

Germany's Past Contested: The Soviet–American Conflict in Berlin over History Curriculum Reform, 1945–48

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Berlin, a focal point for Cold War tensions among the occupation powers, left to history an exceedingly rare and little-known instance of Allied cooperation in curriculum reform. In the midst of frequent ideological clashes, education officials on the Allied Kommandatura Education Committee (AKEC) concluded an agreement in the summer of 1948 on the formation of the postwar history curriculum for a new generation of German youth. The divided city thus remained the only area within the entire occupation zone where Soviet and American education officers established a dialogue over a specific dimension of school knowledge. The proceedings of the AKEC in Berlin and the subsequent accord on the teaching plans for German history offer a unique perspective on the clash between Soviet and American ideological interpretations of modern German history. The theme of this study is the nature of this dialogue, comprising both conflict and a surprising accommodation by both sides. The related issue of school structure, although important for the examination of postwar educational reform in Berlin, is beyond the scope of the investigation.¹

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¹ Karl-Hans Füssl and Christian Kubina, "Educational Reform between Politics and Pedagogics: The Development of Education in Berlin after World War II," *History of Education Quarterly* 25 (Spring/Summer 1985): 133–53; and Marion Klewitz, *Berliner Einheitsschule, 1945–51: Entstehung, Durchführung, und Revision des Reformgesetzes von 1947/48* (Berlin, 1971), 82–123.

Educational Needs and Political Realities in the Immediate Postwar Period

The Soviet Military Government already controlled Berlin for seven weeks before the American forces arrived in the city on the Fourth of July in 1945. During that period, the Soviets worked steadily to piece together a school system bearing their own stamp. About a quarter of all Berlin schoolteachers and school administrators were immediately removed from their posts for allegedly remaining loyal to the ideas of National Socialism.² From the ranks of the German Communist party (KPD), which in April 1946, joined the Berlin SPD (*Sozialistische Partei Deutschlands*) to form the SED (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*), the Soviet occupation officers appointed a new cadre of school politicians to fill influential posts in municipal government.

Communist party officials hastily filled the office of governing mayor (*Regierender Bürgermeister*) and school administrative positions in each of Berlin's twenty districts. Until the defeat of the SED, in the last citywide municipal election, 20 October 1946, the troika of German communists—Ernst Wildangel, Otto Winzer, and Paul Wandel—directed the Main School Office (*Hauptschulamt*) and the Public School Office (*Volkshilfsamt*), the two local school administrative organs. The three men were among many German school administrators from the Soviet zone who were active in the National Committee for a Free Germany, an organization formed in the Soviet Union in 1942 for German socialists seeking asylum from the Third Reich. The Soviets groomed members of the group for the eventual Communist reconstruction of German society after the war.³

The Soviet strategy of molding the Berlin school curriculum along strictly Marxist-Leninist principles did not allow challenges from traditionalist German educators. Moscow enacted a unified school agenda in East Berlin without the hindrance of multiparty strife which later marked school political dialogue in West Berlin. For the Soviets, the imposition of control over German education did not create ideological difficulties. They simply linked their plan to the socialist school tradition that had

² Office of the Military Government for the United States, Berlin Element (hereafter cited as OMGBerlin), *Four Year Report: 1945–1949*, 102, cited in James Tent, *Mission on the Rhine: Reeducation and Denazification in American-Occupied Germany* (Chicago, 1983), 239. All of the OMGUS and OMGBerlin documents for this research are in collections at both the Landesarchiv in Berlin and the National Archives in Suitland, Maryland. OMGUS denotes the administration of the American military government in control of the entire U.S. zone of occupation in Germany.

³ Karl-Heinz Günther and Gottfried Uhlig, *Geschichte der Schule in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1945–1968* (Berlin, 1969), 14.

flourished in Berlin during the Weimar Republic under the Union of Radical School Reformers (URSR), led by Paul Oestreich, Franz Hilker, Otto Koch, Fritz Karsen, Siegfried Kawerau, and Kurt Löwenstein. Indeed, the SED school program bore strong similarities to the main aspirations of the URSR.⁴

Heading the Communist agenda was the *Einheitsschule*, or unified school, which departed from the class-based German tradition of multi-track education and the exclusive hold of the elite *Gymnasium* over entrance to the university. The school organized an eight-year elementary school, offering the same core academic preparation to all pupils. Students took further study either in the *Berufsschule* (professional school) for positions in trade, manufacturing, or farming or in the *Oberschule* (a term for secondary education retained from National Socialist times) for three years of university preparation.

The French, British, and American occupiers, in contrast to the Soviets in the eastern zone, felt the pressure of conservative politicians to preserve the *Gymnasium* from Weimar. In keeping with their own traditional ties to elite secondary education, the British and French education officers did not express serious intentions of changing the structure of the Berlin *Gymnasium*.⁵ Of the four powers, the Soviets and the Americans were the most insistent that the elitist German *Gymnasium* be abolished. The Americans shared with the Soviets a strong faith in the power of education as a tool for the denazification of German youth.⁶ Underlying this general assumption were two divergent cultural perspectives on how to administer the program of democratization in German schools.⁷ Conflict between Soviet and American ideals for

⁴ An East German perspective on the reform ideas of the Union of Radical School Reformers and their influence on the German Democratic Republic can be found in Karl-Heinz Günther et al., *Geschichte der Erziehung* (Berlin, 1976), 557–61, 631.

⁵ F. Roy Willis, *The French in Germany, 1945–1949* (Stanford, Calif., 1962), 13–17; Wilhelm Richter, *Berliner Schulgeschichte: Von den mittelalterlichen Anfängen bis zum Ende der Weimarer Republik* (Berlin, 1981), 23; and Arthur Hearnden, *Education in the Two Germanies* (Oxford, 1974), 31–34.

⁶ Karl-Ernst Bungenstab, *Umerziehung zur Demokratie! Reeducation-Politik im Bildungswesen der US-Zone, 1945–1949* (Düsseldorf, [1970]), 28. The George Zook Education Mission to Germany, funded by the U.S. State Department in 1946, associated the classical *Gymnasium* with the forces of reaction and aristocratic privilege in German society. See U.S. State Department, *The United States Education Mission to Germany* (Washington, D.C., 1946), 22.

⁷ The broadly stated Potsdam provision from August 1945 on the democratization of education directed the Allies to “eliminate Nazi and militarist doctrines and to make possible the successful development of democratic ideals.” The general language of the Potsdam Accords thereby avoided any specific discussion on how the Allies might develop democratic education through school structure, curriculum, or teaching reforms beyond the requisite denazification measures. See Louis Snyder, ed., *Documents of German History* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1958), 487.

democratic education intensified in the heady political atmosphere of postwar Berlin.

The history curriculum in Berlin secondary schools became one of several hot issues among representatives to the AKEC over the first three years of the occupation. The dialogue was in some ways a purely academic exercise. During the brief tenure of the AKEC, history as a school subject was almost entirely absent from the formal curriculum then practiced in many of Berlin's classrooms.⁸ During this period, and for some time afterward, the lingering aftereffects of one of the most destructive wars in human history scarcely allowed the introduction of American-inspired school reform plans.⁹

The strength of the Soviet commitment to reconstruct Berlin schools was brought to the attention of Paul F. Shafer, the chairman of the American delegation to the AKEC and the director of the Education and Religious Affairs Branch for OMGBerlin. Shafer brought to his Berlin post several years of prewar experience as district superintendent of elementary education in the Los Angeles public schools. In his first meeting with the Soviet Military Government in late July 1945, Shafer was surprised to learn that Moscow had placed five fully trained education officers in Berlin to supervise city schools. Captain Shafer was the only education officer to represent OMGBerlin during this time.¹⁰ It was not until 1948 that OMGUS raised the Education Branch to even divisional status, a situation that was quite the opposite in the Soviet camp. Furthermore, the Americans operated at a distinct disadvantage since the only large textbook printing operation to survive the bombing, subsequently known as Volk und Wissen, was in the Soviet sector. Facing a severely limited staff and lacking a strong U.S. commitment to educational reform in Germany, Shafer attended his first AKEC meeting with colleagues Sergei Sudakov (USSR), T. R. M. Creighton (England), and Monsieur Henri Duval (France) on 13 August 1945.

The AKEC and the History Curriculum

The Allies were in full agreement on one essential point regarding the reconstruction of postwar education in Berlin. Berlin schoolchildren,

⁸ The *Zeugnisse* (grade reports) from Werner Vathke, a former pupil from Oberschule V in the Britz section of Berlin-Neukölln, revealed that there was no teaching of history in his school until the 1949–50 school year. Vathke is now professor of history didactics at the Free University of Berlin.

⁹ For illuminating records of school conditions in Berlin after the fall of the Third Reich, see *Gutachten der Gertraudenschule*, 3 May 1946, from the archives of the Ernst Moritz Arndt Gymnasium in Berlin-Dahlem and reports submitted by schoolmaster Erich Jauernig from the Schadowschule in Zehlendorf recorded in *Sitzungen bei den Amerikanern*, 24 Oct. 1945 and 27 Mar. 1946, Rep. 210, Acc. 2691, Nr. 1591, Landesarchiv Berlin.

¹⁰ OMGBerlin, "Historical Report," 1 July 1945–30 June 1946, 3.

many of whom had joined the obligatory activities of Hitler youth organizations and had had direct experiences with Hitler's war in the *Flakdienst* (duty in anti-aircraft artillery) or as *Luftwaffenhilfer* (support services for the air forces), were poisoned by Nazi ideology. The re-education of Berlin youth would require a new educational structure and a new corps of teachers imbued with a democratic spirit. Within these highly controversial reforms, a history curriculum was to take form which would cast a new set of interpretations on Germany's troubled past. The Soviet and American delegations to the AKEC, in particular, brought to the conference table competing visions of how history as school subject might contribute to the democratization of German youth.¹¹

The Allied Kommandatura assumed that history instruction occupied a central position in the Nazi school curriculum. Moreover, the governing body believed that history teachers were purveyors of Nazi race consciousness in the classroom. An early AK directive affirmed these two elements behind the Allied *Nazibild* (image of Nazism) in the fall of 1945 by suspending history instruction in Berlin schools during the 1945–46 school year “owing to the fact that the teaching of history in Hitler's Germany was full of falsifications, based on race theory, militarism, and national chauvinism directed by Hitler's leaders to prepare the population for criminal war and also because members of the NSDAP [Nazi party] prevailed among the teachers of history.”¹²

The denazification of the Berlin teaching staff resulted in a shortage of 105 secondary school teachers in the American sector.¹³ In 1946, the majority of history teachers in Berlin who survived the denazification program instructed pupils in many instances without textbooks, paper, or writing instruments. On this account, the Allies allowed the provisional use of Weimar textbooks and teaching plans in anticipation of a more comprehensive revision of the history curriculum.¹⁴ The decision caused some embarrassment for Shafer and his staff. In the fall of 1945, book plates from Columbia University's collection of Weimar textbooks arrived in Munich, Bonn, and Cologne for printing. Shafer later admitted that some of the history texts which found their way to Berlin schools contained material glorifying the Prussian military. The development

¹¹ The French and British education officers assumed minor roles in the AKEC debate over the new postwar history curriculum for Berlin schools. Their involvement is not addressed in this work.

¹² OMGBerlin, AKEC, “First Year Report,” 20 July 1946, 4/111/6.

¹³ OMGUS, “Monthly Report,” 1 May 1946, i.

¹⁴ OMGUS and Stephanie Krenn, “Influence of National Socialist Ideology on German Textbooks and Readers,” 1949, 2–4. Copy found in Georg Eckert Institute in Braunschweig, document WH-H793.

TABLE 1
Broad Content Outlines for the Teaching of German History
The Central Administration of the Public School Office (Berlin)
1 July 1946

<i>Class</i>	<i>Course Content</i>
One through Four:	<i>Heimatkunde</i> (local history)
Five and Nine:	Pre- and ancient history
Six and Ten:	The Middle Ages
Seven and Eleven:	The modern age to 1815
Eight and Twelve:	Recent history: 1815–present

Source: Zentralverwaltung für Volksbildung; and Paul Wandel, *Richtlinien für den Unterricht in Deutscher Geschichte: Die Neueste Zeit* (Berlin, 1946).

incensed Sudakov and the rest of the Soviet delegation. OMGBerlin subsequently removed the books.¹⁵

The Nuremberg trials and the intense public discussion on German responsibility for Nazi aggression and war crimes sparked the AKEC's first substantial round of negotiations on the reform of the history curriculum. In early 1946, the AKEC called for "instruction in the revelations of the Nazi government" from the trials in the classrooms of Berlin. One teacher from each of the four occupation sectors was to be selected for attendance at the proceedings.¹⁶ Shafer reported, somewhat misleadingly, that all Berlin schoolchildren, using newspapers as texts, participated in lessons on the origins and principles of the trials. This kind of instruction, he wrote, contributed to "the anti-fascistic education" of the young.¹⁷ It is noteworthy that at about this same time, Shafer followed a tight schedule of speaking engagements with teachers in Steglitz and Zehlendorf. His talks stressed the contrast between "personality development and social maturity" in American education as opposed to academic achievement in German schools.¹⁸

On the potentially controversial subject of history course content, school politicians in the Soviet zone assumed a stronger leadership role while the SED still ruled greater Berlin. With the weight of Soviet initiative

¹⁵ OMGBerlin, "Historical Report," 1 July 1945–30 June 1946, 5/35-2/3.

¹⁶ OMGBerlin, AKEC *Proceedings*, 28 Jan. 1946.

¹⁷ OMGBerlin, "Historical Report," 5/35-2/3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

behind them, Paul Wandel of the *Volksbildungsamt* and a group of Berlin teachers, mostly from the Soviet zone, published the first postwar *Richtlinien* (broad course outlines) for the history curriculum on 1 July 1946. The document became the basis for talks leading up to the Allied ratification of teaching plans for history about two years later. Wandel retained the cyclical approach to content from Weimar, but placed a much heavier emphasis on nineteenth- and twentieth-century history. The Soviet teaching plans submitted to the AKEC set down five content areas (see table 1).

The Wandel plan affirmed a joint Soviet–American view on the AKEC. The denazification of the history curriculum, so thought Sudakov and Shafer, rested on a new approach to historical time. Gone were the traditional curriculum of the *Gymnasium* and its devotion to classical and medieval learning which took up at least half of the course work in history.¹⁹ Pupils formed in the consciousness of the new German democracy needed a more thorough study of historical process, referring less to Athens and Rome and more to the modern forces of nationalism and militarism which made Nazism possible in the twentieth century. Wandel introduced the *Richtlinien* on recent history some weeks before authorizing the release of the teaching plans on the ancient and medieval periods. The *Volksbildungsamt* left no doubts in the minds of readers concerning its orientation toward Germany's past in the new history curriculum: "Special weight will be given to the facts which were falsified by National Socialism or silenced with propagandistic intent."²⁰

The *Richtlinien* from 1946, reflecting the influence of the SED in Berlin's political circles, expounded on a Marxist interpretation of modern German history. The puzzling problem of Germany resulted from the union of monopoly capitalism with the feudal Junkers. The fatal pact led the German people to two imperialistic wars and national ruin. The pupil must come to the realization, Wandel insisted, that only a turning away from National Socialism's aggressive imperialism and militarism would secure the future of democracy in Germany. To this end, the course outlines advised teachers to call upon numerous resources for history instruction, above all the *Enthüllungen* (revelations) of the Nuremberg trials.²¹

¹⁹ For an examination of curriculum traditions in the *Gymnasium* before World War I, see Friedrich Paulsen's *German Education: Past and Present* (New York, 1908). According to the commemorative history of Arndt Gymnasium in Berlin-Dahlem, the content divisions set down by the Prussian Ministry of Education in 1901 remained largely unchanged until the early 1970s with the introduction of *politische Weltkunde* (world political studies). See Arndt Gymnasium, *75 Jahre Arndt Gymnasium Dahlem* (Berlin, 1983), 19.

²⁰ Zentralverwaltung für Volksbildung and Paul Wandel, *Richtlinien für den Unterricht in Deutscher Geschichte: Die Neuesten Zeit* (Berlin, 1946), 3.

²¹ Zentralverwaltung, 1946, 62.

The Soviet reform of the history curriculum encountered serious skepticism in the American delegation to the AKEC. Ralph Strebel, the chief of the curriculum office for OMGBerlin, advised Paul Shafer that the Berlin schools could not use the Soviet teaching plans because they were not in accord with the principles behind Allied occupation policy. Strebel's critique, one of the sharpest from the American delegation, attacked the Marxist conception of history: "We cannot accept the oversimplification of history which recognizes the economic basis as the only influence on the development of society. Ideas, desires for prestige, political structure, religious motivation, and tradition are all potent forces shaping society at any time, although at certain times one may have greater influence than the others, which includes economic factors."²²

A closer examination of the wording in Strebel's memorandum shows frustration over Soviet influence in the Berliner *Magistrat*. The American adviser could find nothing positive in the Soviet teaching plans. He wrote, for example, that the SED reform contained only "elements of danger." The following brief commentary also foreshadowed the life-adjustment curriculum which appeared in the United States during the 1950s: "The whole approach to the Russian plan of teaching is psychologically unsound. Their [*sic*] program is organized on a logical basis, starting with ancient history in the fifth and ninth grades, respectively. This results in a dry, dull and abstract superimposition of factual material wholly unrelated to life. It is quite characteristic throughout the entire program that the last emphasis is placed on the ethical and spiritual bases of history."²³

Strebel's ideas might have meant little within the larger scheme of Berlin school politics except for the fact that he was one of Shafer's closest consultants. His insistence on associating the study of history in public schools with the life experience of the pupil also found support in the conclusions of the U.S. Social Studies Committee sent to Germany in 1947 to frame recommendations for the development of the social sciences in the German school curriculum. The group, chaired by Burr Phillips from the University of Wisconsin, maintained that the study of history in Germany was too bound up in "philosophical and mystical speculation" and "an exaggerated reverence for ancient languages" with the outcome that children were ill prepared to face the realities of the twentieth century.²⁴ Beyond these appeals to a more presentist orientation

²² OMGBerlin, Strebel to Shafer, 30 Aug. 1946, 4/11-2/35.

²³ OMGBerlin, Strebel memorandum, undated, 4/11-2/35.

²⁴ United States Social Studies Committee, *Report*, 1947, 36-37. Copy found in the Burr Phillips Collection at the Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison.

in school studies was Cold War language which sharply defined Soviet–American school political relations in the beleaguered city. Accordingly, Strebel suggested that OMGBerlin “go on the offensive, substituting constructive action for negative resistance” and further “employ the services of one or more democratically-minded German historians to start at once, under *our* supervision in the development of *our* program for the teaching of history.”²⁵

The objection most closely shared by Strebel with Shafer’s other advisors, like Allen King (on leave from the Cleveland public schools and president of the National Council of the Social Studies in 1943), James Eagan (a religious affairs specialist for the Education and Religious Affairs branch of OMGUS), and Mildred English (president of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and head of the OMGUS section on school textbooks), centered on the Marxist principle that economics was the engine of historical change.²⁶ Their opposition extended to the treatment of the causes and effects of the Nazi state. Eagan, ever the optimist, said that the SED plan concentrated too much on the negative developments of German history. Instead of devoting so much time to knocking down Nazi philosophers and the heritage of Bismarck and Nietzsche, as the Soviets had done, Eagan wanted to focus on “the very real achievements and liberal thought of Germany’s past.” He held up Carl Schurz in America and his opposition to slavery as a sterling example of what a German “in a free environment can do.”²⁷

Fortunately, someone in OMGUS saw fit to go beyond Eagan’s ethnocentric recommendation to specify examples of liberal opposition in modern German history as guides for textbook publishing. Title 8 of Military Government Regulations (MGR-8), issued in February 1948, stated that it was not enough to eradicate Nazism and Prussianism from history texts. German textbook writers needed democratic models from their own historical tradition, including the liberals of 1848 who struggled for constitutional government, the liberal opposition to Bismarck, the Göttingen Seven, the liberalism of the Weimar Constitution, and Gustav Streseman’s efforts on behalf of international understanding.²⁸ East German history texts dismissed many of these events as veiled supports for the existing imperialist order.²⁹

The Americans found themselves in a contradictory position. The American delegation called for the consideration of liberal traditions in

²⁵ Strebel’s emphases, OMGBerlin, Strebel memorandum, 4/112/35.

²⁶ OMGBerlin, Eagan, King, and English memoranda, 1946 and 1947, 4/2-2/35.

²⁷ OMGBerlin, Eagan to Shafer, undated, 4/11-2/35.

²⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Germany, 1947–1949* (Washington, 1950), 574.

²⁹ A. W. Jefimow, *Geschichte der Neuzeit, 1789–1870* (Berlin, 1949), 156; Wolfgang Bleyer et al., *Geschichte 9* (Berlin, 1987), 87, 94, 98.

German history and, at the same time, criticized the placement of German history as an independent subject in the Soviet curriculum reform. In this sense, the negotiations between Sudakov and Shafer brought out important differences in the curricular conceptions of the two occupation powers. The Soviet answer to “twelve years of Nazi falsification of history” consisted of Wandel’s cyclical teaching plan from 1946. In opposition to this scheme, Shafer advanced the social studies in which German history would be studied in association with psychology, sociology, economics, geography, civics, and world history.³⁰

The extended political tensions between the SED and SPD hindered further negotiations in the AKEC over curriculum reform. The election of the SPD politician Siegfried Nestriepke to the leadership of the *Volksbildungsamt* in October 1946 signified a new phase in the SED/SPD struggle for political control of the Berlin school system. The end of Soviet dominance over the *Volksbildungsamt* came at a time when the four powers were engaged in a host of Cold War political and economic issues. The reconstruction of the history curriculum receded further into the background. The AKEC did not revive the issue until May 1947 when it opted for the creation of a history subcommittee to accelerate an Allied meeting-of-the-minds on the subject. The full delegation of the AKEC was so deeply engrossed at this time in the legislation for the *Einheitschule* that it could not directly address the history curriculum. Progress was extremely slow. The subcommittee was not active until the following December.

Consequently, the AKEC occupied itself with the printing and distribution of school textbooks on a piecemeal basis through the early months of 1948 without any definitive teaching plans. The uncertain situation widened the split between the Soviets and the western Allies. No longer under consideration was a joint four-power textbook project initiated during the early days of the occupation. The OMGUS brass apparently took up Eagan’s proposal for an American-controlled history textbook writing committee. Plans were underway in the American zone in late 1947 for the selection of twenty-four Berlin classroom teachers to begin a new textbook series.³¹ The Soviets followed suit by appointing a group of three professors from Moscow University to translate a Russian history text for use in Berlin schools.³²

³⁰ OMGBerlin, AKEC, Memos by Shafer, English, and King, 4/11-2/35; U.S. Social Studies Committee, *Report*, 1947, 32–34.

³¹ OMGUS, Reorientation Fund, undated, 4/15-2/140.

³² OMGBerlin, AKEC, Mar. 1948, 4/11-1/3; *Protokolle der Amerikanersitzung*, 21 Dec. 1948, Rep. 210, Acc. 2691, No. 1591, Landesarchiv Berlin.

The Cold War split between the two powers increased through acrimonious debates over school literature. On 25 August 1947, his last day as chairman of the American delegation, Paul Shafer mounted a strong campaign against the Soviets for distributing copies of Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer*, Jack London's *Otto the Pagan*, and a collection of speeches by Joseph Stalin. The foreword of each work, Shafer asserted, was full of criticism and propaganda against the western democracies.³³ Sergei Sudakov responded sharply: "Mark Twain ridiculed hypocrisy and bigotry; and this, in the opinion of the U.S. delegation, is an attack against the capitalist class. Jack London characterized the contradictory traits of the social structure, but this again does not suit the U.S. delegation. The U.S. wants to place the entire committee in the position of a suppressor of classical literature."³⁴

The negotiations deteriorated further in March 1948 when the publishing house Volk und Wissen released Ernst Hoffman's book commemorating the one hundredth anniversary of the German revolution. *Die Deutsche Revolution* appeared in Berlin schools with the blessing of the Soviet Military Government, but without the clearance of the AKEC. The new leader of the American contingent, John Sala, demanded the immediate arrest and trial of Hoffman and the publisher. He based his charge on several sentences in the volume which suggested that the United States had taken the place of the recently defeated fascists in leading the fight "against progressive development in the world." Hoffman also attacked the political parties in the western zone for allegedly taking instructions from "foreign imperialists" to split Germany into servile individual states.³⁵

The Soviet colonel Sergei Sudakov snapped that Sala and his allies were well aware of the reactionary nature of their presence in Germany. The author was only speaking the truth.³⁶ Up to this point in the Occupation, four-power agreements banned overt criticisms by German nationals of any of the Allied authorities. Hoffman's action was in violation of these agreements and therefore represented a significant shift in what the Soviets would permit.

In this sensitive political atmosphere, the AKEC once again took up the revision of Berlin's teaching plans for history in early 1948. The three-year absence of an officially sanctioned history curriculum for the city was an important motivation for reaching an Allied accord on history

³³ OMGBerlin, AKEC *Proceedings*, 25 Aug. 1947, 4/16-1/24.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 15 Dec. 1947, 4/16-1/28.

³⁵ Ernst Hoffman, *Die Deutsche Revolution* (Berlin, 1948), cited in John Sala letter to AK, 1 Apr. 1948, 4/16-1/31.

³⁶ OMGBerlin, AKEC, *Proceedings*, 12 Mar. 1948, 4/16-1/31.

as school subject. The parents of school-age children in Berlin had an important voice in this matter, especially in the western zones. Parental groups showered OMGUS and local officials in the school administrative offices for each *Bezirk*, or district, with letters demanding a return to a full class schedule. Schoolmaster Erich Jauernig from the Schadowschule in Zehlendorf noted strong parental complaints as early as February 1946, stemming from a concern that pupils were not being given enough homework. Too many pupils, some parents believed, did not devote enough time to academic work and could be seen “hanging around” the streets.³⁷ These parents demanded a swifter “return to normalcy” in the schools, even though schools were barely equipped in many cases to handle the already heavy pressure placed on the staff and its meager resources.

Joining the dialogue for a stepped-up reconstruction of school life was the Combined Conference of the Main School Office and District School Administrators. At a meeting in late January 1948, the group issued a unanimous motion with AKEC support calling for the introduction of history teaching “as soon as possible.” The conference strongly advised that instructional materials for history be prepared for the entire city in a unified effort involving Berlin educators and the four powers. The laudable recommendation would enjoy a brief hearing, but quickly faded from the scene with the gathering storm of the Cold War.³⁸

The AKEC stepped up talks in May on the teaching plans for history in classes five through twelve. There was a sense of urgency in the negotiations because of the political battles leading up to the ratification of the *Einheitsschulreform* in the Berlin Assembly. Sala, Shabalov, and their colleagues on the AKEC wanted to seal an agreement for the history curriculum soon after the inauguration of the *Einheitsschule*. The Allied Kommandatura signed the Berlin School Law on 1 June 1948. Seventeen days later the representatives on the AKEC signed the final draft of a rare four-power pact on history curriculum reform.

This *Teaching Plan for History Instruction in Berlin Schools* departed significantly from the Marxist-Leninist rhetoric which filled the 1946 history *Richtlinien* of Paul Wandel and the SED. The AKEC toned down most references to western imperialism which Wandel earlier identified as the major cause for Hitler’s rise to power. Furthermore, the document did not convey a sense of the historical tension between capitalist and socialist worldviews. The new teaching plans were written to preserve a temporary ideological neutrality in school affairs between the

³⁷ *Festschrift der Schadowschule* (Berlin-Zehlendorf, 1965), 27.

³⁸ OMGUS, Letter from *Volksbildungsamt* to AKEC, 6 Feb. 1948, 4/11-1/10.

Soviet zone and the western Allies. Each of the signatories could safely draw its own school political agenda out of the generalized teaching plans without confronting opposition from another occupation power.³⁹

The Soviet and American education officers had agreed throughout the often testy negotiations that the traditional history curriculum of German secondary schools devoted an inordinate amount of instructional time to the ancient and medieval periods. The AKEC set down content divisions from grades five through twelve with the assumption that pupils should be given greater exposure to economic and political problems from the twentieth century. The plan integrated elements of the multi-disciplinary approach of the American social studies with the economic dimensions of historical change so central to Soviet history instruction. A combination of social sciences and history crowned the Allied curriculum for the last year of studies in the twelfth grade. Note that table 2 includes excerpts from the Allied Teaching Plans with special attention given to the content outlines for the unit on National Socialism in class eleven and the social sciences in class twelve.

Gegenwartskunde, a study of current affairs, was introduced at the end of each school year beginning in class six and continuing through the twelfth year. The AKEC directed that important “questions of the day” be initiated in answer to a long German tradition of maintaining strict academic boundaries between the study of historical eras and the present. Pupils in grade six, for instance, followed an examination of the Thirty Years’ War by studying current problems of national economy (*Volkswirtschaft*) and trade. The same pupils also discussed the responsibilities of parents and children regarding school attendance as well as standards of behavior for children at home and in school. The suggestions were dear to the hearts of American education officers. The latter activity, almost unheard of in German school tradition, would challenge the ascendent position of the German family’s “private virtues” over school life.⁴⁰

The goal was to sweep away the Nazi race cult and Hitler’s distortions of history in the classrooms of Germany and to replace them with an education centering on the development of democratic youth capable of independent judgment. The teaching plans, like Paul Wandel’s *Richtlinien* from two years before, repeatedly mentioned the necessity of young Germans to struggle with the cruel legacy of the Nazi era. Through the

³⁹ Allied Kommandatura, *Lehrplan für den Geschichtsunterricht an den Berliner Schulen* (Berlin, 1948), 2–6.

⁴⁰ AK, *Lehrplan*, 16; Ralf Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany* (New York, 1967), 313–14.

TABLE 2
The Allied Kommandatura's Teaching Plans for
History Instruction in Berlin Schools, 1948
Content Divisions for Grades Five through Twelve

<i>Cycle One: Grades Five through Eight</i>	
5	Local History, legends from antiquity
6	Ancient History and the Middle Ages to the Thirty Years' War
7	The Age of Absolutism to the Revolution of 1848
8	Recent history from 1848 to 1945
 <i>Cycle Two: Grades Nine through Twelve</i>	
9	Prehistory, antiquity, and the Middle Ages
10	The late Middle Ages and the modern age to 1815
11	From the Congress of Vienna to the present
a.	The Nazi dictatorship
1.	The causes for Hitler's rise to power
2.	Preparations for war
a.	Nazi domestic politics
b.	Cultural measures of the Third Reich
c.	The establishment of a war economy
d.	Hitler's foreign policy
3.	The Second World War
a.	Hitler's imperialist goals
b.	Military campaigns to Stalingrad
c.	Cruel plunder and mass executions of populations in occupied countries
d.	Forced labor and the deportation of workers from many European countries into German-fascist slavery
1.	Concentration and extermination camps
e.	The pact of the democratic powers
f.	Conferences in Moscow, Teheran, and Yalta
g.	The opposition movement and the partisans
h.	Unconditional surrender and the end of the Third Reich
b.	<i>Gegenwartskunde</i> (closing unit on current affairs)
12	The Social Sciences
a.	The development of a historical view
1.	Historical sources, their academic value and meaning
2.	Related sciences of history: anthropology, ethnology, philosophy, archeology and sociology
3.	The changing relationship between facts and theoretical conclusions in historical research.
4.	Historical schools of thought
b.	State forms and theories of state
c.	Religion, philosophy, and worldview in historical change.
d.	The development of justice
e.	Important social and economic formations in the history of the human race
1.	Slave economy of the ancient world, feudal economic order, early capitalism, industrial capitalism, monopoly capitalism, the land question, and the world peace movement
f.	The role of the individual personality and the masses in history
1.	The study of population masses in history
a.	The worker is the fundamental creator of history
g.	The position of women in society
h.	Closure: A cross section of historical epochs studied through the interaction of economic, political, social, and religious forces

Source: AK, *Lehrplan für den Geschichtsunterricht an den Berliner Schulen* (Berlin, 1948).

“principle of objectivity” in historical studies and the “spirit of democracy,” the planners assumed that pupils would be able to confront the truth about the causes and effects of the German catastrophe.⁴¹ Again, as the plans for *Gegenwartskunde* in classes eight and twelve revealed, the Nuremberg trials were touted as one of the most powerful teaching tools for achieving a democratic reorientation in the classroom.⁴²

The AKEC's *Lehrplan* was never introduced in greater Berlin. Cold War confrontation reappeared soon after the signature of the Berlin School Law. On 1 July 1948, Colonel Sergei Shabalov returned to the fray with a special anniversary lesson in *Gegenwartskunde* in remembrance of the German attack on the Soviet Union in 1941. The three-day lesson plan came to the controversial conclusion that “reactionary groups in Germany, England, and the United States had urged Hitler's attack.”⁴³

Given the almost constant tensions between the western Allies and the Soviets from 1945 to 1948, it was amazing that the occupation powers had reached an understanding on school reform at all. The accord on history curriculum reform, one of the rare examples of school political cooperation between Moscow and Washington, ended only one week later with the Berlin blockade. The proceedings of the AKEC were permanently suspended.

The history curriculum accord, born of a temporary ideological accommodation between Marxism-Leninism and the social studies, represented a strong Soviet-American desire to use schools as a means of denazifying Berlin youth through a confrontation with the recent past. The political formation in 1949 of two distinct German national entities in Berlin accentuated a divergence between history instruction on the legacy of Nazism in the schools of the western and eastern zones of the city. Throughout the 1950s and leading up to the present, East Berlin schools officially sanctioned teachings on the evils of Nazism in modern history through the lens of Marxist-Leninist historical interpretation.⁴⁴

For a brief time, from 1948 to 1952, many history teachers in West Berlin used the American-funded textbook series, *Wege der Völker* (*Ways of the Peoples*). A group of Berlin classroom instructors from the western zone wrote the series with financial support provided by the OMGUS Reorientation Fund.⁴⁵ The short-lived project, although seriously com-

⁴¹ AK, *Lehrplan*, 2, 5–6; *Zentralverwaltung*, 1946, 60–66.

⁴² AK, *Lehrplan*, 22–24.

⁴³ OMGBerlin, AKEC (Lesson plan submitted by Sergei Shabalov), 1948, 4/11-2/35.

⁴⁴ *Lehrplan für Grundschulen* (DDR), 5. bis 8. Schuljahr, 1953, 70, cited in *Zu Fragen der Erziehung im Geschichtsunterricht*, ed. Christel Sievert (Berlin, 1955), 174–75; Bleyer, *Geschichte* 9, 106–85.

⁴⁵ OMGUS, Reorientation Fund, undated, 4/15-2/140.

promised by a historical fallacy on the persecution of the Jews in one volume, remained the only textbook series in West Berlin to provide any substantial examination of the Third Reich until the late 1960s.⁴⁶ By this time, curriculum policy in West Berlin and some history textbooks in that sector reflected a definite transition toward a more open discussion over the dark legacy of Nazism and its meaning for Germany's troubled past.⁴⁷ The debate about the Third Reich and the formation of history as school subject which transpired in the AKEC at the exclusion of the Germans is still unresolved. As Gordon Craig observed a short time ago, interpretations concerning Hitler's place in German history continue to be a source of especially heated disputes in current West German academic circles.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Volume four of *Wege der Völker* made the curious assertion that wearing the yellow Star of David in public under the Third Reich "was generally not a danger" to the Jews. Even more disturbing was the assumption that the Jews were fated to suffer the horrors of the Final Solution with the result that Germans were powerless against Hitler and the approaching catastrophe. See Martha Schwarz et al., *Demokratie im Werden*, vol. 4 of *Wege der Völker* (Berlin, 1948), 284–85.

⁴⁷ Senator für Schulwesen, *Rahmenpläne für Unterricht und Erziehung in der Berliner Schule* (Berlin, 1969), B III, c 3; Eugen Kaier, ed., *Grundzüge der Geschichte: Von 1890 zur Gegenwart* (Berlin, 1968), 216–26; Hans Herzfeld, *Grundriss der Geschichte* (Stuttgart, 1970), 232–43; R. H. Tenbrock et al., *Zeiten und Menschen* (Schönigh, 1966), 171–91.

⁴⁸ Gordon Craig, "The War of the German Historians," *New York Review of Books*, 15 Jan. 1987, 15–19.