

Joint Appeal by the KPD and the SPD for Democratic School Reform (October 18, 1945)

Abstract

In the Soviet occupation zone, the SPD [*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*] and the KPD [*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*] came out in favor of a thorough reconstruction of the school system in October 1945. The existing, structured school system was to be replaced by a comprehensive school [*Einheitsschule*]. Church and school were separated, that is, schools were confessionally neutral and the teaching of religion was abolished. School personnel, curricula, textbooks, and teacher training had to meet democratic standards and were to be purged of National Socialist influences.

Source

Principles for the Democratic Renewal of the German School

[...]

1. The adolescent generation of the German people, called upon to consolidate and complete the democratic renewal of Germany, must be raised – free from Nazi and militaristic ideas, in a new spirit, the spirit of proactive democracy, of friendship among peace-loving nations – to embrace independent, upright, liberal, and progressive ways of thinking and acting.
2. The democratization of the school system demands purging the entire faculty and school administration of all Nazi and militaristic elements, and appointing proven anti-Fascists to school councils and positions of leadership.
3. All special educational privileges for particular strata must disappear. The goal of democratic school reform is the creation of a uniform school system in which the intellectual, moral, and physical abilities of our youth are developed all around, which imparts a high education, and which opens up to all qualified individuals, independent of their background, their position, or the wealth of their parents, the path to the country's highest institutions of learning.
4. The German school must promote and consolidate the democratic unity of the nation. It must no longer be torn apart by confessions and world views. We therefore demand, with full recognition of freedom of religion and conscience, the clear separation of church and school. The religious education of children is not the task of the school, but a matter for the home and for religious communities.
5. Teaching is the task of the public school system. That is why no community or private person can be allowed to establish private schools that teach the subject matter of the general education schools (the *Volksschulen*, the middle schools, and the higher schools).
6. The crucial precondition and the most important guarantee for a genuine democratization of the school is a democratic faculty, is a new type of democratic, responsible, and capable teacher. The educators of our youth will be able to fulfill their great tasks, which will determine the future of our people, only if they are willing and able to educate the up and coming young generation into conscious implementers of the rebuilding and creation of a new, peaceful, democratic Germany. The democratic renewal of Germany is not conceivable without a thorough reform of teacher training as well. The current shortage of reliable teachers able to provide a truly democratic education that serves peace and the

welfare of our nation means that we have to open the path to the teaching profession to tens of thousands of anti-Fascist, democratic fighters, and to reshape the existing faculty from the ground up.

7. However, the democratization of the school also demands a thorough revision of curricula and the creation of new textbooks. Adopting textbooks from the period before 1933, which is necessary during the transition phase, should happen only after careful scrutiny, since these books, too, often contain ideas that are not in keeping with the goal of exterminating Fascism and militarism.

8. The spiritual renewal of our people would stop halfway if it did not also encompass a thorough reform of the entire college and university system. The new spirit of a truly progressive humanism and militant democracy must find its way into the higher schools. That requires the reinstatement of all lecturers and professors expelled by the Hitler government, the granting of teaching certifications to those new, capable individuals who, through scholarly accomplishments and as valiant fighters against Hitler, have given proof of their calling to be teachers of youth engaged in higher studies. By means of extensive support through remedial courses and special regulations at the higher schools, the path to colleges and universities must be opened up to all those qualified individuals who were previously excluded from study through Hitler Fascism and reactionary educational privileges. This also includes the abolition of existing admission requirements.

[...]

Source: Siegfried Baske and Martha Engelbert, eds., *Zwei Jahrzehnte Bildungspolitik in der Sowjetzone Deutschlands*, vol. 1. Berlin: Osteuropa-Institut an der Freien Universität Berlin, 1966, p. 5 ff; reprinted in Christoph Kleßmann, *Die doppelte Staatsgründung. Deutsche Geschichte 1945–1955*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986, pp. 391–92.

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