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# The Effects of Denazification on Education in West Germany

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Murray State University Honors College

HONORS THESIS

Certificate of Approval

The Effects of Denazification on Education in West Germany

Helen Beckert

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The Effects of Denazification on West German Education

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
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Helen Beckert

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## Table of Contents

List of Figures .....	ii
Abstract .....	iii
Introduction .....	1
Literature and Sources.....	3
Postwar School Conditions.....	10
Processes and Procedures of Denazification.....	17
American and British Views of Denazification.....	25
Educational Reforms during and after Denazification.....	27
Teacher Training Reforms.....	29
Changes in Teaching Methods.....	32
New Curriculum.....	36
Extracurricular Programs and Youth Culture.....	43
Successes of Denazification.....	46
Failures of Denazification.....	47
Implications for Germany's Future.....	49
Conclusions.....	50

List of Figures

Figure 1.....16

Figure 2.....32

**Abstract**



During the rebuilding of West Germany after World War II, the education system experienced rapid changes due to denazification. Under Allied occupation, Nazi influence in every aspect of society was to be eliminated. The initial phases of denazification took place in a setting of mass chaos; many German schools had been destroyed during the war, textbooks approved by Nazis were completely unacceptable for use in the postwar era, and teachers who had not belonged to the Nazi Party were few and far between. Despite this myriad of challenges, the schools of West Germany rebounded and began to thrive in the decades after World War II. Teacher training improved, and many new forms of curriculum were introduced to improve the education of German students. Though the Allies saw denazification as a failure in the immediate postwar era, denazification experienced a success story as West Germany continued to develop into a major power in Europe.

**Introduction**

Even before the surrender of their home country, the children of Germany faced a multitude of problems. Children who had grown up and come of age during the Third Reich experienced a rigidly structured society that focused on nationalist and militaristic goals above all else. Their families could be torn apart by deportations or differing loyalties. In school, their educations demanded unwavering loyalty to the state and the Führer and required each student to develop their minds and bodies to serve this state. Math, reading, and other traditional subjects were pushed aside in favor of physical education to prepare young people to serve their country. As the war began, their fathers and brothers left to serve in the military. Many of these men never came home. The war dragged on, and their mothers and sisters went to work in factories, leaving the youngest children to fend for themselves during the day. Then the war drew closer to their homes, and their hometowns burned under bombs dropped by the United States or fell under ruthless siege from Soviet armies. School, if it had even continued to this point, stopped for most

German children, and some of these children never survived the bombing campaigns that forced their country – the state that they had been raised to serve – to surrender.

After the capitulation of the Axis Powers and the end of World War II, Europe had been reduced to ruins in many places. Germany, the birthplace of the Nazi Party, experienced devastating bombings by Allied forces throughout 1944 and 1945 that caused extensive physical damage and loss of life throughout the country. The physical damage reflected the devastating effects that the war also had on German society, especially children and the family. The school system was scattered and ineffective under Allied attacks, and reforms introduced under Adolf Hitler set German students far behind their counterparts across Europe. Under Allied occupation, the German school system was included in the program of denazification and democratization. Occupation and foreign influence aimed to completely overhaul the German school system, but these well-meaning attempts were foiled by a severe shortage of resources and funding. The Allied occupiers also sought to purge Nazi influence from German schools as part of denazification efforts, a project in which the British and Americans, more so than the Soviets and the French, took a special interest.

This research focuses on the American and British zones, later combined during occupation as the Bizone, and how these areas were affected by denazification processes. Denazification had important implications for the future of German schools, though its initial effectiveness was questionable. The attempts to overhaul the German educational system under denazification, especially in the American occupation zone, radically changed the future of education in West Germany. Though denazification would be seen as more failure than success in the short term, denazification positively changed German education, as well as society at large, in the long run.



### Literature and Sources

The vast majority of popular history tends to focus on the battles and horrors of World War II rather than the immediate aftermath and consequences. The rebuilding of Europe may be a less dramatic topic to examine, though the study of this time period is key to an understanding of the modern states of Europe. As early as the summer of 1945, just a few weeks or months after V-E Day, research and writing on the process of denazification began to appear. As denazification intensified and continued into the 1940s, scholars of history and political science began to gather more research and information to more accurately analyze how denazification worked and whether or not it could be considered “successful.” Educators and school administrators also joined the fray, recording their own experiences or contributing to scholarly articles. Research on denazification in the German school system gradually increased in volume as the years went on, often being woven in with more general research about denazification as a whole.

The first pieces of writing about denazification to appear contain mainly speculations about the future of denazification or detailed analyses of the processes surrounding denazification. Elmer Plischke’s article “Denazification Law and Procedure,” published in 1947, perfectly exemplifies this type of research. The author outlines in great detail the complicated laws and policies of denazification. Plischke released this article just as denazification was hitting its peak number of arrests and trials.<sup>1</sup> Many authors had negative views on the progress of denazification, such as John H. Herz and William E. Griffith. The title of Herz’s article, “The Fiasco of Denazification in Germany,” immediately gives away his thesis: that denazification in

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<sup>1</sup> Elmer Plischke, “Denazification Law and Procedure,” *The American Journal of International Law* 41 (1947): 807-827, accessed September 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2193091>.

West Germany had failed almost as soon as it had begun. He harangues leaders of the denazification processes for going too far in some cases and not going far enough in others. To Herz, writing in 1948, denazification only provided a temporary solution rather than long-term changes.<sup>2</sup> Griffith, who published his research just over a year after Herz's article went to the press, came to similar conclusions. The first parts of his article "Denazification in the U.S. Zone of Germany" take a mostly neutral stance on the progress of denazification, but the last sections decry it as a failure due to both external and internal factors.<sup>3</sup>

Many primary documents from the same time period take a variety of stances on the Allied occupation of Germany and the denazification process. For this project, a significant number of American government documents were used. Of these documents, most were published by a branch of the Office of Military Government, United States (OMGUS), typically the Education and Cultural Relations Division. OMGUS frequently published materials that were available to its staff, the military, and the general American public for consumption. Most of the materials published by OMGUS take a more positive view of denazification and the progress made in the West German school system. Dr. Alonzo G. Grace, the director of OMGUS's Education and Cultural Relations Division, often contributed articles to bulletins issued by OMGUS. In one particular piece about German youth, "The Coming Generations," Dr. Grace philosophically reflects on the needs of the young people of postwar Germany. His essay from a 1949 publication shows a typical American desire to spread democracy among German citizens,

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2 John H. Herz, "The Fiasco of Denazification in Germany," *Political Science Quarterly* 63 (December 1948): 569-594, accessed October 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2144399>.

3 William E. Griffith, "Denazification in the United States Zone of Germany," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 267 (January 1950): 68-76, accessed October 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1026728>.

a common theme during the postwar occupation.<sup>4</sup> Dr. Grace, it must be noted, had a low opinion of German schools going into occupation, believing them to be anti-democratic, much like other Americans did at the time. Other articles in OMGUS's *Information Bulletin* concerned progress in German education, such as Harry A. Jacobs' article about classroom education via radio and Frank G. Banta's study on exchange programs that brought German students to the United States.<sup>5</sup> OMGUS also released articles detailing progress in education in specific cities. Their short article "Education" traces the changes and development in the West Berlin school system during denazification.<sup>6</sup> At the very end of denazification, John J. McCloy, the U.S. High Commissioner for Germany, penned a general review of the process of denazification. McCloy paints a successful picture of occupation and re-education, though he also examines some of the aspects of denazification that were criticized for their ineffectiveness.<sup>7</sup>

To get part of the British perspective on denazification, several articles in *The Times* of London were referenced for this project. The earliest of these articles was published in December of 1945, and the latest in May of 1952. The tone of these articles tended to be more alarmist in nature, or, at the very least, concerned about the future of Germany and its education system.

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4 Alonzo G. Grace, "The Coming Generations – German Youth and the Future," *Information Bulletin*, July 26, 1949, 3-4, accessed October 2015, EuroDocs.

5 Harry A. Jacobs, "Education by Radio," *Information Bulletin*, December 28, 1948, 9-11, accessed October 2015, EuroDocs; Frank G. Banta, "Student Exchange," *Information Bulletin*, November 30, 1948, 9-11, accessed October 2015, EuroDocs.

6 "Education," in *Germany: Territory under Allied Occupation, US Zone* (Germany: Office of Military Government), 100-106, accessed September 2015, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/History/History-idx?type=article&id=History.FourYrReport&did=History.FourYrReport.i0018&q1=education>.

7 John J. McCloy, "The Present Status of Denazification," *5<sup>th</sup> Quarterly Report on Germany* (December 31, 1950), in *German History in Documents and Images*, accessed November 2015, EuroDocs.

Lord Beveridge, the sponsor and author of the influential Beveridge Report, contributed one of these articles after a 1946 visit to the British zone of occupation in West Germany. As the father of the postwar welfare system in Great Britain, Beveridge also worried about the welfare of the people in Germany, decrying the persistent problems of hunger and housing shortages.<sup>8</sup> Other correspondents wrote in to *The Times* about similar problems, from the refugee and displaced persons crisis to the depleted ranks of teaching staff in Germany.

To examine youth culture in Germany in a more general sense, a few German primary sources were referenced. A leaflet written for the German Youth Ring, a program created to develop leadership skills, illustrates the goals and appeal of this type of club to young citizens.<sup>9</sup> Dr. Elizabeth P. Lam, an OMGUS official, contributed a bulletin article about the need for more youth leaders in the occupation zones of West Germany.<sup>10</sup> In contrast to these pieces that emphasized the leadership of German youth, two essays condemning the riotous nature of young Germans were examined. Heinz Kluth's short article from 1956 about "hooligans" raises concerns about the idle and violent nature of young people.<sup>11</sup> With a similar perspective, Adolf Busemann writes in his essay "Barbarization and Brutalization" about the rise of the gang and of

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<sup>8</sup> Lord Beveridge, "Outlook in Germany," *The Times* (London), August 29, 1946, accessed October 2015, *The Times* Digital Archive.

<sup>9</sup> German Youth Ring: Programmatic Leaflet, in *Occupation and the Emergence of Two States, 1945-1961*, November 19, 1946, trans. Thomas Dunlap, accessed October 2015, EuroDocs.

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth P. Lam, "Training Youth Leaders – Growth of Groups Creates Need," *Information Bulletin*, May 31, 1949, 17-19, accessed October 2015, EuroDocs.

<sup>11</sup> Heinz Kluth, "The 'Hooligans' – Legend or Reality?" *Deutsche Jugend* 4: (January-February 1956), trans. Thomas Dunlap, accessed October 2015, EuroDocs.

crimes committed by youths.<sup>12</sup> These varying points of view give telling clues about the changing aspects of youth culture and the emerging generational gap.

In the later part of the twentieth century and early in the twenty-first century, the subject of denazification and its influence on education was revisited by many scholars. Friedmann Bedürftig examined the initial process of denazification in the build-up to the Cold War, specifically analyzing the stateless nature of postwar Germany.<sup>13</sup> Curt Garner's research took a more specific look at public service personnel in West Germany. The reappearance of former National Socialists in government positions, including employment in the public school system, during the 1950s is a special interest in Garner's article, published in 1995.<sup>14</sup> The article "Education for Peace: A Neglected Aspect of Re-Education in Germany" provides a fascinating perspective on the denazification of education. Hermann Röhrs, the author of this article, worked as a teacher during the immediate postwar period in West Germany. As one of the first teachers to be cleared to work in the reopened schools, he experienced many of the frustrations and triumphs of denazification firsthand. He blends vivid details of his personal experiences with a keen analysis of the idea of re-education in postwar Germany and the goal of maintaining international peace through education.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Adolf Busemann, "Barbarization and Brutalization," *Unsere Jugend*, April 1956, trans. Thomas Dunlap, accessed October 2015, EuroDocs.

<sup>13</sup> Friedemann Bedürftig, "A People without a State: Post-VE Day Germany," *History Today* 45 (May 1995): 47-54, accessed September 2015, EBSCOhost Humanities Source.

<sup>14</sup> Curt Garner, "Public Service Personnel in West Germany in the 1950s: Controversial Policy Decisions and Their Effects on Social Composition, Gender Structure, and the Role of Former Nazis," *Journal of Social History* 29 (Fall 1995): 25-80, accessed November 2015, EBSCOhost Humanities Source.

<sup>15</sup> Hermann Röhrs, "Education for Peace: A Neglected Aspect of Re-Education in Germany," *Oxford Review of Education* 15 (1989): 147-164, accessed September 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1049970>.



A few researchers have examined specific practices in German education during the postwar and denazification era. In his 1997 article, Dirk Schumann analyzes the debate over corporal punishment in schools in West Germany. Little hard data about the frequency of corporal punishment exists to back up his research, so he utilizes court cases against teachers or school districts to effectively illustrate his arguments.<sup>16</sup> Heather L. Dichter concentrates on the importance of sport in society for her 2012 article “Rebuilding Physical Education in the Western Occupation Zones of Germany, 1945-1949.” Dichter uses physical education to trace the changes made to West Germany’s education system. This article shows how the Allied occupiers changed physical education to spread ideas of fair play and democracy to young students, as well as to promote a sense of unity among schoolchildren and their teachers.<sup>17</sup>

The most specifically comprehensive secondary source on postwar education in Germany is Brian Puaca’s 2009 book *Learning Democracy: Education Reform in West Germany, 1945-1965*. Puaca compiled extensive research with reliable primary and secondary sources to trace the development and rebuilding of German education after World War II. He divides his book into chronological sections to show the changes made to the school system over time. Throughout the book, Puaca shows that the incremental changes made to Germany’s schools during and after occupation helped the country move forward and experience growth. As a measurement of change, Puaca tracks the spread of democratization in the educational system.

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<sup>16</sup> Dirk Schumann, “Legislation and Liberalization: The Debate about Corporal Punishment in Schools in Postwar West Germany, 1945-1975,” *German History* 25, no.2 (April 2007): 192-218, accessed September 2015, EBSCOhost Humanities Source.

<sup>17</sup> Heather L. Dichter, “Rebuilding Physical Education in the Western Occupation Zones of Germany, 1945-1949,” *History of Education* 41 (November 2012): 787-806, accessed October 2015, EBSCOhost Education Source.

Puaca surveys educational reform in Germany as a whole, though he specifically concentrates on changes in West Berlin and Hesse.<sup>18</sup>

Other large-scale secondary sources proved extremely useful while researching the long-term impacts of denazification in West Germany. Tony Judt's incredible portrait of Europe after World War II, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*, encompasses more broadly the rebuilding of Europe as a whole, including denazification programs in Germany. Judt analyzes how denazification worked, Germany's reaction to denazification, and the legacy that denazification left behind.<sup>19</sup> Martin Perry's *World War II in Europe: A Concise History* focuses more on the build-up to the war and how the war was fought, though parts of the last chapter discuss the legacy of the war and the effects the war had on the coming decades. The idea of responsibility and guilt that is closely tied to denazification is an important component of Perry's writing.<sup>20</sup> The chapter "West Germany" in *1968 in Europe: A History of Protest and Activism, 1956-1977* outlines the psychological impact that National Socialism had on German citizens in the political realm. Many of the students who were involved in the protest movements in Germany experienced the changes made to the education system during denazification.<sup>21</sup> A shorter reference work, "Occupation and the Emergence of Two States, 1945-1961," gives a

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18 Brian M. Puaca, *Learning Democracy: Education Reform in West Germany, 1945-1965* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009).

19 Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005).

20 Marvin Perry, *World War II in Europe: a Concise History* (Boston: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2013).

21 Martin Klimke, "West Germany," in *1968 in Europe: A History of Protest and Activism, 1956-1977*, edited by Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth, 97-110 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

concise overview of denazification in the context of the rise of a divided Germany and points to other sources that could be useful when researching postwar occupation.<sup>22</sup>

The combination of primary sources and secondary literature examined for this project provides a broad picture of denazification in West Germany. Sources from both American and British perspectives, as well as scholarly pieces of work, give a well-rounded portrait of occupied Germany and the young West German state. Though many of these sources do not specifically address denazification procedures in relation to education, these studies provide a more complete understanding of West Germany during denazification. Both the successes and failures of denazification can be deduced from this series of diverse perspectives on education, occupation policy, and the future of postwar Germany.

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<sup>22</sup> Volker Berghahn and Uta Poiger, "Occupation and the Emergence of Two States, 1945-1961," in *German History in Documents and Images*, accessed October 2015, EuroDocs.

### Postwar School Conditions

The outlook for European recovery after World War II was dismal, to say the least. The war had been fought on multiple fronts that ravaged entire countries. Civilians as well as soldiers had been killed, wounded, or traumatized from the fighting. Any type of resource, from food and shelter to textbooks, was either scarce or non-existent. German schools encountered similar problems, ranging from a shortage of teachers to the destruction of school buildings. American and British occupiers had noble ideas about democratizing and denazifying German schools, but the severe lack of resources and large amount of destruction seriously curtailed their efforts.

During the twelve years that the National Socialists controlled the German government, the focus and purpose of schools had changed significantly. Education still was supposed to produce good, productive German citizens, but the content taught in schools reflected the changed view of a good German man or woman. In the most elite Nazi schools, students, particularly boys, spent five hours per day in physical education classes and only two hours per day taking classes in other subjects.<sup>23</sup> These students were certainly physically fit, but their minds did not receive the same adequate training that their bodies did. For these students, especially once World War II started, education focused on preparation for war.<sup>24</sup>

The Nazi school curriculum also sought to force young students to think in an Aryan mindset. The ideals of Hitler's National Socialist government – a strong military, xenophobia, aggressive manhood, and nationalism – wormed their way into the official curriculum. Every school subject now contained material that reflected these beliefs. Math textbooks often included

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<sup>23</sup> Dichter, 790-791.

<sup>24</sup> Dichter, 791.

speakers in the Rhineland, while Latin textbooks asked students to translate sentences that emphasized military glory and the value of personal sacrifice.<sup>25</sup> Even the idea to shorten the required amount of secondary education fed into the development of an Aryan worldview.<sup>26</sup> With less education required of them, young German male and female students could move more quickly into the gender roles expected of them. Young men could begin training for or even enter the military, while young women could learn how to be good housewives and raise good German children.

Unlike the fighting in World War I, which did not touch Germany's borders, World War II saw a massive invasion of Germany from both the Eastern and Western fronts. Allied forces crossed the Rhine River in the spring of 1945 and began an intense saturation bombing campaign.<sup>27</sup> The industrial centers of Germany became some of the most heavily-targeted areas for bombing. Under these conditions, schools could hardly be expected to operate fully, since teachers and students were likely more worried about losing their lives or surrendering to the invading American and British forces. In some areas, school sessions had become intermittent or stopped completely before the tide had turned against Germany. According to a special British news correspondent, all teaching in the city of Hamburg had stopped by July 1943, except for a few secondary and vocational schools.<sup>28</sup> Many children missed the opportunity to receive an education simply due to the ravages of war.

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<sup>25</sup> Puaca, 30-31.

<sup>26</sup> Puaca, 22.

<sup>27</sup> Perry, 251.

<sup>28</sup> A Special Correspondent Lately in Germany, "Schools in Germany," *The Times* (London), February 4, 1947, accessed September 2015, *The Times* Digital Archive.

The material that German students had learned for over a decade, while not facing the hardships brought by war, was one of the most glaring pedagogical problems faced by occupying reformers. Texts in every school subject - civics, foreign language, and even mathematics - were plagued with racist and nationalist material.<sup>29</sup> To determine which textbooks were actually usable, new teachers and school administrators had to submit all books and resources to the occupiers for approval.<sup>30</sup> The majority of German textbooks were declared unusable in a postwar environment by Allied occupiers, so the occupiers needed to create an entirely new set of written resources for the educational system. Alternatively, textbooks dating from the Weimar era were brought out of storage and repurposed. However, even Weimar textbooks were not ideal for wide consumption, since these resources had often been written for a certain region of Germany, rather than the country as a whole. Books from the Weimar era also promoted regionalist, nationalistic, and revanchist ideas, all of which were contrary to the idea of a peaceful and unified German state.<sup>31</sup> Since many classrooms had poor resources or lacked written materials altogether, teachers had to start from scratch in order to properly educate students.

In some cases, teachers chose to write their own books to supplement learning in their classrooms. Pamphlet-style books were typically only written by very resourceful teachers, so this solution was the exception rather than the norm.<sup>32</sup> The majority of teachers were simply reduced to writing out most of their lessons on chalkboards for students to copy down.<sup>33</sup> Teachers and administrators struggled to support their students with so few materials on hand, so the

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<sup>29</sup> Puaca, 29-30.

<sup>30</sup> Röhrs, 150-151.

<sup>31</sup> Puaca, 30.

<sup>32</sup> Puaca, 31-32.

<sup>33</sup> A Special Correspondent, "Schools in Germany."

occupying forces began to produce and print temporary replacement textbooks. The Education and Cultural Relations division of OMGUS (Office of Military Government, United States) worked around the clock to either edit Weimar textbooks or write new books for classrooms.<sup>34</sup> By 1946, OMGUS began to hope that German textbook writers would step in to create new materials. In the American zone, several Curriculum and Textbook Centers opened to provide resources for textbooks authors – from private office spaces to libraries full of helpful books. The impact of these centers is debatable, however, since very few textbook manuscripts were submitted, much less approved by OMGUS, through 1947.<sup>35</sup>

Without a proper teaching staff and administrative system, schools cannot provide adequate services to students. This fact became one of the most glaring problems early on in the denazification and occupation process. Not every German citizen was a member of the Nazi Party, but the rate of membership was much higher among teachers and administrators. By the end of the war, ninety-seven percent of German teachers belonged to the National Socialist Teachers League (NSLB); thirty-two percent of NSLB members also belonged to the Party.<sup>36</sup> Considering that only about ten percent of Germany's entire population formally belonged to the Party, this percentage of Party membership among teachers was alarming. Certain types of teachers had been almost completely taken over by Party members. For example, the majority of physical education instructors had also worked for Nazi youth leagues, acting as directors or leaders of the Hitler Youth or the League of German Girls.<sup>37</sup> Clearly, occupiers would need to reevaluate the hiring or rehiring of teachers.

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<sup>34</sup> Puaca, 30.

<sup>35</sup> Puaca, 31.

<sup>36</sup> Puaca, 33.

<sup>37</sup> Dichter, 795.

As a profession, teaching had been weakened while under the control of the National Socialist government. Thanks to the rise of the Hitler Youth and its powerful leaders, the authority of teachers over their students was undermined.<sup>38</sup> Students who belonged to the Hitler Youth or other Nazi programs for children were expected to place their duties to the organization over their schoolwork, or even their parents' wishes. Additionally, schools in Germany were looked down upon by occupiers, especially Americans. The participation of German citizens in repairing their society, especially the education system, was "unthinkable" for most occupying officials.<sup>39</sup> OMGUS officials often believed that German education had always been "anti-democratic" and that teachers acted like dictators in their classrooms.<sup>40</sup> Perceptions of teachers by both native Germans and the occupiers would shape how the denazification process affected the development of schools and curriculum.

Finding new teachers and staff would prove to be more of a challenge than the American and British occupiers had hoped. Many young German men, who had comprised most of the faculty of German schools before the war, had gone missing or died while fighting for their country. While writing about his experiences as an educator in postwar Germany, Hermann Röhrs observed that he was "one of the few younger teachers" who had been hired by the time schools began to reopen.<sup>41</sup> A common practice for schools was to call former teachers out of retirement. By July 1946, the average age of Berlin schoolteachers had risen to 57.<sup>42</sup> Most of these retired teachers had served under Weimar and usually held more conservative beliefs about

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38 Puaca, 22.

39 Bedürftig, 48-49.

40 Puaca, 15.

41 Röhrs, 150.

42 "Education," 101.



classroom management and the reforms that the occupiers wanted to enforce.<sup>43</sup> Alternatively, apprentice teachers or volunteers with little to no training were employed to satisfy the staffing needs of German schools.<sup>44</sup> Many of these young volunteers – up to eighty percent in some areas of West Germany – were women, in contrast to the male-dominated field before the war.<sup>45</sup> Unfortunately, due to the high average age of postwar teachers and the stress placed on them during the postwar years, the profession suffered from an unusually high mortality rate.<sup>46</sup> Eventually, improved teacher training and the natural progress of denazification would solve the problems of teacher shortages, but the years immediately following the war were difficult for schools and their staffs to weather.

In addition to teacher shortages, food shortages reached epidemic proportions after the defeat of Germany. In the chaos of war, food production and distribution had plummeted. OMGUS coordinated a feeding program for schoolchildren in Berlin and other German cities in the American zone. Though it only comprised one meal per day, students could rely on at least one hot and nutritious meal.<sup>47</sup> Hermann Röhrs, a young teacher in postwar West Germany, noted that this meal became the central event of the school day for both teachers and students: “it [the meal] created a genuine situation of caring and being cared for . . . and provided opportunities for thoughtful discussions.”<sup>48</sup> The feeding program that Röhrs and his students benefited from came about after occupying officials saw firsthand the effects of malnutrition on schoolchildren. Poor

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43 Puaca, 36.

44 “Education,” 101.

45 Puaca, 37.

46 Röhrs, 151.

47 “Education,” 102.

48 Röhrs, 151.

nutrition or food shortages made students and their teachers more vulnerable to catching various illnesses.<sup>49</sup> Like their contemporaries around the world, hungry or sick children in Germany could not focus on the content of lessons, if they even had the strength to attend school. In the context of schools, food became a symbol of unity among students and teachers as well as a crucial form of sustenance. Severe rationing in West Germany cut into the food supply of families, so many students suffered from food shortages at home.<sup>50</sup> School meal programs helped to bridge the hunger gap, but this problem would only be resolved as food distribution improved over time.

Due to the aforementioned bombing campaign carried out by the Allies during the later years of the war, school buildings, not to mention entire cities, had often been damaged or destroyed. By one estimate, about forty-six percent of school buildings in the American zone had been flattened to the ground or damaged.<sup>51</sup> In the British occupational zone, approximately

two-thirds of all towns had been significantly damaged by bombs or destroyed beyond repair.<sup>53</sup>

Many surviving German citizens in these towns, most of which were located in the industrial heartland that had been the target of the bombings, had to find



<sup>50</sup> Our Berlin Correspondent, "Life in Berlin," *The Times* (London), December 21, 1945, accessed September 2015, [The Times Digital Archive](#).

<sup>51</sup> "Education," *The Times* (London), 1945.

<sup>52</sup> Military Governor, "Germany" (map), *The German Press in the U.S. Occupied Area, 1945-1948, a Special Report*, accessed March 2016, UW-Madison Libraries Digital Collection.

<sup>53</sup> Lord Beveridge, "Outlook in Germany"

Fig. 1: A map of the occupation zones of

new places to live. According to a news correspondent in Berlin, “streams of refugees” crowded less-damaged cities, even six months after the end of the war.<sup>54</sup> Sources do not, or cannot, determine an exact number of refugees or displaced persons in Germany, but general consensus suggests a number in the millions.<sup>55</sup> Occupying forces would need to find ways to shelter all of these homeless. Many schoolchildren struggled due to homelessness or could not attend school at all while simply trying to stay alive.

Any school buildings that had survived Allied bombings were likely to be requisitioned for other uses. Eighty-one schools in Berlin alone became hospitals, government offices, or housing for displaced persons.<sup>56</sup> All of these buildings, whether or not they were being used for their intended purpose, faced overcrowding and the lack of both heat and bathroom facilities.<sup>57</sup> Repairs were necessary to make the schools more accessible to students. Because of the shortage of labor, many teachers took it upon themselves to perform most of the repair work, which continued as schools opened back up for classes.<sup>58</sup> These teachers certainly suffered from overwork during the early years of denazification from the physical labor needed to rebuild schools and the stress of adapting to new rules and reforms.

As an early solution to the shortage of classrooms, many schools began to teach classes in shifts, a practice called *Schichtunterricht*. This method did not solve the miserable teacher-to-student ratio – as high as 1:88 in some schools – though it did enable more students to attend

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54 Our Berlin Correspondent, “Life in Berlin.”

55 Judt, 32.

56 Puaca, 26.

57 “Education,” 102.

58 Röhrs, 151.

school at once.<sup>59</sup> Usually, teachers divided the school day into two halves, with older students attending during one part of the day and younger students in the other part, though some buildings were used for three shifts of students.<sup>60</sup> This solution had good intentions, though it shortened the amount of time that students spent learning. This problem, like many others the German education system faced, would take time to fix.

### **Processes and Procedures of Denazification**

In order to properly carry out denazification, Allied occupying forces needed to determine what methods would be most effective for rooting out the National Socialist influence in German society. The trials of leading Nazi Party members before the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg are likely the most infamous events of denazification, but examining these trials only scratches the surface of denazification. This section will use the example of denazification in the American zone, since the American occupational government had some of the most stringent and thorough forms of denazification. The American and British zones were joined as the Bizone on January 1, 1947, so any reference to denazification processes after this date will reference the collective Bizone.<sup>61</sup>

The first main stage of denazification took place in the immediate aftermath of Germany's surrender on May 8, 1945. Part of an American military directive issued a few days after the surrender read, "Germany is not to be occupied for the purpose of liberation but as a defeated enemy nation."<sup>62</sup> Unlike the terms of the Treaty of Versailles after World War I, the program of denazification was meant to re-educate Germany on all of her wrongdoings. The

59 "Education," 101.

60 Puaca, 27.

61 Bedürftig, 54.

62 Bedürftig, 47.

occupation began with a strong sense of hatred for Adolf Hitler's regime and its effects on both Germany and Europe as a whole. Under the Potsdam Agreement, the United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union were required to use predetermined zones of occupation to begin the liquidation of the Nazi Party.<sup>63</sup> In the American zone, direct military control was the natural first step in denazification, both out of necessity and to boost the egos of American military commanders. Many OMGUS officials concluded that most Germans needed re-education and close supervision during denazification, an attitude that humiliated German citizens.<sup>64</sup> Other Americans saw postwar West Germany in a "clinical" sense, in desperate need of therapy and rehabilitation due to its persistent problems with militarism and nationalism.<sup>65</sup> Alonzo Grace, the director of the Education and Cultural Relations Division of OMGUS, observed that German youth had "a natural bitterness" coupled with "tolerance and a desire for international understanding and peace."<sup>66</sup> Grace and his fellow occupiers saw promise in the future of Germany, but their attitudes towards Germany remained negative and patronizing.

The beginnings of denazification, however, did not look promising to the occupiers. The situation in Germany in 1945 was absolutely dismal. The previously outlined problems of food and material shortages, as well as cities and towns that had been absolutely decimated, cast a shadow over all of German society. The Nazi Party had cut deeply into every facet of German life. During the first stages of the occupation, General Lucius Clay, American Military Commander, noted:

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63 Plischke, 809.

64 Röhrs, 151.

65 Bedürftig, 52.

66 Grace, 3.

. . . our major administrative problem was to find reasonably competent Germans who had not been affiliated or associated in some way with the Nazi regime . . . All too often, it seems that the only men with the qualifications . . . are the career civil servants . . . a great proportion of whom were more than nominal participants (by our definition) in the activities of the Nazi Party.<sup>67</sup>

General Clay's keen observation was correct. Most skilled workers, especially those with government jobs, had been members of the Nazi Party. Prominent public officials, including teachers, had been expected to at least show support for the Nazis during the regime, if not join the Party or other Nazi organizations.

Despite its apparent mission to create a unified denazification policy, OMGUS officials allowed some localized and regionalized freedom within the program of denazification, rather than creating a uniform program for the entire American zone.<sup>68</sup> This method allowed local or regional officials to prioritize denazification based on what their areas needed the most. One of the most widely-used instruments in denazification processes was the *Fragebogen*, or questionnaires, issued to every German citizen. The *Fragebogen* contained an exhaustive list of 131 questions that had to be completed by every German for tribunals, called *Spruchkammern*, to examine.<sup>69</sup> <sup>70</sup> While the questionnaires were being processed, anyone with suspected Nazi involvement could only work at low-skill jobs before their trials.<sup>71</sup> With the extensive nature and

<sup>67</sup> Judt, 56.

<sup>68</sup> Puaca, 33.

<sup>69</sup> Bedürftig, 51.

<sup>70</sup> Berghahn and Poiger, 5.

<sup>71</sup> Griffith, 70.

sheer number of *Fragebogen* that had to be processed by local *Spruchkammern*, delays in denazification could only be expected. Teachers who were suspected of Nazi involvement could not return to their posts until they appeared before a tribunal, worsening the shortage of educators in schools. Up to eighty or eighty-five percent of teachers were removed in some areas during the processing of the *Fragebogen*.<sup>72</sup>

OMGUS realized that not every German had been involved with the Nazi Party to the same extent, so officials created a scale to determine the level of one's involvement with the former regime. The new "Law for Liberation from National Socialism and Militarism" was issued by OMGUS in March 1945 and later drafted into German law in each zone.<sup>73</sup> From most culpable to least culpable, the categories were: guilty, compromised, less seriously compromised, accessory, and exonerated.<sup>74</sup> People in the exonerated category faced no fines or punishments, while the first four categories carried specific sentences with them. Anyone in the accessory or less seriously compromised groups faced fines, probation, or restrictions on work for a short number of years.<sup>75</sup> Former teachers placed in these categories could hope to return to their profession in a relatively short amount of time. On the other hand, people in the guilty or compromised categories could be sentenced to a labor camp, lose property, or even face trial as a war criminal.<sup>76</sup> No data specifically breaks down the number of teachers who fell into each category, though it may be safe to assume that most educators fell into the categories of less seriously compromised, accessory, or exonerated based on large-scale data.

<sup>72</sup> Plischke, 821.

<sup>73</sup> Plischke, 824.

<sup>74</sup> Bedürftig, 51.

<sup>75</sup> Plischke, 825.

<sup>76</sup> Plischke, 824.

At first, however, relatively few people who faced the *Spruchkammern* received placements in the most serious categories. A possible cause of this phenomenon was that the *Spruchkammern* were comprised mostly of ordinary German citizens and public prosecutors.<sup>77</sup> Members of the tribunals reviewed the *Fragebogen* and debated the futures of their friends and neighbors, so they may have felt reluctant to punish these individuals more harshly. *Spruchkammern* staff probably also received pressure from former Party members to make more favorable judgments or take into account so-called “extenuating circumstances.”<sup>78</sup> Outside pressure and a desire to just get through the trials as quickly as possible made it easier for former Nazi Party members or sympathizers, especially those in the lower three categories, to return to professions like teaching.

Certain groups were given large-scale amnesty to make the process of denazification move along more rapidly. In 1946, the Allies issued a general amnesty for any German citizen born on or after January 1, 1919, under the idea that anyone aged fourteen or younger when Hitler came to power in 1933 could not be held responsible for his or her actions.<sup>79</sup> This amnesty, known as the Youth Amnesty, had positive implications for German students. Most children or teenagers who had been involved in the Hitler Youth or other Nazi groups for children could focus on rebuilding their lives and receiving an education, rather than being forced to face the *Spruchkammern* as a minor. Additional amnesties were also granted later in 1946 to about one million German citizens who had been incriminated for only minor offenses, were physically or mentally disabled, or had low household incomes.<sup>80</sup> Thanks to these amnesties, the

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<sup>77</sup> Griffith, 71.

<sup>78</sup> Herz, 572.

<sup>79</sup> Dichter, 792.

<sup>80</sup> Griffith, 72.



*Spruchkammern* could focus on resolving the cases of upper-level former Nazis rather than wasting resources on the prosecution of minor offenses.

Denazification cannot be discussed thoroughly without mentioning the impact of the Nuremberg Trials of 1945 and 1946. These high-profile trials dealt with the highest-ranking members of the former Nazi Party, the government of the Third Reich, and the German military, rather than everyday Party members. At the trials, the International Military Tribunal (IMT) sentenced twelve men to execution and seven to jail terms, while three men were exonerated.<sup>81</sup> These convicted men served as scapegoats and examples for the German people during denazification. Films and photographs of the trials were used in schools and re-education centers in West Germany, and news reels concerning the trials were shown worldwide.<sup>82</sup> Certain German citizens were taken to Nuremberg to observe the trials firsthand. In February 1946, a group of teachers from Berlin were sent to observe the ongoing trials in order to inform fellow teachers and students about the “fair legal processes” being used by the occupiers.<sup>83</sup>

The creation of the American-British Bizonia in January 1947 was the first step towards the formal close of denazification. By October of 1947, amendments to denazification laws began to accelerate the proceedings. These changes allowed for speedier trials and exonerations of lesser offenders who fell into the lowest two categories of former Nazis.<sup>84</sup> The amendments to denazification law came about for several reasons. German citizens, experiencing firsthand the exhausting nature of denazification procedures, were simply growing tired of the process. The rule of the Third Reich was a dark stain on German history, so most people preferred to forget

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81 Perry, 292.

82 Judt, 53-54.

83 “Education,” 102-103.

84 Griffith, 73.

about their Nazi past rather than be forced to relive the gruesome details.<sup>85</sup> The occupying powers in the American zone began to grow tired of the comprehensive nature of the program.<sup>86</sup> Sheer numbers show the breadth and depth of denazification. John McCloy, the U.S. High Commissioner for Germany, noted in 1950:

Since [June 1, 1948] the trials have continued but new registrations, largely refugees and returning POWs, have made it impossible to complete the program. By September 30, 1950, a total of 13,416,000 persons had been registered; 958,071 trials had been held; and 2,777,444 amnestied. . . . There remained 1,740 cases to be disposed of.<sup>87</sup>

The numbers provided by McCloy are staggering, especially considering that these millions of people had been processed in the span of about four years.

The amount of cases that piled up during denazification exhausted not only the people involved in the process, but also their resources. In March of 1948, the U.S. House Appropriations Committee refused to pass a military spending bill unless denazification procedures were stopped.<sup>88</sup> The United States was already about to spend millions of dollars in Marshall Plan aid to rebuild the rest of war-torn Europe, so spending extra money on military proceedings in Germany probably seemed excessive to many American politicians. In any case, German citizens were ready to take back political control of their own country from the Allied occupying forces.

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<sup>85</sup> Herz, 593.

<sup>86</sup> Plischke, 827.

<sup>87</sup> McCloy, 7.

<sup>88</sup> Griffith, 73.

Ideally, all of the zones of Germany would have been reunited to create a single German state, but tensions with the Soviet Union thwarted this hope. The Cold War nearly escalated into a “hot war” several times in divided Berlin and along the East-West German border. Under the diplomatic policy of containment and the foundation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Western Europe and the United States attempted to stand up to a perceived military threat from the Soviet Union.<sup>89</sup> These moves made by the West only served to deepen the divide between the former Allies and the Soviets. Neither side ever lost its mistrust of the other, a problem that dated back to the Russian Revolution.<sup>90</sup> The occupiers became more eager to withdraw their involvement in West Germany as the threat of nuclear warfare with the Soviet Union loomed. As an alternative to reunification, the American-British Bizonia and the French zone combined in 1949 to form the Federal Republic of Germany, while the Soviet zone was renamed the German Democratic Republic.<sup>91</sup> The citizens of the Federal Republic elected Konrad Adenauer as the first Chancellor, though the Allies reserved the right to intervene in the state and, if deemed necessary, return to direct rule of the formerly occupied zones.<sup>92</sup> Under Adenauer, an outspoken critic of Allied denazification policies, the new Federal Republic was eager to end denazification processes.

No formal declaration or movement ended denazification in West Germany. The trials of the *Spruchkammern* concluded, for the most part, by the early 1950s. The rigid categories that divided suspected Nazi collaborators by degree of involvement eventually fell out of favor.

Informal denazification, however, continued after the formation of the Federal Republic and, one

<sup>89</sup> Berghahn and Poiger, 4-5.

<sup>90</sup> Judt, 104.

<sup>91</sup> Berghahn and Poiger, 5.

<sup>92</sup> Judt, 147.

could argue, even continues to the present day. Even a decade after the end of World War II, Nazi ideas of anti-Semitism and racial superiority still held sway in Germany, though few people would publicly air their views.<sup>93</sup> Only time could slowly change the tide of public opinion to an unfavorable view of the Third Reich and its core beliefs.

### **American and British Views of Denazification**

Though both the Americans and the British considered denazification as an important component of occupation, the two occupying powers approached the process differently. Their ideas about education and its importance to denazification differed slightly. American officials, proud of their country's history of democracy, wanted to instill the same concepts and ideals among German youth through educational policy. To the British, reforming a basically functioning system by forming better relationships with Germans was more important.

American officials in Germany wanted to revisit the structure of the German education system to make it more democratic. The "tracking" system designed by German schools decades before was viewed as a relic of the past, a system that only deepened divides among social classes and did not allow for advancement of students. Americans sought to create secondary schools that would give all West German students the same standard of education, unlike the vastly different *Gymnasium* and *Volksschulen*.<sup>94</sup> British occupiers, however, did not see the structure of German education as problematic. The structure of schools in the British zone remained unchanged during occupation, and the occupiers focused more on revising the content taught in those schools.<sup>95</sup>

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93 Perry, 301.

94 Dichter, 793.

95 Dichter, 793-794.

Some Germans criticized the British for not doing enough in the area of educational reform. The Education Branch of Great Britain's occupying government considered itself as an advisory committee and believed that citizens of West Germany should be the driving force behind new educational policies.<sup>96</sup> Initially, American officials took more direct control in their zone to initiate denazification policies. However, after several years of occupation wore down the morale of American policymakers, they began to believe that Germans needed to generate their own version of denazification and democratic education.<sup>97</sup> "Non-intervention" as the official British policy could be criticized as unfocused or ineffective, but perhaps the hands-off approach worked better in the long run. To create a solid and enduring educational system, Germans needed to help themselves by reforming the system on their own.<sup>98</sup> With more freedom to interpret the suggestions of occupiers, schools in the British zone may have been more able to adapt to changes and become more flexible.

OMGUS eagerly pushed for an expansion of democratic education in the American occupation zone. As part of the move towards democracy and equality, students from all social classes in American-controlled schools were encouraged to mingle with each other in schools.<sup>99</sup> The direct reforms put forth by American occupiers all pointed directly towards democracy. The introduction of a new form of civics curriculum and new pedagogical methods urged both students and teachers to think more democratically. OMGUS officials believed that the formal and rigid student-teacher dynamic needed to become more personal in order to make teachers

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<sup>96</sup> Röhrs, 154.

<sup>97</sup> McCloy, 9.

<sup>98</sup> Röhrs, 156.

<sup>99</sup> Our Frankfurt Correspondent, "Germans at School," *The Times* (London), April 25, 1951, accessed October 2015, *The Times* Digital Archive.

appear more approachable to students.<sup>100</sup> This idea, combined with pedagogical techniques of group work and parliamentary style debates in the classroom, demanded that teachers use less authoritarian methods in the classroom. The British, while supporting the introduction of democracy in education, did not want to force educators to adopt any new policies.<sup>101</sup> Their method of introducing democracy in schools became more indirect rather than pushing for direct changes of policy.<sup>102</sup>

Neither the British nor the Americans ever made an intentional effort to align their educational policies with the policies of the other occupying power. Since the occupiers used different processes of denazification and introducing varying educational reforms, the changes confused German citizens.<sup>103</sup> The regionalization of denazification and reform made the process seem scattered, especially since educational reform was often left up to individual German states. These disparities were caused by anything from shortages of funding to differences of opinion over educational reform.<sup>104</sup> Whatever the true underlying causes of the differences between American and British denazification were, these discrepancies in policymaking frustrated German educators. However, the introduction of different methods of denazification in education may have allowed more diverse ideas to flourish in West Germany as occupation ended.

### **Educational Reforms during and after Denazification**

Dealing with the changes that denazification brought about became a massive challenge for teachers to overcome. Most of the changes at the beginning of denazification were the

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100 Puaca, 43.

101 Röhrs, 153-154.

102 Our Frankfurt Correspondent, "Germans at School."

103 Puaca, 33.

104 Our Frankfurt Correspondent, "Germans at School."

products of Allied ideas, though West German educators and political leaders took over the creation of education policy by the late 1940s and into the 1950s. Possibly in an effort to boost morale, Allied occupiers wanted changes that they implemented to appear German or broadly European in source.<sup>105</sup> However, despite this mindset, German schools would take on aspects during denazification that reflected American, British, and wider global practices.

For the American occupiers, denazification in schools comprised only a small part of the methods that would be used in an attempt to reshape German thinking. Educational reform in schools reflected a wider vision of re-education and psychological change.<sup>106</sup> Re-education centers, created with the idea of showing Germans the horror of their country's deeds during World War II, showed documentary films about the war that were required viewing to receive ration cards. Unfortunately, these centers had little impact on public opinion: many Germans turned their faces away from the film screens.<sup>107</sup> Denazification would have better luck with specific reforms tailored for schools.

The Allies provided some general guidelines for all of the occupation zones during denazification. Under Allied Control Authority Directive No. 54, the four occupying countries agreed that schools in Germany should emphasize democracy and civic responsibility and that all teachers should undergo training at universities.<sup>108</sup>

The first formal law concerning the German education system after the war went into effect in Berlin on June 1, 1948. The bill provided sweeping reforms that applied to the American sector of the city: free textbooks and materials for all students, advanced training for

<sup>105</sup> Puaca, 39-40.

<sup>106</sup> Bedürftig, 52.

<sup>107</sup> Judt, 57.

<sup>108</sup> Dichter, 793.

teachers, and co-educational public schools.<sup>109</sup> A unified school system, called *Einheitsschule*, provided compulsory education for all students between the ages of six and eighteen.<sup>110</sup> Laws with specific requirements for schools tended to be more localized or regionalized in Germany, much like this law in Berlin. During the occupation and denazification, OMGUS issued directives or general mandates for education, but specifications were left up to regional or local governments. With this method, German cities and regions could exercise more authority over their schools. The regional flexibility in school reform would translate to regional flexibility in other areas of education, such as textbook use, teacher training programs, and the selection of new curriculum.

### **Teacher Training Reforms**

As part of the many reforms instituted during denazification, programs and schooling for teachers experienced many changes as well. The staff shortages caused by the war and the denazification programs also created a shortage of properly trained teachers. In the American-occupied part of Berlin, over half of the teachers in classrooms in the immediate postwar phase had received only temporary or partial training.<sup>111</sup> A system to fully train new teachers or retrain former teachers from the National Socialist era needed to be developed quickly to lower the high teacher-to-student ratios across West Germany.

A major question posed by the Allied occupiers concerned which German citizens would be allowed to become teachers. Members of the public often raised concerns over former Nazi teachers or other officials working in the classroom. In the American zone, OMGUS urged the Minister of Education to keep former “enthusiastic propagandists of Nazi doctrines” out of

<sup>109</sup> “Education,” 102.

<sup>110</sup> “Education,” 102.

<sup>111</sup> Puaca, 35.



schools so that they would not negatively influence the democratic youth of West Germany.<sup>112</sup>

While any former Nazis who had been classified as guilty or compromised could never work in a school again, former teachers who received pardons could return to their former jobs. Re-assimilating into society, in theory, could help rehabilitate former Nazi Party members and allowed them to belong to the wider German community.<sup>113</sup> Over time, officials and hiring personnel for school systems began to turn a blind eye to teachers who had held prominent positions in the Third Reich government.

Other staffing changes in schools became more noticeable in the decade after occupation began. More women started to enter the teaching profession, particularly young women.<sup>114</sup> The Youth Amnesty allowed more young people, both men and women, to pursue careers such as teaching that may have been barred for their older peers.<sup>115</sup> Since many young German men had been killed or disappeared in the war, young women often filled their places in the job market. Young men who had survived the war and gone through denazification procedures also began to seek jobs as teachers.<sup>116</sup> American and British occupying officials likely saw the influx of young male and female teachers as a positive change, and perhaps as a chance to introduce more democratic reforms in the classroom. However, by 1950, at least one-fourth of teachers were over age fifty-five, compared to one-eighth who were this age or older before World War II.<sup>117</sup> As

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112 McCloy, 7.

113 McCloy, 8.

114 Puaca, 38.

115 Dichter, 801.

116 Puaca, 39.

117 Puaca, 91.

these older teachers aged out of the system, however, more young teachers who received new forms of educational training entered the teaching profession.

The teacher training programs instituted during and after occupation cannot be generalized to draw simple conclusions. Individual states within West Germany constructed their own policies and programs to train teachers.<sup>118</sup> Under the vision of each state, training varied by length of time in school required, content areas studied, and certificates offered by the training programs. Due to these variations, the quality of teacher training likely varied dramatically from state to state. However, the American occupiers at least attempted to create some unified policies for all West German teachers. Several foreign ideas, such as political education and closer teacher-student relationships, entered the curriculum of teacher training courses. Two of the most popular pedagogical techniques that entered German teaching classes were the open class discussion and the debate. Seminars, conferences, and extra courses aimed at West German teachers gave the attendees methods for introducing their students to discussions and debates in the classroom.<sup>119</sup> The new approaches of open discussion in classrooms supposedly made teachers and student think in a more democratic fashion. Most of these structural reforms, however, did not completely blossom until the end of American occupation in West Germany.<sup>120</sup>

On the whole, German teachers resented the first waves of changes to teacher training made during occupation. According to former teacher Hermann Röhrs, many of his fellow educators in the postwar era felt bitter about needing to receive re-education and develop a more democratic system in schools.<sup>121</sup> Some of this bitterness may have been created by the demands

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118 Puaca, 93.

119 Puaca, 94-95.

120 Puaca, 98.

121 Röhrs, 151.

placed on Germans by outside forces and the psychological effects of occupation. The mandates made by foreign officials and passed down through the occupying chain of command could come across as condescending at times. The confusion that came from the first stages of denazification also caused frustration among teachers in the American and British zones of occupation.<sup>122</sup> Once occupation began to slow down and control returned to German officials, teachers may have begun to resent these changes less.

### **Changes in Teaching Methods**

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<sup>122</sup> Röhrs, 152.

The German education system before World War II had been stereotyped as strict and authoritarian, not entirely without a basis in fact. The school system to this day remains stratified into different levels of schooling that determine a student's entire future. As early as the Weimar era, students were either tracked into an elite school, the *Gymnasium*, or the common school, the *Volksschule*.<sup>123</sup> Some educational reforms during the Weimar era, however, would be useful during the denazification of the school system. Weimar had seen the first introduction of civic



education, or *Staatsbürgerkunde*, which had the main purpose of preparing responsible citizens.<sup>124</sup> The political education of Weimar still had at its heart a strong focus on nationalism and early ideas of xenophobia.<sup>125</sup> This form of political education, while imperfect, was a promising

starting point for educational reform after World War II. In contrast, educational<sup>126</sup> changes made during the Third Reich were discarded wholesale during denazification. Clearly, schools in

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<sup>123</sup> Puaca, 19.

<sup>124</sup> Puaca, 20.

<sup>125</sup> Fred M. Hechinger, "About Education," *The New York Times*, January 31, 1990, Late Edition, accessed September 2015, LexisNexis Academic.

<sup>126</sup> Gerd Mingram, "Teacher with Her Pupils in Hamburg-Wellingsbüttel," 1950, accessed March 2016, *German History in Documents and Images*.

Germany had suffered from over a decade of a barrage of Nazi and militaristic influences.<sup>127</sup> Nazi officials had rewritten the curriculum at every level of schooling to glorify the military, spread xenophobic and racist ideals, and promote Hitler's political goals, all changes that were pedagogically unsound.<sup>128</sup> Despite the aforementioned undermining of teacher authority, the classroom reflected the hierarchical nature of Nazi Germany, giving the teacher extensive power over his or her students.

A change in the relationship between student and teacher was necessary, especially in American eyes, to denazify the classroom. Popular German authorities on education called for an end to an authoritarian structure and stronger relationships between teacher and student.<sup>129</sup> These expectations were likely unrealistic at the beginning of denazification. With such high teacher-to-student ratios, teachers often had no other choice but to act authoritatively to maintain control of such large classes. However, once schools had been rebuilt, more teachers had been hired, and class sizes had decreased, teachers could experiment with new educational methods in the classroom. In the early 1950s, more teachers began to use open discussions and debates with their students.<sup>130</sup> This shift in methodology could be due to a new generation of teachers that had begun to enter schools during this time. Teachers who had been educated in the system

Fig. 2: A young elementary school teacher using discussion-based previously outlined had learned about more "democratic" means of teaching, so these young teachers were more likely to incorporate their training into their classrooms.

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127 Plischke, 820-821.

128 Puaca, 22.

129 Puaca, 43.

130 Puaca, 94.

Modern pedagogy broadly supports less authoritarian and more student-centered means of teaching, so German schools were already modernizing by the middle stages of denazification.

To deal with initial shortages of materials and teachers, unique programs were introduced across Germany. In many German cities and towns, educators and occupying officials recruited radio stations to help in the classroom. As with other components of education, the use of radio in the classroom varied in each German state and town.<sup>131</sup> OMGUS sponsored the development of educational radio programs that could be used by stations in the entire zone.<sup>132</sup> Unfortunately, distance education via radio could not solve every problem of teacher shortages. The material shortages also extended to radios, and finding enough radios for schools became a great challenge for education officials.<sup>133</sup> The educational radio programs did provide a sense of unity among German schools and gave teachers who lacked textbooks and other written materials some relief.

Another educational trend that became popular in Germany was the student exchange program. In the American zone, officials began to ponder the introduction of exchange programs at the high school and university levels to foster international unity and friendship. The exchange programs could also promote a sense of cultural awareness for both participating countries. A statement released by the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee in October of 1946 declared the intent of creating a cultural exchange program “to permit and encourage the revival of visits of Germans to the United States, and of persons from the United States to Germany.”<sup>134</sup> In the 1948-1949 academic year, 172 German university students studied in the United States, many of

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131 Jacobs, 9.

132 Jacobs, 9.

133 Jacobs, 10.

134 Banta, 9.

them privately sponsored.<sup>135</sup> The French and British zones also undertook similar programs for German students. Students studied at American universities in Kentucky, Michigan, California, and every state in between. Some German professors even got the opportunity to lecture at the University of Notre Dame and the University of Louisville.<sup>136</sup> OMGUS and other occupation government organization probably hoped that university students and professors would learn about American democracy while abroad and spread their newly-learned ideals when they returned to Germany.

German teenagers also had the chance to experience the American education system. Between 1949 and 1953, nearly 1,900 secondary school students from Germany attended high school in the United States.<sup>137</sup> Like the similar programs offered to German university students, the programs aimed at secondary school students hoped to instill cultural awareness among the students and to spread democratic ideals. Private organizations, rather than government partnerships, generally sponsored secondary school exchanges.<sup>138</sup> Typically, the exchange programs did not produce dramatic tangible results among German students. Rather, as stated by the U.S. Information Administration Educational Service Exchange, the benefits were intangible changes in attitudes and perceptions.<sup>139</sup> By traveling to and experiencing life in a different country, German students could gain a broader perspective and incorporate their experiences into their lives back home.

A long-standing form of school discipline, corporal punishment, came under fire in the postwar period. As early as 1815, the future German state of Bavaria had passed a resolution that

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135 Banta, 11.

136 Banta, 10.

137 Puaca, 76.

138 Puaca, 76.

139 Puaca, 78.

recognized the potential need for corporal punishment in schools as a remedy for students who acted lazy or misled their fellow pupils.<sup>140</sup> In the schools of Germany, as well as other parts of the world, teachers and administrators began to debate the effectiveness of corporal punishment in the 1940s and 1950s. Some Germans encouraged teachers to continue the use of force in the classroom. In some cases, brute force from teachers was seen as the only way to restore order if a student could not be suspended from school for the day.<sup>141</sup> Older generations often saw young people as “hooligans” who would perpetrate violence when not closely supervised by adults.<sup>142</sup> However, with the modernization and liberalization of the Federal Republic, legal action began to limit the use of corporal punishment in the classroom.

Early in the postwar period, government officials refrained from expressly prohibiting corporal punishment. The education minister of North Rhine-Westphalia, Heinrich Konen, issued a decree in 1947 that strongly discouraged teachers from using corporal punishment except in exceptional circumstances.<sup>143</sup> For many teachers and government officials, corporal punishment hearkened back too much to the education system under Nazi control. However, the situations that teachers often encountered in schools often led to problems of discipline. Since teacher and classroom shortages continued after the war, and many students were expellees or refugees being raised without fathers, teachers had to confront large classes with unruly behavior.<sup>144</sup> Over time, voices opposing corporal punishment in German schools became louder, but the practice would continue for a few more decades. Through a series of education law reforms and court cases,

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140 Schumann, 196.

141 Adolf Busemann, n.p.

142 Kluth, n.p.

143 Schumann, 199.

144 Schumann, 203-204.



most forms of corporal punishment were outlawed in Germany by the late 1970s.<sup>145</sup> The eventual shift in attitudes toward the use of force in the classroom indicates a modernizing influence of denazification over time.

### **New Curriculum**

Since the curriculum in every subject under the Third Reich had been saturated with nationalistic propaganda, a new set of curriculum would need to be designed. Unlike modern educational thinking, which usually proposes a national standard for education, postwar education in Germany became highly regionalized or localized. As a British journalist candidly noted during a visit to West Germany, no overall unifying curriculum had been adopted, and there was little national effort to standardize every aspect of education.<sup>146</sup> However, certain trends became popular among many teachers and grade levels in West Germany as denazification took root.

An interesting addition to the German classroom was instruction in English. Throughout the British and American zones, lessons in English were introduced, even to children in the higher levels of primary school.<sup>147</sup> Presumably, learning English could be a great advantage to young Germans as their country was rebuilt, since Germany developed close international relationships with its occupying powers. The occupiers probably also had an easier time finding usable classroom materials in English from either Great Britain or the United States, so learning English had a practical application to activities in school.

Physical education in schools had a long history in Germany, even before Hitler's regime turned these classes into recruitment sites for the military. Sport and recreation was commonly

<sup>145</sup> Schumann, 215-216.

<sup>146</sup> Our Frankfurt Correspondent, "Germans at School."

<sup>147</sup> Our Frankfurt Correspondent, "Germans at School."

viewed as a unifying force in schools and a method of teaching that could occupy wild or unruly students.<sup>148</sup> Like other parts of the curriculum, the pedagogy of sport and physical education in Germany needed some serious rewiring to eliminate National Socialist influence. The Zook Report, a document issued after a U.S. Education Mission to Germany, recommended that German physical education focus on “health, hygiene, and recreational features” as well as “democratic ways of thinking and living.”<sup>149</sup> Under the creation of institutions such as the *Deutsche Sporthochschule* in Cologne, German teachers, ranging from young volunteers to veterans seeking new certifications, learned how to incorporate these techniques into physical education. Programs such as the *Sporthochschule* filled the needs for well-trained teachers and for students to participate in democratic experiences.<sup>150</sup>

Methods of teaching and pedagogies changed significantly during denazification. In the American zone, education reformers began to give “fuller range to modern theories.”<sup>151</sup> These “modern theories” include a range of practices, from a more student-centered classroom approach to a focus on the creation of civic-minded citizens. Many teachers began to place less emphasis on the value of unquestioning obedience in an effort to strengthen their rapport with students.<sup>152</sup> Changing classroom values also indicated a shift away from an authoritarian style of education that focused on the knowledge and skillset of the teacher.

Under the guise of instilling democratic values among students, students were encouraged to formulate their own opinions. New pedagogies proclaimed the benefits of using

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148 Dichter, 789.

149 Dichter, 796.

150 Dichter, 805.

151 Our Frankfurt Correspondent, “Germans at School.”

152 Our Frankfurt Correspondent, “Germans at School.”

classroom discussion and debates as teaching tools.<sup>153</sup> Interactive methods that promote voicing one's opinions can positively influence the critical thinking and analysis skills of students.

OMGUS officials were convinced that using debates in the classroom would give young German students a taste of democracy and practical experience in political education.<sup>154</sup> The free exchange of opinions was promoted as a way to instill democratic ways of thinking.<sup>155</sup> In contrast to traditional lecture methods, class discussions can help students become more interested in their own education and provides more quality interactions with the teacher. It must be noted, however, that just because classroom debates and discussions were encouraged during denazification, they did not necessarily happen in a majority of classrooms. More traditional teachers, especially veterans from the Weimar era, likely preferred to stick to the more expedient methods of lecture and straight memorization. However, just as other aspects of the German education system became more modernized, the use of class discussions and debates became more acceptable with time.

As the British correspondent in Frankfurt observed, neither denazification agencies nor German authorities crafted a single curriculum to be distributed among schools. Throughout Germany's history, individual states had remained sovereign from the federal government over education.<sup>156</sup> This observation, however, does not mean that some regions never implemented educational reforms from denazification. The changes simply moved more slowly in some states than in others. Additionally, the stratified system of German education prevented changes from being made smoothly across the board. Secondary schools and primary schools received reforms

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<sup>153</sup> Puaca, 94-95.

<sup>154</sup> Puaca, 45.

<sup>155</sup> Dichter, 796.

<sup>156</sup> Puaca, 60.

differently, just as the elite *Gymnasien* and common *Volksschulen* had different experiences of denazification.<sup>157</sup> Students at all levels noticed the transformative effects of denazification, but at varying rates of change.

The writing of new curriculum materials, especially textbooks, had been a laborious process in the early stages of denazification. The Curriculum and Textbook Centers, which provided resources for German textbook writers, produced few approved texts in the first two years of occupation.<sup>158</sup> As denazification continued under occupation, however, more German authors created textbooks that received approval from OMGUS. The renamed resource centers, now called Education Service Centers, expanded their services not only to writers but also to local communities.<sup>159</sup> With more resources and better materials available, a larger number of German textbooks went to the printing press. The percentage of textbooks rejected by OMGUS decreased from fifty percent in 1947 to about ten percent in 1950.<sup>160</sup> Ostensibly, the increased number of textbooks was due to a better supply and the increased availability of reference materials. The increase in the rate of approved textbooks could have been caused by other factors. With five years of denazification behind them, OMGUS officials may have just been desperate by 1950 to get as many textbooks published as possible and might have taken less care to evaluate proposed textbooks stringently. Whatever the content of these new materials, they became more readily available to students. In West Berlin, as well as other cities, education reform provided funds for free textbooks for students.<sup>161</sup> The new textbooks were imperfect;

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<sup>157</sup> Puaca, 60.

<sup>158</sup> Puaca, 31.

<sup>159</sup> Puaca, 82.

<sup>160</sup> Puaca, 82.

<sup>161</sup> "Education," 102.

many either overlooked the build-up to World War II or overemphasized the impact of German resistance movements.<sup>162</sup> However, giving native German authors the chance to write their own curriculum likely had a positive psychological effect on schools. Textbooks written by Germans, for Germans, felt less imposing for teachers and students to use, and the production and use of these materials restored some national pride.

The most challenging component of the new German curriculum was the teaching of history and civics. German schools in the Weimar era and under the National Socialist government had required classes in social studies, though the tone of these courses ran counter to the goals of denazification. Reformers saw the Weimar curriculum as antiquated, though its contents were arguably more acceptable than lessons that were taught in Nazi-controlled schools. Writing the new version of German history became a challenge for textbook authors and continues to be a struggle to this day.

During the initial stages of denazification, history and civics was a banned subject in all West German schools. The method that American and British occupiers used to rewrite history as victors of a war was far different than methods used in the past. Usually, conquerors could write a version of history that villainized their opponents and lionized their own actions.<sup>163</sup> In the German case, however, the defeated and divided nation was to be re-educated in an understanding of peace, democracy, and cooperation.<sup>164</sup> Crafting a set of curriculum requirements that fulfilled these goals would take extensive time and effort; therefore occupiers postponed the teaching of history until these goals could reasonably be met.

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162 Puaca, 80.

163 Röhrs, 151.

164 Röhrs, 152.

In West Berlin, the first outlines for a history curriculum were approved in the spring of 1947, and a committee of German teachers and historians gathered to write new textbooks and materials.<sup>165</sup> Like this timeline in West Berlin, the teaching of history and civics began in most German cities and states in 1947 and 1948. The general moratorium on political education was finally lifted in 1947, which allowed states and localities to start the process of developing a history and civics curriculum. The gradual reintroduction of social studies benefited the intellectual development of German students, but two years of no history education combined with spotty schooling during the war put many older students behind.

The introduction of new curriculum in history and civics would greatly contribute to the changed attitudes of young people in Germany. In the early 1950s, a rejection of militarism among older students and young adults was attributed to Allied re-education programs and education reform.<sup>166</sup> The new history classes were designed to help students apply political education to their everyday lives. For example, in the Constitution of the State of Baden, an article specifies the importance of “constitution-based civics instruction” and requires every German student to be given a copy of the constitution upon graduation.<sup>167</sup> German schools were eager to impress upon students the importance of their democratic education.

New textbooks and materials provided important guidance in the introduction of democratic education. German-authored history textbooks began circulating in the late 1940s due to the efforts and support of the Educational Service Centers. One of the most influential and

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<sup>165</sup> “Education,” 102.

<sup>166</sup> Our Special Correspondent in West Germany, “Shadows across Germany,” *The Times* (London), May 10, 1952, accessed October 2015, *The Times* Digital Archive.

<sup>167</sup> Excerpt from the Constitution of the State of Baden, in *Occupation and the Emergence of Two States, 1945-1961*, May 8, 1947, trans. Thomas Dunlap, accessed October 2015, EuroDocs.

comprehensive textbook series, the *Wege der Völker* books, appeared in classrooms across West Germany in late 1948.<sup>168</sup> These books, which were aimed at students in grades five through twelve, provided support for critical thinking and a more accurate narrative of German history. The textbooks gave teachers samples and ideas for group assignments, a new experiment in pedagogical practices, and provided complicated critical thinking questions for individual assessment.<sup>169</sup> The new methods of teaching history and civics introduced in *Wege der Völker* textbooks continued to appear in textbooks written for later generations of German students.

A key development of political and social studies education in the 1950s became known as *Zeitgeschichte*. Instruction in *Zeitgeschichte* encompassed a variety of topics in recent German history and current events around the world.<sup>170</sup> The study of recent history had been a part of German classrooms during occupation and into the early 1950s, but it later gained recognition as a separate subject. For example, the social studies curriculum in Hesse in 1957 required a detailed survey of the events of the Third Reich, World War II, and postwar eras.<sup>171</sup> Many local or state history curriculums required civics classes to analyze the most important current events or news briefs of the day. Unfortunately, just as some time periods are skimmed over or ignored in modern classrooms, some German students did not receive proper education in *Zeitgeschichte* that the government required. Official excuses given by teachers sound familiar: class trips had to be extended, material learned in previous school years needed review, or other time periods took up extra class time.<sup>172</sup> Despite these excuses, some teachers may have felt uncomfortable

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168 Puaca, 83.

169 Puaca, 84-85.

170 Puaca, 111.

171 Puaca, 139-140.

172 Puaca, 141.

confronting Germany's more recent past. Other teachers may have used these excuses to skirt around or resist the new German curriculum.

### **Extracurricular Programs and Youth Culture**

Clubs and organizations for children and young people played a large role in the lives of students under the Third Reich. Belonging to youth groups and clubs gave students a sense of security and provided an extra arena for re-education. After disbanding the Hitler Youth and similar organizations, the Allied occupiers realized that programs for students could be useful in the denazification process. Youth program could influence individual students and their culture to become more open and democratic.

One of these extracurricular programs for German students, the German Youth Ring (*Deutsche Jugendring*), came about from a desire to “overcome the unfortunate Hitler Youth spirit and the moral dissipation of the postwar period.”<sup>173</sup> Membership in this organization extended to any German teenager or young adult, regardless of faith, background, or city of residence.<sup>174</sup> The inclusive nature of new extracurricular clubs presented a unified image to German students. Belonging to an organization like the German Youth Ring could help young people expand their horizons by developing leadership skills, participating in extra educational courses, and improving their political skills.

In a public OMGUS bulletin, Alonzo G. Grace, emphasized the importance of using extracurricular programs in the re-education of youth. For Grace and many other occupying officials, the success of denazification could be measured by the character development of young people through clubs and organizations.<sup>175</sup> The nature of youth organizations had to be steered

173 German Youth Ring: Programmatic Leaflet.

174 German Youth Ring: Programmatic Leaflet.

175 Grace, 4.



away from the legacy of the Hitler Youth and other programs. OMGUS's vision for youth clubs included instilling liberal values, decreasing competitiveness, and encouraging cooperation among members.<sup>176</sup> To achieve these goals, German youth needed to step up among their peers as leaders of extracurricular activities. In the late 1940s, OMGUS began to sponsor programs to train German students in leadership roles. Youth conferences with leadership training courses began in earnest in Hesse in the summer of 1948.<sup>177</sup> To supplement their training, German youth and adult program leaders often observed the operations of other international organizations, such as the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations.<sup>178</sup> Involvement in youth organizations, especially in leadership positions, gave German students a sense of purpose and community in a divided nation with an uncertain future. Training programs offered by OMGUS and other military government organization also helped to spread democratic ideas among young people in Germany

Two popular forms of extracurricular activities were student government and student-run newspapers, both innovations encouraged by American occupiers. In the throes of denazification, American education experts heralded student government in schools as an excellent method to familiarize students with democracy.<sup>179</sup> Overworked teachers during the immediate postwar phase likely cared very little about organizing a student government organization, since they had to contend with a dire lack of materials and large class sizes. In the late 1940s, however, students began to clamor for their own school government systems. Individual student governments for schools became the norm, with fifty-two percent of *Volksschulen* in Hesse sponsoring a student

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176 Grace, 4.

177 Lam, 18.

178 Lam, 19.

179 Puaca, 45.

government organization by 1949.<sup>180</sup> In Berlin, an advanced form of student government, the RIAS-Schulfunk-Parlament, was formed to unite students from schools across the city, as well as teachers and administrators.<sup>181</sup> With student government, German youth could experiment with different levels of democracy and even learn proper parliamentary procedure. By the late 1950s, student newspapers developed as a natural outgrowth of student government. Students, especially in secondary schools, began to utilize newspapers in their schools to express their ideas to peers and to voice their opinions about perceived problems in their schools and community.<sup>182</sup>

Many reforms instituted in schools during denazification pointed to a growing acceptance of democratic ideals. Curriculum was freed from nationalistic and militaristic influences, and new German-authored textbooks became readily available to teachers and students. History and civics classes developed a new focus on political education and began to address the modern history of Germany. Unique programs were instituted under occupation and often continued under the Federal Republic, such as student exchange programs and a decrease in the use of corporal punishment. All of these reforms, while made with good intentions, produced mixed results and left behind a confusing legacy of denazification in education.

### **Successes of Denazification**

American and British occupiers likely wanted to see immediate positive changes from their denazification processes. This expectation only gave them disappointment; the successes of denazification would be seen in the long run instead of within a few short years. Though Germany's exterior had suffered from utter destruction, culture, social structures, and traditions

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180 Puaca, 62.

181 Puaca, 66.

182 Puaca, 125.

endured the hardships of war.<sup>183</sup> Changes to German society would occur, but these altered attitudes could only be observed a few decades after the end of denazification. Most of the successful reforms would not be made under occupation. Educational reforms that were implemented by the Federal Republic in the 1950s and 1960s generally had more of an effect than denazification reforms in the 1940s.<sup>184</sup>

Even as early as the 1950s, young people in Germany began to reject old notions of nationalism and militarism.<sup>185</sup> Many of the young adults who adopted more peaceful outlooks on politics had come of age and attended school during the chaotic era of denazification. These younger members of society also became politically active in their own ways, spearheading the popular protests movements in West Berlin and the Federal Republic in 1967 and 1968.<sup>186</sup> It would be far too simple to attribute this cultural change solely to reforms in the education system. Granted, history and political education made great strides during and after denazification. However, these changes in cultural attitudes likely arose through a combination of events. During this time, the German economy experienced a miraculous economic recovery, known as the *Wirtschaftswunder*. Job opportunities for young people became more plentiful, so youth had fewer reasons to desire nationalism or militarism in Europe.

The training of teachers also improved during denazification. The establishment of the *Deutsche Sporthochschule* for physical education teachers was just one example of the revamped training programs that appeared in Germany.<sup>187</sup> Education for all types of teachers changed after

183 Berghahn and Poiger, 10.

184 Puaca, 195.

185 Our Special Correspondent in West Germany, "Shadows across Germany."

186 Klimke, 103-104.

187 Dichter, 805.

the war. Each federal state could determine its own system for training teachers, but general trends indicated that new teachers began to gain more hands-on experience before receiving their certifications.<sup>188</sup> The profession of teaching also became more open to potential employees. As denazification continued, teaching became a less male-dominated profession, since so many German men had been killed during the war or were barred from returning to their jobs.<sup>189</sup> The teaching profession opened up more job opportunities for women. With this change, women who had lost husbands during the war or needed to support a family could find a job with some security and a reasonable income.

### **Failures of Denazification**

The initial failure of denazification was its rejection by the German people. German citizens were tired of the war, its legacy, and the humiliating psychological effects of occupation by the victors. Under the Federal Republic, most formal programs of denazification quietly died out. Former members of the German army, the *Wehrmacht*, spread myths about the supposed innocence of the German people and the idea of a defensive war.<sup>190</sup> For most Germans, this version of history was much easier to digest than the gruesome reality. Since denazification lifted the veil on Germany's wrongdoings during World War II, most Germans rejected its policies to avoid shattering their worldview.

A more tangible failure of denazification was the ability of former Nazi officials to return to their old jobs or to obtain new positions of power. By the early 1950s, less care was given to the background of civil servants during the hiring process.<sup>191</sup> With the lowering of standards for

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188 Puaca, 92.

189 Puaca, 38.

190 Perry, 307-308.

191 Garner, 37.

government jobs, former Nazi Party members had the opportunity to return to their former places of employment or find new jobs in local, state, or even federal governments. Additionally, when denazification tribunals had been researching the backgrounds of suspected former Nazis, they often had no resources to fact-check information provided on the *Fragebogen*.<sup>192</sup> Teachers who had been involved with the National Socialist movement could easily rejoin the profession by providing false information on these questionnaires. The backgrounds of these teachers certainly influenced how and what they taught during and after denazification. Many of them were likely uncomfortable lecturing on the negative aspects of the Third Reich that they had served just a few years previously.<sup>193</sup> Eventually, former Nazi officials would age out of government positions, but the decades following World War II saw many former National Socialists return to making government decisions.

In the eyes of American officials, the continuance of the traditional “tracking” system used by German schools could be construed as a failure of denazification. During the Weimar era in Germany, two main secondary schools provided education to students after grade five. The elite *Gymnasium* only admitted five percent of its applicants, while the common *Volksschule* was the only form of higher education available to over eighty percent of German students.<sup>194</sup> In the early 1950s, individual states in the Federal Republic reorganized their education systems, though most of these structures still stratified students based on their grade school achievements.<sup>195</sup> Getting accepted into *Gymnasium* versus attending *Volksschule* greatly impacted the future of young students from a very young age. This stratification largely

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192 Garner, 43.

193 Perry, 306.

194 Puaca, 19.

195 Puaca, 42.

continues in modern Germany, with students even in grade one “tracked” into certain classes that determine their futures.

### **Implications for Germany’s Future**

Initially, denazification efforts left a bad impression on the German people. Chancellor Adenauer addressed denazification and occupation in his first address to the Federal Republic’s parliament: “The government of the Federal Republic, in the belief that many have subjectively atoned for a guilt that was not heavy, is determined . . . to put the past behind us.”<sup>196</sup> Most Germans grew weary of denazification tribunals and procedures after three years of occupation, with the weight of memory pressing on their shoulders. Though Germans preferred to leave their Nazi past behind, they could not deny that the denazification processes put forth during occupation had impacted their nation, for better or for worse. The results of denazification extended to every corner of society, including education.

Denazification and reform in German schools had important consequences for young generations of German citizens. With new types of political education practiced in schools, students graduated and entered the adult realm with a more nuanced political understanding than their parents. These students had usually experienced or observed democracy through student government or local politics. However, many of them lacked a complete understanding of the events of World War II and Germany’s role in the conflict. Young students often noticed that their older relatives, or even their teachers, seemed reluctant to discuss the Third Reich, despite the required history curriculum in their classrooms.<sup>197</sup> These young adults may have later realized that they had been denied the opportunity to learn the truth about their country’s past, but their education had at least prepared them to vocalize their beliefs.

<sup>196</sup> Judt, 61.

<sup>197</sup> Puaca, 198.

As the children of the postwar generation came of age, they began to question their country's role in World War II, the Holocaust, and their own parents' personal histories. Discovering the bitter truth, rather than the abbreviated or glossy version they had learned in school, drove many university students and young adults to take to the streets of West Germany in 1968. The international and more democratic perspective of history and civics education that the protesters had gained during their education enabled them to connect to other protest movements in the world, engage with critical political issues, and challenge traditional authority.<sup>198</sup> The actions of these students and their hope for a better future exemplified the impact of denazification reform in education. Thanks in part to the new structure and curriculum of German schools, young people felt empowered to challenge the status quo and to take a stand in the political arena.

### **Conclusions**

As American and British occupiers trickled out of Germany between 1948 and 1950, many saw their work as unfinished or as a waste of time. In many areas, denazification appeared to only have a limited effect. Other people, such as General Lucius Clay, took a more positive approach. Reflecting on his experiences during German denazification, General Clay stated, "The results of an educational program are intangible and almost impossible to evaluate immediately," predicting that Germans themselves would play the largest role in shaping the future of the Federal Republic.<sup>199</sup> The general's observation and prediction became true in the coming years. West Germany made great strides in improving its education system to benefit the younger generation.

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<sup>198</sup> Puaca, 198-199.

<sup>199</sup> Puaca, 193.

The attempts that the British and American occupiers, and later the Germans, made to reform the education system in West Germany completely altered schooling and pedagogical techniques. In the short term, denazification could be construed as a failure, since many former Nazis could return to their old positions and were not completely excluded from society. However, after a few more decades, denazification became a success story, especially in the education system. New curriculum, new textbooks, and new pedagogical methods of teaching helped German schools accomplish both modernization and denazification. Denazification also gave society in West Germany the chance to move forward more effectively into the future. Only time would allow many deep-rooted beliefs and practices to change, but the initial stages of denazification were steps in the right direction.



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