtable Talks in the German Democratic Republic,” 105.

might have hindered the writing of the various treaties involved in reunification. De Maiziere gave suggestion after suggestion, such as changing the flag or adding the East German national anthem as a verse to the West German anthem. Schäuble reminded de Maiziere nearly every time that, “This is the case of East Germany joining West Germany, not the other way around. ... You are heartily welcome. But this is not the unification of two equal states.”<sup>305</sup> The rhetoric of two unequal states joining together would be a common theme throughout the reunification process and afterward, as the two regions tried to reconcile their differences from a forty-year separation.<sup>306</sup>

If reunification had been a coming-together of two equal states, some of the East German ways of life and education might have transferred over into West Germany. According to Wolfgang Mitter, a historian and education expert at the German Institute for International Education Research at the time of reunification, the West German education system was in need of reform by the late 1980s, and reunification presented the perfect opportunity.<sup>307</sup> East Germans had successfully developed and implemented a unified secondary schooling system as articulated in the 1965 Law on the Unified Socialist Education System, which had the potential to be a great addition to the new German education system. This would mean that every student would attend high school for the same number of years, much like in the

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<sup>305</sup> Tom Heneghan, *Unchained Eagle: Germany after the Wall* (London: Pearson Education, 2000), 53.

<sup>306</sup> Inga Markovits, *Imperfect Justice: An East-West German Diary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 60.

<sup>307</sup> Wolfgang Mitter, “Educational Reform in West and East Germany in European Perspective,” *Oxford Review of Education* 16, no. 3 (1990): 339.; Stephanie Wilde, “Secondary Education in Germany 1990-2000: ‘One Decade of Non-Reform in Unified German Education’?” *Oxford Review of Education* 28, no. 1 (March 2002): 40.

United States, and from there, those with sufficient marks would be able to take the *Abitur* exam and matriculate into university. East German education critics believed this was a system that could greatly benefit a growing, and united Germany – if only they stripped away the Soviet elements.<sup>308</sup> However, West German Ministry for Education did not see the need for change, and so the three-tiered system continued after 1990.

*The First Decade of a United Germany in Textbooks, 1990-1999*

While the largest reeducation effort in terms of money and effort took place in the years immediately following World War II, a great second wave of reeducation was coming with reunification, a time of *Verlernen*, or “unlearning.”<sup>309</sup> For East Germans this meant unlearning the Soviet-based schools’ methods and ideologies about who won World War II, and why communism had supposedly been the legitimate successor for Germany after fascism. In the first few years after reunification, this was done through textbook trains – shipments of West German textbooks to eastern *Länder*. The Federal Republic’s Ministry of Education and Science, in coordination with publishers and schools, transported 2.46 million textbooks to the eastern *Länder* in a project known as the “Campaign for School Book Supply” (*Schulbuchaktion*).<sup>310</sup> Additionally, the Ministry gave 32.8 million Deutschmarks to purchase new books, and publishers gave eastern *Länder* discounts of fifty percent.<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>308</sup> Wilde, “Secondary Education in Germany 1990-2000,” 40.

<sup>309</sup> Rodden, *Repainting the Little Red Schoolhouse*, xxiii.

<sup>310</sup> Pritchard, *Reconstructing Education*, 64.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

Readers can divide German textbooks published after reunification into two eras. One started immediately after reunification and lasted until 1999. The caesura of 1999 reflects the physical and intellectual challenges of rewriting textbooks quickly to incorporate the events of 1989 and 1990 into the texts themselves. It also represented a full decade of reunified German history.

In the first few years after reunification, textbooks in all the *Länder* were reprints of the previous years' West German editions. The fact that they were West German textbooks written prior to reunification showed in the breakdown of topics within the books. For the two textbooks published in the 1990s, the focus was on West German topics because they were meant for a West German audience. The ratio of West-to-East unit headings was very high – on average, over 7 out of every ten unit headings referred to West German history.<sup>312</sup> Between 1990 and 1999, there was a twelve percent increase in the number of combined East-West topics, making the 1999 edition of *Geschichte* less West-focused, but just barely (see Table 2).

**Table 4.2**  
**German Textbook Thematic Units in the First Era of Reunification, 1990-1999**

Textbook	Year	East	West	Combined	Total	% East	% West	% Combined	West Ratio
<i>Deutschland nach 1945</i>	1990	2	15	8	25	8.0	60.0	32.0	0.76
<i>Geschichte</i>	1999	2	12	11	25	8.0	48.0	44.0	0.70

In *Deutschland nach 1945* (*Germany after 1945*, 1990), the emphasis was on the immediate postwar period. Of the ten large units within the textbook, five covered events up to 1949.<sup>313</sup> The remaining units focused on political history within the

<sup>312</sup> *Geschichte* (Neusäß: Kieser, 1999).; Walter Göbel, *Deutschland nach 1945* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1990).

<sup>313</sup> Göbel, *Deutschland nach 1945*, np.

Federal Republic; East Germany and the problems with Berlin; the impact of the East-West conflict in the 1950s, and the BRD's domestic and foreign policy in the 1960s.<sup>314</sup> The final unit entitled "Germany's Political Agreements as Building Blocks of the Collective Security System," only just touched on reunification in the last section entitled, "The Unification as a Possibility."<sup>315</sup> Seeing as this textbook was published in 1990 and therefore most likely written sometime in 1989, this last fact is not surprising.

Because reunification was not fully realized by the time of publication, the majority of the combined East-West topics refer to treaties between East and West Germany. However, the unit starts with three sections on the path to, and pursuance of *Ostpolitik*: "The Self-Image of the Two German States," "The Starting Positions of Bonn and East Berlin for Intra-German Negotiations," and "The Inclusion of Eastern Germany and Brandt's Policy in the Federal Republic."<sup>316</sup>

By the time the publisher Kieser produced *Geschichte* in 1999, the focus had shifted away from treaties and to social and political situations preceding, and succeeding, reunification. The underground movements and the 1989 protests were paired with the topics of "Political, Economic and Social Situations" in the GDR and "The Emergence of Opposition Movements in the GDR."<sup>317</sup> There was also an addition of an entirely new unit on German reunification. Popular topics included "We are the people! – 'We are one people,'" the popular cheers during and after the

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<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> *Geschichte 10*, 5.

1989 protest, and “Migration,” which tackled inter-German migration, as well as migration within the European Union.<sup>318</sup> Although there were a multitude of options for East and West Germany – a federation like the Swiss, or a confederation as proposed by Czechoslovakia in the Velvet Divorce – the section “‘We are the people!’ – ‘We are one people,’” proposed that reunification was inevitable:

The demand ‘We are the people!’ which had been directed against the autocracy of the SED, became even louder with the demand for unification with the Federal Republic: ‘We are one people!’ Trying a confederation of the two German States, as laid down in Kohl’s 10-Point Program in December 1989, was therefore doomed to failure.<sup>319</sup>

#### *The Second Era of United Germany in Textbooks, 2000-2014*

The second era of post-unification German textbooks began in 2000. There are a multitude of reasons for this as a pivot point. By 2000, the pan-Europeanism that had been the focus of West German textbooks since the 1970s had become more of a reality, as European Union plans for the adoption of the Euro currency in 2002 took shape.<sup>320</sup>

It was also the beginning of a new generation of students entering the classrooms – those who had started their education after reunification. German children started *Grundschule* (elementary school) as six year olds, and the upper-level years of *Gymnasium* (Years 9-12) started at age 16. Those who entered the upper-levels of *Gymnasium* in 1990 had started their education in 1980. For the same grade level, but in the year 2000, the students had started their education in 1990. By 2000,

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<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>320</sup> Helmut Kohl and Kai-Alexander Schlevogt, “Supranational Visionary and Builder of Euroland: Former German Chancellor Dr. Helmut Kohl on the Euro’s Significance for Germany and Its Neighbors” *The Academy of Management Executive* (1993-2015) 16, no. 1 (February 2002): 9.

only the last few years of students included those who had attended school prior to reunification.

Additionally, the textbook writing, publishing, and approval process could take up to five years.<sup>321</sup> While textbooks from 1990 to 1999 may have had bits about reunification added, they were hastily added without changing the overall narrative of the text.<sup>322</sup> Some schools also chose not to buy new editions, and instead, had their students make changes by hand – dates, names of towns (Karl-Marx-Stadt to Chemnitz for example), and later -currency (from Deutschmark to Euro).<sup>323</sup> By the time the 2000 school year arrived, textbook writers had been able to restructure the arguments so that the narrative on both East and West German history appeared balanced, in addition to adding substantive chapters on the process of reunification, and on life in a reunified Germany.

In the post-2000 era of German textbooks, the units with combined East-West topics constituted the majority of the units of study (See Table 3). Part of this can be attributed to the simple passage of time. However, it also represented a choice on the part of publishers towards reintegration. It would be just as easy to write one chapter with all East German events, followed by a chapter of all West German events covering the same time period.

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<sup>321</sup> Simone Lässig and Karl Heinrich Pohl, “History Textbooks and Historical Scholarship in Germany,” *History Workshop Journal* 67 (Spring 2009), 135

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid*, 130.

<sup>323</sup> Merle Ingenfeld, Interview by author, June 14, 2015.

<b>Textbook</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>West</b>	<b>Combined</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% East</b>	<b>% West</b>	<b>% Combined</b>	<b>West Ratio</b>
<i>Kursbuch Geschichte</i>	2000	4	3	9	16	25.0	18.8	56.3	0.47
<i>Geschichte Plus</i>	2003	14	7	12	33	42.4	21.2	36.4	0.39
<i>Geschichte und Geschehen 13</i>	2003	6	7	6	19	31.6	36.8	31.6	0.53
<i>Geschichte und Geschehen</i>	2005	6	8	2	16	37.5	50.0	12.5	0.56
<i>Anno Neu 10</i>	2008	3	4	8	15	20.0	26.7	53.3	0.53
<i>Zeit für Geschichte</i>	2010	3	1	10	14	21.4	7.1	71.4	0.43
<i>Buchners Kolleg</i>	2011	3	4	11	18	16.7	22.2	61.1	0.53
<i>Geschichte und Geschehen Thüringen</i>	2013	0	0	17	17	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.50
<i>Forum Geschichte</i>	2014	4	1	5	10	40.0	10.0	50.0	0.35

*Buchners Kolleg 12 – Geschichte* (*Buchner’s Course 12 – History*, 2011) did just this. There was one chapter on “The Federal Republic of Germany: Political and Economic Development, 1949-1989” followed by a chapter on “The GDR 1949-1989: The State and Business.”<sup>324</sup> Each chapter began with a timeline. Despite the varied interactions between East and West Germany for the period 1949-1989, the East German chapter only includes two East-West German events: “1958-1961 – the number of refugees in the West again rises dramatically” just before the building of the Berlin Wall, and the 1972 Basic Treaty with the Federal Republic.<sup>325</sup> The chapter text itself, however, does a better job than previous editions of articulating the DDR’s relationship with the West including this section on the 1960s:

The stabilization of the regime under Walter Ulbricht was only managed in 1961, when the DDR was sealed off by the Berlin Wall

<sup>324</sup> Maximilian Lanzinner and Thomas Ott, ed., *Buchners Kolleg 12 – Geschichte* (Bamberg: C.C. Buchner, 2011), np.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

and a ‘death strip’ along the inner-German border opposite the west. ... The communist regime in the 60s wanted to economically overtake the ‘class enemy,’ the Federal Republic. Although this project failed, it brought the GDR economy to the forefront of all Eastern Bloc countries.<sup>326</sup>

Conversely, a unit could combine East and West German events or topics, along almost clean compare-and-contrast lines. One popular East-West topic was “Women in East and West,” which presented the growing demand for women’s rights in both East and West Germany.<sup>327</sup> The 2013 Thuringia edition of *Geschichte und Geschehen* included a section on “The Women’s Movement” which included both East and West German history:

In the 1950s and 1960s, the housewife and mother was again the preferred social mission. Although the Federal Republic announced equality between men and women in 1957, the reality remained in many areas behind the law. Against this, they formed a self-confident women’s movement... calling for equal opportunities, career opportunities, and family-friendly work policies. ... DDR women were just as exposed to the double burden [of work and family] as women in the west. Although, after the 1970s, a dense network of nursery schools and kindergartens facilitated the agreement of motherhood and work.<sup>328</sup>

#### Primary Sources in the Texts

While both eras of post-unification textbooks emphasized primary source material, the emphasis increased in the second era. In some textbooks, over fifty percent of the text consisted of reprinted primary sources in the forms of texts, maps, photographs, or diagrams. For two textbooks for Thuringia, *Geschichte und Geschehen 9/10* (2013) and *Forum Geschichte (Forum of History, 2014)*, there was

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<sup>326</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>327</sup> *Geschichte Plus – Sachsen*, 6.; *Geschichte und Geschehen* (2013), 283.

<sup>328</sup> *Geschichte und Geschehen, Thüringen*, 283.

only at most two pages of academic text, followed by several pages of sources. A section on the building of the Wall in 1961 included six separate sources, including the infamous photograph of a soldier jumping over the barbed wire, and a snippet from “Klaus W., who in 1961 lived in a suburb of Berlin.”<sup>329</sup> Another section on “Life in Divided Germany” included twelve primary sources with questions at the end to prompt discussion.

For each source, little context was provided, often consisting of no more than a sentence introducing the author of the passage. Students or teachers were to provide the analysis in the form of independent thinking – something the American reforms in the postwar era had promoted. In addition to presenting East and West German viewpoints, the sources represented a viewpoint that was not exclusively German. This was important because much of German history after World War II had been tied to other nations. There were passages from the memoir of George Kennan, the U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union; thoughts from Mikhail Gorbachev on the fortieth anniversary of East Germany; or U.K. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s opinion on reunification.<sup>330</sup>

However, the West German downplaying of East German history after reunification becomes apparent when examining primary sources representing 1949-1989 East Germany. West German topics’ sources included a mixture of political and social sources – such as Leader of the Opposition in the Bundestag Kurt Schumacher’s speech on the illegality of the foundation of the DDR, or Hannelore

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<sup>329</sup> *Forum Geschichte 9/10, Thüringen* (Berlin: Cornelsen, 2014), 249.

<sup>330</sup> *Kursbuch Geschichte* (Berlin: Cornelsen, 2000), 528 .; *Geschichte und Geschehen Klasse 13* (Leipzig: Klett, 2003), 143.; Ulrich Baumgärtner and Wolf Wiegand, ed., *Anno Neu 10, Gymnasium Berlin* (Braunschweig: Westermann, 2008), 149.

König's memories of her childhood in postwar Germany.<sup>331</sup> While the sources may have portrayed hard times, such as König's memories, they generally used positive language: "My mother had arranged for us an apartment, which belonged to the teacher's wife. We all lived in a one bedroom apartment, and we paid her for bread, carrots, butter, and sugar. But we had a roof over our heads, bags in front of the doors, and a bed."<sup>332</sup>

For East German sources from 1949 to 1990, the mixture of sources was scarce. The West German sources included interviews, memoirs, government documents, and newspaper articles from a variety of people and organizations. However, for the East German sources presented, it was a top-down approach to East German history – sources from or about the officials, instead of from the average people. Some East German sources included a memo on the Wall border guard's order to shoot anyone trying to cross the border, and an interview with the chief ideologue of the SED, Kurt Hager.<sup>333</sup> The memo to border guards said that: "Every shot from the submachine gun saves hundreds of comrades, saves thousands of DDR citizens' lives, and ensures millions-worth of national wealth. It is not an attempt on your brothers and sisters if you hold a gun to border violators. How can they be your brothers, if they betray the Republic!"<sup>334</sup> With sources such as these, the next generation of German students learned the history of divided German from a

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<sup>331</sup> *Geschichte und Geschehen 9/10, Thüringen* (Stuttgart: Klett, 2013), 235-251.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>333</sup> Hans-Otto Regenhardt, *Forum Geschichte 9/10, Thüringen* (Berlin: Cornelsen, 2014), 249.; *Geschichte und Geschehen Klasse 13* (Leipzig: Klett, 2003), 144.

<sup>334</sup> *Forum Geschichte 9/10, Thüringen*, 249.

decidedly West German point of view. This is something that would hamper East German reintegration into a united Germany.

This, in the end, is how the Federal Republic demonstrated the triumph of capitalism over communism, the triumph of West versus East – not in flashy rhetoric, but in the selection of primary sources. The triumph was seen in the Unification Treaty and its affirmation of the Hamburg Agreement. Publishers and academics continued to include East German events in their textbooks. However, it was their selection of sources that continued to present a triumphant view of the people of West Germany, and the officials of East Germany. Students would learn West German history, and a negative, top-down version of East German history. This would be confusing for the new *Bundesländer* students whose parents lived in the East German state; did the actions of the leaders of the DDR make the entire nation immoral? How could they reconcile the everyday lives of their parents with the state security state without representations of the everyday?

### Conclusion

Education is in a unique position to shape future generations, and textbooks especially so. Textbooks are a source of social constructions by the nation in order to assure what they want to promote in terms of their history and culture, will survive.<sup>335</sup> Thus through these mediums, Benedict Anderson's "imagined community" can continue. There is no better place to find what a society thinks is important to know and understand than in its textbooks. Textbooks have the ability to legitimize the actions of a group, such as the Nazi-era textbooks did in their racially-motivated rhetoric about the German loss of World War I. They also have the ability to teach

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<sup>335</sup> Stuart Foster and Keith Crawford, "The Critical Importance of History Textbook Research," 3.

students what should not happen again, as the revised textbooks promoted after World War II by OMGUS did.

Stephanie Wilde, a professor in educational psychology, called the reforms after reunification a “decade of non-reform.”<sup>336</sup> She argued that reunification presented an opportunity to reform the West German education structure, as well as the curriculum. Instead, in terms of the curriculum, it included East German history as a separate entity from “German” history – i.e. West German history. Paul Cooke, a professor in German cinema, noted that Germany after reunification has only begun to handle with the DDR past, and only in terms of the role of the state security force, the Stasi.<sup>337</sup> Germany after reunification had yet to fully address East German history as a part of German history – something crucial to the reintegration process.

Some East Germans felt “lied to, robbed, and cheated” following reunification.<sup>338</sup> They felt that their history was being rewritten to only portray the Western side. One way in which East Germans combatted this was by writing memoirs of their experiences under the DDR. One example of this was Jana Hensel, who grew up in Leipzig and experienced reunification as a thirteen-year-old, expressed her annoyance at the appearance of whitewashing of East German history: “I came from the German Democratic Republic – a separate country with a different history.”<sup>339</sup> Another East German woman who had worked for the German Public

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<sup>336</sup> Wilde, “Secondary Education in Germany 1990-2000,” 39.

<sup>337</sup> Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany Since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia*, (New York: Berg, 2005), 28.

<sup>338</sup> Markovits, *Imperfect Justice*, 21.

<sup>339</sup> Jana Hensel, *After the Wall: Confessions from an East German Childhood and the Life that Came Next*, (Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag GmbH, 2004), 17.

Film Company (*Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft*, DEFA) expressed her displeasure at the portrayal in the media of East German history: “They choose certain pictures and not others, in order to show the history of East Germany has been all negative.”<sup>340</sup>

To present a story that did not include East German history was to say the country had never existed in the first place – something that was simply not true. West Germany had recognized East Germany with the Basic Treaty of 1972; it could not go back on its policy. Nor should it have presented a view that was almost all West German. Just as West Germany had forty years of divided history, so did East Germany. German history textbooks had made changes to include more of the East German narrative, though the total inclusive view of German history has yet to be realized as regional boundaries and educational structures impede such a viewpoint.

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<sup>340</sup> John Borneman, *After the Wall: East Meets West in the New Berlin*, (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 249.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

After the physical and mental devastation wrought by World War II, education had the ability to make European society stronger.<sup>341</sup> In Germany, it promised to erase the racist definition of Germanness that the ideologically driven Nazi regime had instilled. To do so would mean educating future generations of German children with textbooks free from the racial, ideological, and chauvinist elements that had dominated German education up until the end of World War II. However, the division of Germany into four zones and the beginning of the Cold War changed the focus for German education.

Although there were four zones – American, British, French, and Soviet – the Cold War made the American and Soviet Zones the two leaders in the establishment of East-West geopolitics. The heightening tensions allowed the Americans and Soviets to establish their own, competing definitions of what being German meant through education, and in particular, the textbooks. These definitions were only strengthened by the tensions, and the eventual creation of the Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic in 1949.

In the American Zone, 1945 to 1949 was a time to rebuild German education, and build a better definition of Germanness by using a liberal model, focusing on critical thinking and student engagement. This building began on the basis of German

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<sup>341</sup> Tony Judt argues that this was a process of forgetting the past and moving forward. Conversely, Jeffrey Herf believes Germany became stronger because of its grappling with the memory of the Third Reich and the Holocaust. See Tony Judt, “The Past is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe,” *Daedalus* 121, no. 4 (Fall 1992): 83-117.; Herf, *Divided Memory*.

traditions. The plans were to guide German students to be free thinkers, where teachers routinely asked students their opinion, and looked for more than a textbook answer. Through textbook vetting, education centers, and newly minted teachers, the American Zone achieved this aim, conceiving of its Zone (and later the Trizone) as a bastion of liberal thinking in Western Europe. The goal was simple, though the actions needed to fulfill it were not: to establish a new meaning of “Germanness” that would help to prevent another German-led World War.

Antifascism, and later loyalty to the Soviet Union, were the driving forces behind the Soviet Zone’s policies. The efforts of denazification in the schools were coupled with a desire to show that the Soviet way had been empirically better – that the Red Army had liberated Germany, and had done so with an ideological framework morally superior to that of the racist Third Reich. The Soviet-led transformation of eastern German education was gradual initially, so as not to overwhelm the unprepared Germans for a radically different interpretation of Germanness.<sup>342</sup> However, with the creation of the German Democratic Republic in 1949, molding East Germany in the image of the Soviet Union became the primary goal. In 1990, the propagandized education ended with the reunification of East and West Germany. The reasoning behind finding a new definition of “Germanness,” as opposed to taking on the West German definition, was that the education systems of the two Germanys had followed parallel (if opposite) trajectories of “Germanness.” It was time to write a new definition.

By the time of reunification, Germans had had many experiences of “re-education” in the definition of Germanness, whether at the hands of the Americans or

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<sup>342</sup> Blessing, *The Antifascist Classroom*, 4.

the Soviets. They would experience such a re-education again with the educational reforms after 1990, when German educators in the reunified *Bundesrepublik* confronted the task of reintegrating East and West German history in their textbooks. Beyond textbooks, there would also be the matter of restructuring the former Eastern *Länder* schools to follow the 1964 West German Hamburg Agreement. While the restructuring of the German school system was more typical of the entire reunification process, the textbooks showed a side of reintegration that was not so equal.

In German history textbooks after 2000, a time in which a new generation that grew up after reunification, East and West German events were given almost equal space within the narrative of postwar German history. This would not eliminate the differences caused by forty years of division. However, by teaching a curriculum that acknowledges both East and West German history – the successful and the failed, the good and the bad –formerly East German families have become more a part of German memory and identity. Twenty-first-century curricula present a German history that includes both East and West – even though that history is hardly a closed book, as Eastern integration has not completely been achieved – either economically, socially, or culturally.<sup>343</sup>

That tone of integration will be continually revised as Germans grapple with their past. The need for an even-handed presentation of German history evokes a form of transitional justice to those who experienced both states. It shows the next generations of German children that, though the past may be divided it should be

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<sup>343</sup> Wolfgang Emmerich, “Cultural Memory East v. West: Is What Belongs Together Really Growing Together?” *Oxford German Studies* 38, no. 3 (2009): 253.

presented from all angles and all sections of society. To do so will continue the process of expanding the definition of who a German is – a process of reintegration that reunification began.

### *Implications for Further Research*

Research on nationalism using textbooks is crucially important to understanding how a state builds its own definition of what and who it is. Parallels to the German case can be found in nearly every nation – from the rhetoric of “Manifest Destiny” in American textbooks, to the coverage of the Yugoslav Wars in the former Yugoslav states.<sup>344</sup> Textbooks sustain national identity by providing a narrative of one state over another. The United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), with the help of the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research (GEI), have promoted conversations between countries, as well as within nations, to create textbooks that are nationally neutral. One such committee focused on history textbooks in Germany and Poland. Its task was to write textbooks with sections on German-Polish relations with “fair description of mutual relations.”<sup>345</sup>

Additionally, UNESCO and the GEI have recognized the importance of textbook research as a form of transitional justice and to help promote the reconciliation process. Such research should encourage honest and direct conversations between parties about the truth behind the claims made within the textbooks. Each party, be it an example of internal reconciliation in the case of the Rwandan genocide textbook project or of international reconciliation as in the

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<sup>344</sup> Pingel, *UNESCO Guidebook on Textbook Research and Textbook Revision*, 25.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

Spanish-Portuguese project, must come to the table not only with points of contention, but points of agreement. These projects are about finding a common history that gives a fair treatment to those previously understood as “losers.”

While textbooks are one of the main ways in which nationalism is disseminated through the school system, they are not the only way. Research should also look at how the textbooks are being taught – far more challenging than textbook analysis itself. In the first years of post-World War II Germany, many teachers avoided teaching past the First World War out of uncertainty about the appropriateness of teaching something so fresh.<sup>346</sup> This research shows how important it is to also look at lesson plans, and interview teachers and students themselves to get a well-rounded view of how the textbooks work as one part of a whole. The world’s most even-handed textbook is of no use if the teachers do not teach from it.

Ultimately, the German case is just one of many. However, it is one that should be emphasized for its constant shift in the definition of “Germanness” by outside and inside actors. The accomplishment of this thesis has been to show that shifting definition has been constantly reworked through education. It shows both how nationalism can be shaped negatively by an outside power dictating the terms of textbooks and curriculum, as well as how a country can, with time, shake off those past divisions to find a self-definition that is genuinely inclusive.

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<sup>346</sup> Puaca, *Learning Democracy*, 16-17.

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