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Educational Reform and the Social Democratic Party in Weimar Prussia, 1918-1932.

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EDUCATIONAL REFORM AND THE SOCIAL
DEMOCRATIC PARTY IN
WEIMAR PRUSSIA, 1918-1932

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of History

by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DDP	Deutsche Demokratische Partei
DNVP	Deutschnationale Volkspartei
DVP	Deutsche Volkspartei
FES	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (Bonn)
GStA	Geheimes Staatsarchiv, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin and Merseburg)
IISH	International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam)
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
USPD	Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands

ABSTRACT

Education in Germany has historically been a matter for the individual states rather than the central government. In Prussia in the 1920s, elementary education was segregated by religious denomination, while the upper grades were divided according to occupational specialty. The Social Democratic Party was the only party which proposed to change the system, calling for the secularization and integration of the schools. When it unexpectedly found itself in power in November 1918, the party's commitment to its program was tested. While the leadership continued to affirm its support for educational reform throughout the 1920s, it did little to introduce any changes.

Admittedly, the Social Democrats did not rule alone; they had to share power with middle-class parties. Maintaining good relations with its coalition partners naturally entailed compromise. A greater obstacle to educational reform, however, was the lack of consensus within the party. Intra-party disagreement did not concern merely peripheral details, but reveals profoundly different views on the proper role of religion in modern society and the place of the individual.

Since party platforms tell us little about actual socialist attitudes towards education, we must turn to educators in the party. Kurt Löwenstein believed that religion was an anachronism in the modern age; he called

for the complete secularization of education by completely excluding religion from the schools. Another educator in the party, Paul Oestreich, focussed on the problem of integrating the post-elementary schools in order to ensure that all students were afforded equal opportunities. Not all socialists, however, either rejected religion or insisted on the complete uniformity in the upper levels of the schools. Adolf Grimme represents this group of more moderate socialists. All three reformers developed arguments to support their positions.

The leadership of the party declined to choose among these very different programs. Lack of coordination by the party's leadership meant that nothing was done to reform Prussian schools, which remained essentially as they had been in Imperial Germany. Inactivity in educational reform is an indication of Weimar Social Democracy's inability to define concretely its goals and act decisively.

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

Marxist ideology is commonly viewed as one which restricts the freedom of the individual in favor of advancing the interests of the group. Certainly there is much evidence to support this contention. Marx's theories centered around the struggle of socio-economic classes; according to him, individuals merely represented their class. Furthermore, Marx insisted that class struggle, not the deeds of great individuals, was the driving force of history. Without doubt, Marx was hostile to individualism as the concept is generally understood.

It is also commonly believed that Marxist ideology is hostile to religion. There is Marx's famous and oft-quoted statement that "[religion] is the opium of the people".¹ According to him, religion was merely a tool used by capitalist oppressors to buttress their power and keep the masses docile and obedient. Marx's criticism of religion was certainly harsh. But although his ideology is essentially hostile to religion and restrictive of the freedom of the individual, one cannot automatically apply these judgments to Marx's followers.

¹Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction", The Marx-Engels Reader, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton, 2d ed. 1978), p. 53.

Marxist ideology was an expression of opposition to the existing system in general. Its applicability to specific practical problems of the day was untested until the middle to late nineteenth century and the advent of socialist political parties which professed adherence to Marx's principles of scientific socialism. Once Marxists entered the political arena, they were confronted with the difficulties encountered in any attempt to translate a theory into practice. As long as the fledgling parties were excluded from political power, abstract considerations concerning the place of religion and the role of the individual in modern society became secondary issues, of only theoretical interest. More pressing was the immediate problem of determining the proper attitude to adopt towards the state. The debate within the movement on the issue of collaboration illustrates the problem of trying to unite theory with practice.

Before the First World War European socialists were divided on the question of whether Marxist parties should remain in opposition to their respective governments or whether they should collaborate with them whenever possible, in order to advance the interests of the workers.² The strongest Marxist party at this time was the Social Democratic Party of Germany (Sozialdemokratische Partei

²James Joll, The Second International, 1889-1914 (New York: Praeger, 1956), pp. 77, 82, 85-105.

Deutschlands or SPD). While German socialists did not go so far as to advocate revolution, they did insist that Marxists must remain in opposition to their respective governments, thus maintaining ideological purity. Nevertheless, several historians have pointed out that the SPD was less hostile to the state than its belligerent rhetoric seemed to indicate.

The anomaly can be accounted for by the increasing importance of German trade unions, which steadily grew in membership around the turn of the century.³ Union leaders were more interested in pragmatic problems concerning wages and hours than in abstract theoretical debates about Marxist ideology. The strength of the unions vis-a-vis the SPD was demonstrated in August 1914, when union leaders, without consulting the party leadership, reached an agreement with the Imperial government to support the war effort.⁴ For union leaders, preservation of their organizations' apparatus and treasury was more important than trying to follow Marx's abstract prescriptions for revolution.

Despite these changes, most party theoreticians refused to acknowledge the widening gap between Marxist ideology

³John A. Moses, Trade Unionism in Germany from Bismarck to Hitler 1869-1933, vol. 1, 1869-1918 (London: George Prior Publishers, 1982).

⁴Richard N. Hunt, German Social Democracy 1918-1933 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), pp. 159, 180.

and the SPD's behavior. While party programs and official statements continued to express animosity for the existing system, the party's leadership was, in fact, more accommodating and amenable to compromise. Ideological purists had persuaded the majority at the 1903 party conference to pass a resolution condemning the ideas of the revisionist Eduard Bernstein.⁵ Bernstein had attempted to close the gap between the theory and practice of socialism by revising the theory to correspond more closely to the reality. Nevertheless, despite the party's repudiation of revisionism and its insistence on maintaining a confrontational attitude towards the state, the SPD hesitated only briefly before following the unions' lead and supporting the war effort in 1914.

Revisions to the ideology were acceptable only when circumstances seemed to refute the validity of Marxist theories. The workers' patriotic enthusiasm for the nation's war effort is a case in point. Marx's expectation that the workers of the world would unite and refuse to fight one another if war broke out was disappointed.⁶ Class solidarity proved ephemeral; nationalism was the more potent force. German socialist theoreticians insisted

⁵Peter Gay, The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), p. 266.

⁶Roman Szporluk, Communism and Nationalism, Karl Marx Versus Friederich List (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 4.

that worker support for this war of defense was compatible with Marxist ideology. By focussing on the Russian enemy, socialists could claim that Marxism would only suffer an irreversible set-back if the tsarist authoritarian state triumphed.

This argument became less persuasive as the war dragged on. Initial solidarity in the workers' movement evaporated and tensions in the SPD mounted. A vocal minority rejected continued collaboration with the government. These members insisted that the party should revert to its true nature--a party of opposition. The positions of the two factions were irreconcilable, eventually leading to a split in the party.⁷ On the eve of German defeat and the birth of the Weimar Republic, when unity was most needed, the largest and strongest party in the nation divided.

By New Year's Day 1919, there were three Marxist parties in Germany. Although the SPD was the strongest party in the land, it was unable to lead the nation in its hour of need primarily because the party had difficulty conceiving of itself as the ruler of the nation instead of the opposition. The issue of whether to collaborate with

⁷C.E. Schorske, German Social Democracy 1905-1917 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955). Schorske maintained that the war only brought the conflict between reformists and the opposition out into the open; the controversy had been brewing long before the war. See Arthur Rosenberg, The Birth of the German Republic 1871-1918 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1931) for the opposing viewpoint.

the state, a problem that had plagued the movement from the time of its inception, became acute when the socialists found that they *were* the state.⁶ Marxist ideology provided no guidance in this unprecedented situation. Nevertheless, the leadership of the SPD was unable to consider the possibility that the creed that had long given its members hope and comfort in their times of tribulation no longer offered any answers.

Russian Communists were untroubled by these problems-- they had always opposed the tsar's authoritarian state. When they assumed power in 1917, they immediately set about the task of translating Marxist theory into practice; violence was an inevitable part of the process.

German socialists shrank in horror before Bolshevik excesses. Having already proven its readiness during the

⁶See Schorske and Hunt; also Evelyn Anderson, Hammer or Anvil, the Story of the German Working Class Movement (New York: Oriole Editions, 1945); Joseph A. Berlau, German Social Democracy 1914-1921 (New York: Octogan Books, 1949); and Franz Borkenau, World Communism, A History of the Communist International (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1938). Although not an historian specifically of the socialist movement, the foremost expert on the Weimar Republic, Karl Dietrich Bracher, held a similar view of the SPD. See his book Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik: Eine Studie zum Problem des Machtverfalls in der Demokratie (Villingen: Ring Verlag, 1955). These works are all classics. For a more recent work that focusses on SPD shortcomings see Donna Harsch, German Social Democracy and the Rise of Nazism (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993). Harsch criticized the party for shirking its responsibility by merely reacting to events, rather than exerting the leadership that the nation needed.

war to collaborate with liberals and Catholics, the SPD did not hesitate to continue to do so in 1919 in order to create a new form of government for Germany. The result: the Weimar Republic, famous for its political instability. In the brief fourteen years of the Republic's existence, twenty different cabinets, with an average life span of eight and a half months, attempted to rule the nation.⁹ Although it had helped to create the Republic, the SPD joined national cabinets only sporadically throughout this period. Lack of positive and pragmatic programs made opposition more agreeable than being in power.

The situation was different in Prussia, the nation's largest state. Prussian governments were more stable because the SPD was willing to participate in its governments throughout the period from the November Revolution of 1918 to July 1932, when Reich Chancellor Franz von Papen dissolved the state's government. Since the Social Democrats did not command a majority alone, they were obligated to share power with liberals and Catholics. The American historian Dietrich Orlow maintained that the commitment of these three groups to the successful realization of democracy in Prussia made that state the "rock of democracy",

⁹Bracher, p. 75.

a model for the federal level to emulate.¹⁰ In his view, the three groups' commitment to democracy was a positive achievement.

Now that the issue of collaboration was settled, socialists needed to define more precisely their position on issues that went beyond the immediate interests of its constituency of blue-collar workers. One of these areas was education. Although pre-war party platforms had called for sweeping educational reform, the SPD's willingness to implement its programs had not been tested. Elementary schools were segregated by religious denomination and included religious instruction in the curricula, while post-elementary schools were segregated according to occupational speciality. Now that the SPD was in power, socialist educators were eager to implement changes.

Around the turn of the century, the Prussian educational system was not very different from those of other European states. Although British and French governments steadily curtailed the power of the established churches over education throughout the nineteenth century, religion

¹⁰Dietrich Orlow, Weimar Prussia 1918-1925. The Unlikely Rock of Democracy (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986); vol. 2, Weimar Prussia 1925-1933. The Illusion of Strength (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991).

A coalition of the SPD, Democrats, and the Catholic Center was in power from 1919 to 1921, and then again from 1925 to 1932. From 1921 to 1925, the coalition was joined by another liberal party, the German People's Party.

was not entirely excluded from the schools; in England, a non-denominational religious instruction became standard, while in France, parents who favored religious education could send their children to private parochial schools. Regarding the upper levels, both states made attempts following the First World War to open the middle and high schools to less privileged children by providing financial assistance. Fiscal instability of the post-war period, however, limited these measures.¹¹

Until 1917, education in Russia resembled the pattern in the West. The Communists instituted sweeping changes, determined to eliminate all vestiges of tsarist authoritarianism. The nation's new leaders believed that a radically restructured educational system could serve to educate the new generation in values more appropriate for a modern socialist society. In order to accomplish this goal several measures were implemented: religious instruction, which had been used to teach obedience to the tsar, was banned; church schools were closed; grades, entrance examinations, and corporal punishment were all abolished; students were given equality with teachers; and practical rather than theoretical studies were emphasized.

¹¹Gerald L. Gutek, A History of the Western Educational Experience (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press 1972, 1987), pp. 290-314.

By the end of the 1920s, undisciplined and poorly-educated students led to a reconsideration of these innovations; the goals of Stalin's ambitious five-year plans could not be met unless workers, technicians, and scientists were properly trained. In 1927 university entrance examinations were re-introduced and in 1932 the teachers' authority to award grades was restored. Professions of loyalty to the new regime and its ideology were now prerequisites for advancement.¹²

Prussian socialists declined to follow the Russian example. Dedicated to the implementation of democracy, socialists in Prussia continued to share power with the Catholics and liberals. Two German historians of education, Wolfgang Wittwer and Christoph Führ, argued that the Social Democrats declined to aggressively pursue educational reform because the issue threatened relations between the coalition partners.¹³ Keeping the coalition intact was the socialists' priority. This argument emphasizes obstacles external to the SPD which inhibited

¹²Guterk, pp. 336-350.

¹³Wolfgang W. Wittwer, Die sozialdemokratische Schulpolitik in der Weimarer Republik. Ein Beitrag zur politischen Schulgeschichte im Reich und in Preußen (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1980) and Christoph Führ, Zur Schulpolitik der Weimarer Republik: die Zusammenarbeit von Reich und Ländern im Reichsschulausschuß (1919-1923) und im Ausschuß für Unterrichtswesen (1924-1933): Darstellung und Quellen, (Weinheim: Beltz Verlag, 2d ed. 1972).

the party from trying to enact its program. The unspoken assumption is that the party had a program.

The SPD's party programs and its press gave the impression that the party desire implementation of a secular and integrated school system. Such repeated public affirmations only antagonized its coalition partners, especially the Catholics, and bred mistrust that threatened the stability of the coalition. If the SPD truly had no intention of pursuing school reform legislation, what purpose could it serve to assert that it did? Two German historians of socialism, Susanne Miller and Heinrich Potthoff, shifted the focus of the debate away from coalition politics towards the problem of electoral politics.¹⁴ They argued that even though the SPD collaborated with middle-class parties, it could not forego use of the Marxist language of opposition without losing its working-class voters to the Communist Party.

Applied to the sphere of education, this thesis results in the argument that the SPD continued to avow its support for a secular, integrated school system because the party believed that this was what its voters wanted. The available evidence indicates, however, that the majority of parents, including those in the working class, did not

¹⁴Susanne Miller and Heinrich Potthoff, A History of German Social Democracy From 1848 to the Present, trans. J.A. Underwood (Leamington Spa: Berg Publishers, 1986).

support the secularization of education; most were unsure what integration meant.¹⁵ This dissertation cannot undertake to explore parents' motives in depth; the problem is primarily to explain the puzzling behavior of the party leadership. Why would the SPD continue to call for far-reaching educational reform that had little appeal for its voters and strained relations with the Center? Was the leadership of the SPD so poor that it was unaware of the wishes of its own electorate?

A more likely reason for its ostensibly inexplicable behavior is that the leadership was too distracted by more pressing problems to give educational reform serious consideration. Adhering to party slogans, the party leadership either did not notice or did not care that it lacked a clearly defined program. Educators in the party were frustrated that the party gave educational reform such scant attention. They sought to develop specific educational programs which reflected Marxist ideology as they under-

¹⁵Most children, including those of working class families, were enrolled in denominational (Catholic or Protestant) schools. Preußische Statistik (Amtliches Quellenwerk) 272. Das Schulwesen in Preußen 1921 im Staate, in den Provinzen und Regierungsbezirken, ed. Preußischen Statistischen Landesamte in Berlin. (Berlin: Verlag des Preußischen Statistischen Landesamtes, 1924), p. 8. In 1921 there were only fifty-five secular schools enrolling 0.5 percent of all Prussian school children. An updated study showed that by 1929 there were 256 secular schools (which by this time were referred to as "collection schools", for technical reasons) with 0.76 percent of all school children. Although an increase is indicated, it was still less than one percent.

stood it. The issues of religion and individualism which had previously been abstract theoretical questions now resurfaced as concrete practical problems that needed to be addressed.

Cultural critics from all points on the political spectrum were agitated by these problems. Conservative academics and apolitical left-leaning intellectuals have both received the attention of scholars.¹⁴ These groups ridiculed the spectacle of Weimar politics; they believed that the realms of politics and culture were mutually exclusive. Politically-active cultural critics in the SPD, however, have attracted less notice.

Socialist cultural critics shared the contemporary belief that Germany's glorious cultural heritage was endangered in the modern world. They differed from those who scorned politics, however, in that they believed that the revival of culture depended on economic recovery and political reform. Since formal education is central in the transmission of culture to youth, reform of the schools was mandatory for cultural rejuvenation and national revival.

¹⁴Fritz K. Ringer, The Decline of the German Mandarins. The German Academic Community, 1870-1933 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969) deals with right-wing academics; Peter Gay, Weimar Culture. The Outsider as Insider (New York: Harper and Row, 1968) and Walter Laqueur, Weimar, A Cultural History 1918-1933 (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974) deal with apolitical left-wing intellectuals.

Three prominent Social Democratic reformers--Kurt Löwenstein, Paul Oestreich, and Adolf Grimme--concentrated on different aspects of education. Although they borrowed from current pedagogical theory, they did not participate in academic debate and research on education.¹⁷ They were more likely to refer to theologians, sociologists, and philosophers than to other educators in their arguments. The experience of the war had politicized all three of them--they felt it was their civic duty to participate actively in public life and share in solving the nation's problems. They believed that the application of Marxist principles to the practical problem of educational reform was the key to creating a new society.

Kurt Löwenstein tirelessly pursued realization of the party plank calling for the secularization of education. By this he meant not only the integration of Catholic and Protestant elementary schools, but removal of religious instruction and all references to religion--prayers, religious songs, and Biblical reading passages--from the schools. Only the complete secularization of education, he thought, could eliminate the public power of the established churches, a prerequisite for German recovery.

¹⁷For more information on educational theory see Jürgen Oelkers, Reformpädagogik. Eine Kritische Dogmengeschichte (Munich: Juventa Verlag, 1989) and Wolfgang Scheibe, Die Reformpädagogische Bewegung 1900-1932. Eine einführende Darstellung (Weinheim: Verlag Julius Beltz, 1969).

Löwenstein's position supports the prevailing view that both Marxist ideology and its proponents were hostile to religion.

Paul Oestreich attempted to clearly define the socialist position on integration. He strove for nothing less than the complete integration of the numerous post-elementary schools--the people's school, the middle school, and the numerous high schools--into one common school for all. A flexible curriculum offering electives would allow some freedom of choice. Students deemed to be "gifted", however, would not be segregated from other students. Instead, by educating all the nation's youth together, the whole society would benefit, rather than merely promoting the rise of favored individuals. Oestreich's emphasis on the collective reinforces the view that Marxist ideology and its adherents were more solicitous of group welfare than of individual freedom.

Adolf Grimme, a religious socialist, viewed the secularization and integration of education very differently from Löwenstein and Oestreich. Although Grimme ostensibly supported the secular school type, he believed that a religion purified of corruption had a place in the schools. As education minister at the end of the period (1930-1932), he criticized the increasing competition among the different types of schools for special privileges for their graduates. He did not, however, contemplate integration on

the lines Oestreich had suggested.¹⁸ Grimme's interpretation of religion and the role of the individual shows that Marxist ideology is not necessarily incompatible with religion or individualism.

The leadership of the SPD, already limited by the necessity of conducting coalition politics, was unable to choose among these profoundly different school reform plans. Lacking a unified vision, the party drifted. The reluctance of the Social Democratic leadership to decide on a common educational reform plan reflected the party's inability to define its attitudes towards religion and the place of the individual in modern society. The SPD failed to offer a positive program because it could not surrender its identity as an opposition party.

Chapters two and three will examine the politics of educational reform. The following three chapters will deal with the theoretical arguments that Löwenstein, Oestreich, and Grimme constructed to lend substance to the socialist educational ideals of secularization and integration. The final chapter will return to political issues, in order to assess the impact the Social Democrats had on the schools.

¹⁸The special "privileges" they wanted were simply jobs, which were becoming scarce with the onset of the Great Depression. With rising unemployment, they hoped to reserve certain positions for their graduates.

CHAPTER TWO THE POLITICS OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN IMPERIAL GERMANY

In order to understand the politics of educational reform in Weimar Prussia, we need to understand the origins of the confessional segregation of elementary education and the occupational segregation of secondary schools. The state became more active in educational issues in the early part of the 1800s; as the century progressed, education became an increasingly important political issue.

This chapter will address the following questions: How did the state's elementary schools come to be divided by religion? How did the secondary schools come to be divided by occupational preparation? What were the positions of the middle-class political parties on education? What was the Social Democrats' attitude toward the public schools? Toward the state?

The issues of the proper relationship between the established churches and the schools and the role of religion in the elementary schools were debated by politicians in the Wilhelminian period. Concern with post-elementary education was restricted primarily to professional educators, although there were political aspects as well. This chapter will deal with both problems up to the time of the fall of the Hohenzollerns and the assumption by the SPD of the reins of power.

RELIGIOUS SEGREGATION OF PRUSSIAN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION TO 1871.

Prussia's Civil Code of 1794 defined education as a duty of the state. The state found it convenient, however, to delegate daily administrative tasks to the churches, both Catholic and Protestant. The natural result was a confessionally segregated school system.¹ The churches controlled not only religious education, but also handled non-religious aspects of elementary education as well. These tasks included the inspection of school buildings and property, as well as the hiring and supervision of teachers. This informal agreement between throne and altar(s) benefitted both parties; the churches wielded considerable power over elementary education, while the state was spared the cost of establishing an educational bureaucracy.²

The state, however, did not completely relinquish its control over educational matters to the churches. To correct the problem of poorly trained teachers, the state

¹Since Catholic and Protestant populations before 1871 tended to be segregated regionally, segregation of the schools posed few problems. Marjorie Lamberti, State, Society, and the Elementary School in Imperial Germany (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 21.

²Lamberti, pp. 16, 37; Thomas Alexander, The Prussian Elementary Schools (New York: MacMillan, 1918), pp. 24-26; Anthony J. La Vopa, Prussian Schoolteachers, Profession and Office, 1763-1848 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), p. 36.

opened the first teachers' training institute or *Seminar* in 1806. This measure was followed in 1826 by a ministerial decree requiring prospective teachers to take a state licensing examination, a test based on training in the *Seminar*, before assuming teaching duties.³ These initiatives had the effect of markedly improving the quality of elementary teachers. The *Seminaren*, like the elementary schools, were confessionally segregated.⁴

There was an unexpected consequence of these reform measures. Since teachers now received professional training, they became more conscious and protective of their identity as a distinct occupational group. They began to resent supervision by clergymen who had not shared their pedagogical training.⁵ Although pastors were generally well-educated, often university trained, teachers felt that a pastor's qualifications were inapplicable to the supervision of education.⁶ Teachers were not opposed to religion or the inclusion of religious instruction in the curriculum; their desire to be free of church control was based strictly on professional interests.

³La Vopa, pp. 53-54.

⁴Wittwer, p. 175.

⁵Lamberti, pp. 16, 27; La Vopa, pp. 58, 101-104.

⁶La Vopa, p. 101.

The reform era from 1806 to 1819 might have been an auspicious time for teachers to agitate for abolition of church domination of education. The teachers' sense of professional solidarity and common purpose had not yet sufficiently developed at this time, however. By 1819, the beginning of the era of reaction, the state had become hostile to any perceived attack on the established churches--the churches were now viewed as indispensable partners in the attempt to return Prussia to pre-Napoleonic days.⁷ The state ignored teachers' pleas for the professionalization of educational administration.

In the Revolution of 1848, elementary teachers, like other professional groups, formulated a program stating their grievances. One of their chief demands was for the abolition of church inspection and supervision of the schools.⁸ They repeated their position that professional qualifications, not confessional orientation, should be the decisive factor in appointing school officials. When the revolution collapsed, the teachers' wishes were ignored. While the Constitution of 1850 affirmed state authority over education, it also provided that confessional relationships would be taken into account in establishing

⁷Gordon A. Craig, Europe, 1815-1914 (Hinsdale, Illinois: Dryden Press, third edition, 1972), p. 48.

⁸Lamberti, p. 27.

elementary schools.⁹ Prussian elementary education continued to be divided by denomination and dominated by the established churches. Failing to win the support of the state, teachers who strove for an end to church control of education would have to find another champion for their interests.

OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALIZATION OF PRUSSIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS TO 1871

Prussia's defeat by Napoleon at Jena in 1806 initiated a period of intense self-criticism on the part of the state. Perhaps if outmoded institutions were reformed, the potential strength of the nation's individuals could be actualized. This would increase the power of the state so that the French occupiers could be repelled. The renowned philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte gave eloquent expression to these ideas in his Addresses to the German Nation, delivered in Berlin in the winter of 1807-1808.

In the Addresses Fichte blamed Prussia's defeat on the state's failure to educate all of its members.¹⁰ Fichte believed that by allowing church domination of the schools

⁹Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁰J. G. Fichte, Werke, Fünfter Band (Leipzig: Fritz Eckardt Verlag, 1910), p. 385. While Frederick the Great had encouraged the spread of religiously-oriented education in order to produce moral, orderly, and obedient subjects, he did not want the masses to receive too much education because they might then aspire to rise above their assigned station in life.

the state had neglected to instill a sense of patriotism in youth.¹¹ The nation would be invigorated, Fichte insisted, by a well-educated citizenry; individual freedom and service to the state could harmoniously co-exist because the interests of the individual complemented those of the state.¹²

Fichte borrowed extensively from the ideas of a contemporary, the Swiss educational reformer Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi. Pestalozzi criticized the contemporary educational practice of emphasizing the development of one skill to the neglect of other subjects. An all-around cultivation of intelligence, morality, and physical fitness provided a better education, he thought.¹³ Fichte linked Pestalozzian principles of education to the national ideal of Prussian rejuvenation.¹⁴

Wilhelm von Humboldt, Minister of Education and Religion, was receptive to these ideas. He introduced the classical curriculum into the *Gymnasium*; practical career preparation would take place after the student completed

¹¹Gutek, pp. 187-188.

¹²John S. Brubacher, A History of the Problems of Education (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1947, 1966), pp. 58-61.

¹³F.H. Hayward, The Educational Ideas of Pestalozzi and Fröbel (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1904, 1979), p. 18.

¹⁴Gutek, pp. 200, 213.

his studies.¹⁵ Originally intended to educate all of the nation's youth, the curriculum of the nine year *Gymnasium* proved to be so rigorous that only those with leisure could invest the amount of time necessary to master the demanding subjects. Not only did attendance at a *Gymnasium* necessitate a great expenditure of the student's time; it also cost money--tuition was charged at private preparatory schools, as well as the *Gymnasium*. The high fees prevented workers' children from attending.

When middle schools appeared later in the century, the result was a three-tiered system of education, which roughly corresponded to separate schools for the lower, middle and upper classes.¹⁶ The majority of the population received only a basic education in the eight-year "people's" schools, which were the only schools that were free. Changing from one track to another was almost impossible, given that the *Gymnasium* emphasized the study of Latin and Greek.

The division of students was matched by a division of the teaching profession. While elementary teachers were

¹⁵James C. Albisetti, Secondary School Reform in Imperial Germany (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 19.

¹⁶Different educational tracks originated in the Middle Ages when clergy received an abstract, other-worldly training in a university, the aristocracy trained to fight and be chivalrous, and craftsmen learned the practical skills of their trade in the guild system. Gutek, pp. 69, 298-309.

trained in state-controlled *Seminars*, secondary school teachers attended a university where their preparation consisted of thorough mastery of three academic fields. Secondary school teachers liked to think of themselves more as scholars than educators.¹⁷

In the *Seminaren*, which were separate from the universities, elementary teachers received a less theoretical, more practically-oriented course of study. Elementary teachers aspired to obtain equal pay and status with secondary school teachers. To this end, they called for the attachment of the *Seminaren* to the universities. Secondary school teachers resisted this proposal--they wanted to maintain their sense of exclusivity.¹⁸ In addition, they argued, since few university graduates would voluntarily choose to teach at the elementary level, the profession would be impoverished. This problem could be avoided by denying elementary teachers admission to universities, precluding the possibility of changing their career tracks.¹⁹

As long as the teaching profession was segregated, the state's schools would necessarily remain segregated too.

¹⁷Konrad Jarausch, The Unfree Professions. German Lawyers, Teachers, and Engineers, 1900-1950 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 14, 47.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁹Wittwer, p. 179.

During the Revolution of 1848, elementary teachers called for vertical integration of the educational system, combining all grades from the elementary school through the upper grades and leading to the university.²⁰ If the schools were integrated, then teacher training would have to be unified as well; elementary teachers would then enjoy the benefits of a university education. Their hopes were dashed when the Constitution of 1850 retained the standard practice of segregated schools for both students and teachers.

PRUSSIAN POLITICS BEFORE THE FIRST WORLD WAR--LIBERALS AND CATHOLICS ON EDUCATION

Elementary teachers found a champion for their interests in the two liberal parties, the Progressives and the National Liberals. These two parties differed on specific issues but shared a common set of principles. Among these was an insistence on separation of church and state and removal of church domination of the schools.²¹ Instead of confessionally segregated elementary schools, the liberals proposed that a mixed confessional school was more appropriate in the modern industrialized and urbanized age.²²

²⁰Lamberti, p. 27.

²¹Bruce B. Frye, Liberal Democrats in the Weimar Republic. The History of the German Democratic Party and the German State Party (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985), p. 10.

²²Lamberti, p. 215.

While liberals criticized the churches in general, they were especially hostile to the Catholic Church.

Despite the liberals' opposition to religious segregation, neither party was hostile to religion itself. Religious instruction was essential, liberals believed, because Christianity was such an integral part of German culture. The nation's youth could not properly appreciate the great German classics of literature and art without an understanding of the Christian religion. Although they wanted to abolish church control of the schools, liberals believed that religion could nevertheless be retained.

Programs of the two parties illustrate the liberals' desire to check the power of the churches while retaining a positive attitude towards religion. The 1878 program of the Progressive Party called for "independence of the school from the church" but added the proviso "without prejudice to the regulation of religious education".²³ The latter clause indicated that the churches would be allowed to supervise religious instruction but not other school affairs. The program of the National Liberals (1881) emphasized the rights of the state and its precedence over the churches, but also stated that, "[the state] very well appreciates the great importance of the churches for our

²³Wolfgang Treue, Deutsche Parteiprogramme 1861-1961 (Göttingen: Musterschmidt-Verlag, 1954), "Programm der Deutschen Freisinnigen Partei", 5. März 1884, p. 75.

people."²⁴ They also called for "peaceful relations between state and church".²⁵ The party just wanted to ensure the supremacy of the state. These rights were not precisely defined nor was the issue of religious instruction in the schools raised.

The liberals did not adopt the elementary teachers' desire for integration of the different levels of schools (vertical integration). The liberals, however, did champion national standardization of all schools in the different states of Germany (horizontal integration). They were disappointed when education remained under state control after unification. Until the nation's schools were integrated, they believed, national unification would remain incomplete.²⁶ Bismarck thought unification was incomplete too, as long as the Catholics competed with the state for authority.²⁷ In an attempt to eradicate the public power of the Catholic Church, he instituted the May Laws, effective from 1873 to 1878. This period is known as

²⁴Ibid., "Programm der Nationalliberalen Partei", 29. Mai 1881, p. 72.

²⁵Ibid., p. 71.

²⁶Lamberti, p. 63.

²⁷The Papal Doctrine of Infallibility of 1870 made Bismarck wonder whether German Catholics would pledge their first allegiance to the Kaiser or the pope. Lamberti, p. 41.

the *Kulturkampf*. The liberals supported the state against the Catholics.

The Catholics had established their own party, the Center, in response to the exclusion of Catholic Austria from unified Germany. The *kleindeutsch* solution to the problem of German unification had resulted in a Reich with a sizeable Catholic minority. Comprising about one-third of Germany's population, Catholics feared for the survival of their religion not only in a predominantly Protestant Reich, but in the rapidly changing modern world. To this end, the Center vociferously defended the traditional practice of confessional segregation and church control of elementary schools.²⁸

The May Laws restricted the public activity of the Catholic Church and asserted state authority over clerical training and appointments.²⁹ The Church's control of schools in Polish districts and the Rhineland was curtailed by replacing clerical school inspectors with professional educators. A lack of money for new state civil servants, however, prevented the wholesale dismissal of Catholic inspectors. Bismarck's primary intention was not to promote the professionalization of education--Protestant supervisors were not removed from their posts--but to

²⁸Treue, "Programm des Zentrums", 30. Juni 1870, pp. 60-61.

²⁹Craig, p. 344; Lamberti, p. 50.

eliminate the Catholic Church as a political and social power.³⁰

When Bismarck called off the persecution in 1878, clerics who had been dismissed from the schools resumed their old positions.³¹ The chancellor now wanted to return to the old church-state partnership, in the interest of upholding the traditional authority of both in the face of a new threat--the growing socialist movement. An alliance of Catholics and conservative Protestants would be useful in checking the spread of revolutionary ideas. The Center Party, for its part, was eager to demonstrate that Catholics were loyal citizens.

During the *Kulturkampf*, Protestant clergymen had opposed the persecution of the Catholics, fearing that the state might curtail their own privileges as well. In 1876 the Conservative Party, representative of the Protestant rural population, publicly stated its opposition to the May Laws.³² These statements facilitated an alliance between Protestant Conservatives and the Catholic Center. In the matter of education, the positions of the two parties were identical. Conservatives regarded the "confessional, Christian *Volksschule* . . . [as] the most important

³⁰Lamberti, pp. 47-48, 86-87.

³¹Ibid., p. 107.

³²Treue, "Gründungsaufwurf der Deutsch-Konservativen Partei", 7. Juni 1876, p. 65.

guarantee against the increasing unruliness of the masses and the progressive deterioration of all social ties."³³ Socialism threatened the existing order; Conservatives were ready to close ranks with both the Catholic Church and the state in battling this pernicious evil.

In 1892 the two parties introduced a bill that legally established the customary practice of confessional segregation. The National Liberals and Progressives managed to defeat the bill. But in 1906, the same proposal became law when the National Liberals abandoned the Progressives and abstained from the vote, allowing the bill to become law. The custom of confessional segregation of the school system now enjoyed legal sanction.³⁴

Although the Catholics found it beneficial to cooperate with Protestant Conservatives on religious and educational issues, the Catholics and liberals shared some common interests as well. As a party defined by religious membership, the Center consisted of members of all social classes, including workers. The party promoted socioeconomic reforms that Conservatives resisted. While the anti-clericalism of the liberals presented an obstacle to liberal-Catholic cooperation, the two groups could unite on occasion. The rapid growth of the socialist movement

³³Ibid.

³⁴Lamberti, p. 215.

altered the political scene. Before considering this new political force, however, we need to consider developments in post-elementary education.

The role of religion and the churches in elementary education was a political issue because of the existence of the Center Party. The problem of post-elementary education, however, was largely restricted to professional educators, although the issue did have political dimensions. As Germany became industrialized, educational reformers increasingly criticized as impractical the humanistic *Gymnasium* that emphasized study of Greek and Latin.³⁵ In the second half of the 19th century, specialization in education increased. New educational institutions emerged to train professionals in technical subjects excluded from the *Gymnasium* curriculum. Two new types of secondary schools--the *Realgymnasium* (which emphasized mathematics and science) and the *Oberrealschule* (which concentrated on German studies)--challenged the supremacy of the *Gymnasium*.

Gymnasium students were accorded special privileges; they received an exemption from compulsory military service and were the only graduates admitted to the universities. Advocates of the new secondary schools demanded equal rights for their students. They won an influential

³⁵ Oelkers, p. 26.

supporter in the person of Kaiser Wilhelm II. Following the school conferences of 1890 and 1900, the two new types of school were awarded parity with the *Gymnasium*.³⁴

Wilhelm was especially enthusiastic about the *Oberrealschule* with its focus on German language, history, and literature.³⁷ The Kaiser believed that religious instruction in the elementary schools and a greater emphasis on German studies in some secondary schools could aid in checking the spread of socialist ideas.³⁸

What position did the Social Democrats take on the churches, the state, and the educational system?

GERMAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY IN OPPOSITION, 1869-1917

The industrialization that rapidly proceeded after Bismarck's unification of the Reich led to a rapid increase in numbers of the urban working class, with significant consequences for the nation's political life. Originally organized into educational societies under the tutelage of the Progressives, workers soon recognized that their interests fundamentally conflicted with those of property

³⁴Ringer, pp. 50-51.

³⁷Gutek, p. 328.

³⁸Alexander, p. 398; Albisetti, pp. 180-182.

owning liberals.³⁹ The association of the Progressives with the authoritarian government also led workers to distrust the liberals.⁴⁰ In increasing numbers, workers joined organizations devoted specifically to advancing their interests.

One of these organizations was the Social Democratic Workers' Party (Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei or SDAP), established at Eisenach on August 8, 1869. It was led by Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel, men close to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, theoreticians and would-be politicians-revolutionaries.⁴¹ The new party's program reflected its dual heritage--both its liberal progressive patrimony and the scathing critique of that patrimony, Marxist ideology. The program began with a statement of its general principles, including several radical-sounding phrases such as "the abolition of all class rule" and

³⁹Frye maintained that differences between liberalism and socialism (in Imperial Germany, the Weimar Republic, and even today) were greater than their similarities; the ideologies of the two were fundamentally irreconcilable, even if the two parties could compromise on particular issues. For the opposite point of view, see Beverly Heckart, From Bassermann to Bebel. The Grand Bloc's Quest for Reform in the Kaiserreich, 1900-1914 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

⁴⁰Miller and Potthoff, p. 24.

⁴¹I am referring to Marx's and Engels' activities in the International Workingmen's Association. Known as the First International, it was established in 1864. During the International's brief existence, the SDAP was affiliated with it; it was dissolved in 1876 because of factional in-fighting.

"abolition of the existing means of production"; affiliation with the International was a further indication of the party's radical inclinations.⁴²

Other provisions of the program, however, could have easily been written by a Progressive. For example, the fourth principle stated that economic liberation of the workers "is possible only in a democratic state". The program also demanded "universal, equal, direct, and secret vote to all males over 20 years of age".⁴³ These planks illustrate that Germany's first socialists were committed democrats. In educational matters, the party called for "separation of church and state and separation of education from the church", and "compulsory education in primary elementary schools and free instruction in all public educational institutions."⁴⁴

In 1875, the SDAP merged with another socialist group,⁴⁵ to create the Socialist Workers' Party of Germany (Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands, or SAPD). The program of the new party, written at its founding congress in Gotha, resembled the SDAP's earlier program in its

⁴²Treue, "Programm der Sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterpartei", Eisenach, 8. August 1869, p. 59.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 60.

⁴⁵Ferdinand Lassalle's General German Workers' Association.

emphasis on demands for democracy--the secret ballot, universal suffrage, civil liberties, and freedom of association.⁴⁶ The issues of religion and education were combined; the program called for "universal and equal education of the people through the state. Universal compulsory education. Free instruction in all educational institutions. Declaration that religion is a private matter."⁴⁷ This plank emphasized four points: that education was a responsibility of the state and that education must be equal, free, and secular. These demands were intended as statements of principle; the party had no prospect of implementing its program, or even of influencing the state to implement these changes.

As a matter of fact, socialists soon viewed the state with hostility when Bismarck introduced anti-socialist legislation in 1878. Until they expired in 1890, these laws severely restricted the activity of the party. The SPD's press was banned, its leaders were harrassed, and public meetings were prohibited. Despite these limitations, however, every Reichstag election throughout the period saw a steady increase in votes for the SAPD. Persecution by the state only increased the party's

⁴⁶Treue, "Programm der Sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterpartei", Gotha, Mai 1875, pp. 66-67.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 67.

attraction for workers.⁴⁸ The 1890 Reichstag election showed the largest gains yet for the socialist party. Bismarck's plan to eradicate the workers' movement failed. When Wilhelm came to the throne in 1888, Bismarck's days were numbered; the Iron Chancellor resigned in 1890. The new Kaiser then made efforts to conciliate the working class by letting the anti-socialist law lapse and by extending social insurance measures first introduced by Bismarck.⁴⁹

A legal party again, it adopted a new name at the 1891 Erfurt Congress. The term "worker" was dropped from the name of the party--it was now called the Social Democratic Party of Germany (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands or SPD). The delegates adopted a new program as well. It contained the usual Marxist statements on the inevitable demise of capitalism and the certain triumph of the proletariat, phrases that property-owning liberals naturally perceived as radical. The leadership of the SPD, however, recognized the psychological appeal of Marxist rhetoric for

⁴⁸Gary P. Steenson, "Not One Man! Not One Penny!" German Social Democracy, 1863-1914 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1981), p. xiv, passim.

⁴⁹These measures included health, accident, disability, and old-age insurance, passed by the Reichstag 1883-1889. Germany was a pioneer in providing state assistance for the working class.

working class voters and employed it to effective electoral advantage.⁵⁰

One cannot question the sincerity of the party leadership's belief in Marxist theory; to be a Social Democrat in Imperial Germany entailed real hardship, including harassment by the authorities and ostracism by mainstream society. Naturally, committed socialists were gratified when their message attracted increasing support at the polls. The growing popularity of Marxian socialism seemed to validate the correctness of the theory. Success emboldened the party's leaders, encouraging them in their belief that socialism was the inevitable wave of the future. They envisioned successively increasing victories at the polls. Democracy would sweep them to power--history would vindicate their sacrifices. Although socialism remained the final goal, democracy seemed to offer the winning strategy. Without openly repudiating revolution, the party was steadily becoming a party of reform.⁵¹

The program's treatment of religion and education showed the party's preference for the language of opposition. Point six called for "affirmation of religion as a private matter. Abolition of all use of public means on

⁵⁰Miller and Potthoff, p. 36.

⁵¹The revision of Marxist theory in these years has received much attention from scholars. The most important works are Gay, The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism and Schorske (see chapter one).

church or religious goals. Church and religious communities are to be considered as private organizations."⁵² Point seven addressed the issue of education:

Secularization of the school. Compulsory attendance at public primary schools. No charges to be made for instruction, school supplies, and maintenance in public primary schools, nor in the higher educational institutions for those male and female students whose capabilities for further training are deemed suitable.⁵³

These planks expressed the SPD's dissatisfaction with the existing school system. Socialist theorists believed that education should serve to raise the consciousness of the workers to the necessity of their historical mission, as outlined by Karl Marx.⁵⁴ Religious instruction and cultivation of patriotism in the schools presented obstacles to this mission. Because the schools did not serve its purposes, and because it had no power to change the situation, the leadership of the SPD tended to be indifferent to public education.⁵⁵ Since the schools were hostile to the socialist movement, the party developed its own organizations--clubs for extracurricular activities as

⁵²Treue, "Programm der Sozialdemokratischen Partei", Erfurt, 21. Oktober 1891, p. 76.

⁵³Ibid., pp. 76-77.

⁵⁴Gutek, pp. 248-249.

⁵⁵Lamberti, p. 198; Albisetti, p. 61.

well as educational study groups.⁵⁶ These clubs often had links with their middle class counterparts, however; segregation of workers from the rest of German society was never total.⁵⁷ Certainly workers' children continued to be educated in the public schools. Because the SPD had no power to change the system, discussion of educational issues was mostly confined to educators in the party.

The leadership of the SPD believed in Marx's prophesy of the inevitable triumph of the proletariat. But it thought that it would be a long time before this came to pass. Socialist leaders were surprised to find themselves in power in November 1918. How would they attempt to implement their party programs? Would they reform the schools?

⁵⁶W.L. Gutsman, Workers' Culture in Imperial Germany. Between Tradition and Commitment (New York: Berg Publishers, 1990).

⁵⁷Vernon L. Lidtke, The Alternative Culture, Socialist Labor in Imperial Germany (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). Lidtke's book was a refutation of the thesis of negative integration asserted in Guenther Roth's book, The Social Democrats in Imperial Germany (Totowa, New Jersey, 1963).

CHAPTER THREE

THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM, NOVEMBER 1918 TO AUGUST 1919

When the Kaiser abdicated in November 1918, the socialists had a unique opportunity to implement their programs. In the early days of the Revolution, Prussian education was secularized by decree. Intent on adhering to democratic procedure, however, SPD leaders soon rescinded these decrees. While the new constitution adopted in August 1919 partially realized some of the socialists' objectives, the constitutional clauses which dealt with education proved to be difficult to implement. Events during the Revolution and immediately afterwards merit detailed consideration, because decisions made at this time limited the actions of reformers throughout the 1920s.

THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS IN POWER, NOVEMBER 1918-FEBRUARY 1919

In October 1918, as the World War was drawing to a close, the SPD joined the Imperial government. The military authorities acknowledged that Germany had lost the war; an immediate armistice was necessary. The military leadership hoped that a government that included the Social Democrats might receive more moderate peace terms than would the old authoritarian government. Wilson's Fourteen Points gave them reason to think so. Accordingly, the SPD was invited to join a government which included members of both the Center and the Progressive Party. It was also

expected that socialist participation in the cabinet would mollify the increasingly restive working class and prevent revolution.

It soon became apparent that not even inclusion of the SPD in the government could prevent the fall of the monarchy. On November 9, 1918, the last imperial chancellor, Prince Max of Baden, announced the abdication of the Kaiser. Prince Max then transferred the powers of his office to Friedrich Ebert, leader of the SPD. For the first time in its history, the party found itself in power.¹

By this time, however, there were two socialist parties. During the War, many party members had begun to believe that it was time to abandon collaboration with the state. When the leadership refused, opposition members meeting at Gotha on April 6, 1917 formed a new socialist party, the Independent Social Democratic Party (Unabhängige

¹For a general history of the revolution see Rudolf Coper, Failure of a Revolution. Germany in 1918-1919 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955).

Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, or USPD).² The SPD and USPD shared the same goal--realization of a socialist economy and society. They differed, however, on how to pursue this objective. Relations between the two parties were good at first. Early in November, Ebert replaced the Progressive and Center cabinet ministers he had inherited from Prince Max with USPD representatives.

Although formation of an all-socialist government appeared to herald great social and economic changes, Ebert's intentions were anything but radical. He intended that his government would serve merely to maintain order until the nation could elect a national assembly to write a constitution.³ The Independent ministers had other ideas; they wanted to use the powers of the state to implement

²Once the USPD broke away from the parent party, the correct term for the original party was "Majority Social Democratic Party" or MSPD. When the MSPD and USPD reunited in 1922, the party was briefly referred to as the United Social Democratic Party or VSPD (Vereinigte or United). Soon afterwards, however, the "V" was dropped and the party was once again called the SPD. In the interest of simplicity, I will only use the acronyms SPD and USPD. Also see David Morgan, The Socialist Left and the German Revolution: A History of the German Independent Social Democratic Party 1917-1922 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975).

³"Ebert über die Aufgaben der neuen Regierung", Vorwärts, January 1, 1919. Even though this article appeared over a month later, it illustrates Ebert's unwavering attitude towards the Revolution and the National Assembly. Ebert was also worried that the Allies would make good on their threat to occupy Germany if the government could not keep order. On this point see "Entente gegen deutschen Bolschewismus", Vorwärts, January 3, 1919. Use of the term Bolshevism indicates that the Russian example was uppermost in everyone's mind.

basic economic and social reforms immediately. They felt that the socialists would never again have such a favorable opportunity to implement their program. The differences in approach made the disintegration of SPD-USPD cooperation inevitable.

A socialist government also took power in Prussia. The Independent Social Democrat, Adolph "Ten Commandments" Hoffmann,⁴ along with the Majority Social Democrat, Konrad Haenisch, assumed control of Prussia's Ministry for Spiritual and Instructional Affairs. Giving an indication of things to come, they promptly renamed the ministry; it was now known as the "Ministry of Science, Art, and Education".⁵ In accordance with USPD intentions, Hoffmann proceeded to enact immediately the socialist plank calling for secularization of education. On November 27 church supervision of the schools was abolished.⁶ Two days later

⁴Wittwer, pp. 25, 79. Hoffmann served in the Prussian state legislature from 1910 to 1918. He was notorious as the author of atheistic pamphlets; one such tract which appeared in 1891 lampooned the Ten Commandments, earning Hoffmann his nickname. His ascent to power seemed ominous to pious citizens.

⁵I will use the terms "Ministry of Education" and "Education Minister" throughout the rest of the dissertation.

⁶Die deutsche Revolution 1918-1919--Dokumente, ed. Gerhard A. Ritter and Susanne Miller (Frankfurt: Fischer Bücherei, 1968), "Verfügung des Preußischen Ministeriums für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Volksbildung über die Aufhebung der Geistlichen Ortschulaufsicht vom 27. 11. 1918", p. 254.

the same fate befell compulsory religious instruction.⁷ The custom of opening and closing the school day with a prayer was also abolished. Prohibiting prayer in the schools was aimed at protecting the rights of dissidents (those who had dropped church membership), who had suffered discrimination before and during the World War.⁸

Intoxicated by the sudden possession of power, Haenisch initially agreed with Hoffmann's actions. By late December, however, the two socialist parties were bitterly divided over the tempo of change. The SPD insisted that reform had to await the convening of a democratically elected National Assembly. This belief led Haenisch to revoke both decrees.⁹ When the USPD resigned from the

⁷Ibid., "Erlaß des Preußischen Ministeriums für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Volksbildung an die Provinzialschulkollegien und Regierungen über den Religionsunterricht vom 29. 11. 1918", p. 254.

In the pre-war period, Hoffmann was so opposed to religious instruction in the schools that he had requested his own children be assigned to the Jewish class, an action that outraged not only the public, but the Jewish teachers as well. See GStA (Berlin) Rep. 76 VII neu Sekt 1B-I, Nr. 37, vol. VII, p. 121.

⁸An example of discrimination against dissidents was their ineligibility for military promotion during the war. This question spawned a long debate in the Prussian legislature from late 1916 to the middle of 1917. See GStA (Berlin) Rep. 76 VII neu Sekt 1B-I, Nr. 37, vol VII, pp. 106-108, 114-116, 118, 121, 127-130, 133-136, 138-139, 143, 145.

⁹Ritter and Miller, "Anordnung des Preußischen Ministers für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Volksbildung, Haenisch, über den Religionsunterricht vom 28. 12. 1918", p. 261.

government shortly afterwards, the prospect of secularizing the schools disappeared.

Catholics made up one-third of Prussia's population. The Center Party was dedicated to maintaining the religious character of elementary education. In November, the leadership of the party was overtaken by the rapidity of events; the party was in disarray. Hoffmann's decrees galvanized the Center into action, however. Catholics in the Rhineland threatened to secede from Prussia and Germany if the decrees were enforced.¹⁰

The Independents were furious that Haenisch rescinded the decrees. The Education Minister defended his action on several grounds. First, maintaining Prussian unity was essential in order to maintain German unity.¹¹ Secondly, Haenisch insisted that changes could be enacted only after the proper legislative body, the National Assembly, considered the issues.¹² Replying to the charge that he was

¹⁰Ibid., "Artikel der Kölnischen Volkszeitung über Richtlinien und Arbeitsziele des Preußischen Kultusministeriums vom 7. 12. 1918", pp. 256-258 and "Entschliebung einer Versammlung in Köln gegen die Aufhebung des Religionsunterrichts, 3. 12. 1918", p. 258. The SPD accused the Center of resorting to blackmail in threatening secession, "Das angebliche Schulkompromiß. Die Expresserpolitik des Zentrum", Vorwärts, July 6, 1919.

¹¹"Kultusminister Haenisch über den Einheitsstaat", Vorwärts, July 24, 1919.

¹²GStA (Merseburg) Rep. 169D Preußischer Landtag, xf B1, Die Schulunterhaltung Allgemein, Bd. 1: 1919-24. 11. April 1919, Verfassunggebende Preußische Landesversammlung.

pandering to the Catholics' wishes, Haenisch pointed out that rash action could only lead to a backlash--the November decrees had given the Center an issue which had mobilized its constituency.¹³ A strong Center Party delegation in the National Assembly would only hinder the realization of educational reform on socialist lines.

The SPD's firm adherence to the establishment of democracy should not be viewed solely as a disinterested desire to empower the people. The party also believed that it would benefit electorally from universal suffrage. Although the Social Democrats had not expected the victory of the proletariat so soon, they were now certain that the triumph would be bloodless--violent revolution appeared unnecessary because historical necessity had allegedly swept the socialists into power and historical necessity would keep them there. As the natural leaders of Germany, socialists would carry out their world historical task of supervising Germany's transition from capitalism to socialism. The party fully expected to receive a majority of votes when elections were held on January 19, 1919.¹⁴

¹³Ibid., xc C2, Die Konfessionelle Verhältnisse der Schule (Konfessions-, Simultanschule), Ldtg. Bd. 1: 1919-27, Verfassunggebende Preußische Landesversammlung, 12. April 1919.

¹⁴"Neujahrgruß allen Schaffenden", Vorwärts, January 1, 1919. This article linked the socialists with Luther, Goethe, Kant, and Nietzsche. An untitled article, Vorwärts, January 2, 1919, expressed similar sentiments.

The SPD did well in the elections but failed to secure a majority. Not only did it face competition from the USPD, but also from a third socialist party, the Communist Party of Germany (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands or KPD), which was established on December 30, 1918.¹⁵ While the USPD opposed collaboration with non-socialist parties, the KPD went even further--it advocated the seizure of power and implied that violence would be necessary in the process.

When two of the KPD's most popular leaders, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, were murdered in January 1919, the Communists accused the SPD of complicity in the murders. (There is some controversy about who was responsible for the murders. What is important, however, is that the KPD believed that the Social Democrats were responsible.) At the very least, the SPD's press campaign contributed to the poisonous atmosphere of hatred and fear that led to the murders.¹⁶ At any rate, from this time on the Communists remained implacably opposed to the Social Democrats. While the USPD and SPD were able to mend

¹⁵For details on the founding of the KPD see Werner Angress, Stillborn Revolution: The Communist Bid for Power in Germany 1921-1923 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).

¹⁶For an example of this see "Die Reichskonferenz des Spartakusbundes", Vorwärts, January 1, 1919. The SPD linked the KPD with the Russian Bolsheviks, whose example of violent revolution struck fear into the hearts of orderly citizens.

fences, a KPD-SPD reconciliation proved impossible. The KPD presented a constant threat to the SPD's voter base.

Even if the socialist movement had not been fragmented, the members of all three parties combined did not compose a majority of the nation's voters. The SPD hoped that its opposition to revolution and its readiness to collaborate with the middle-class parties would eventually win the loyalty of the nation.¹⁷ But as long as the SPD feared the loss of its working-class constituency to one of the other socialist parties, it felt obligated to continue speaking the language of opposition. Furthermore, as long as the SPD was bound to Marxist ideology, it could not appeal to the nation at large. It would have to remain a special interest party.¹⁸

THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, FEBRUARY--AUGUST 1919

The newly elected National Assembly met on February 6, 1919 in the city of Weimar, away from the tumultuous capital. The KPD boycotted the elections, leaving the field to

¹⁷Konrad Haenisch, Staat und Hochschule. Ein Beitrag zur nationalen Erziehungsfrage (Berlin: Verlag für Politik und Wirtschaft, 1920). This is an example of socialist attempts to broaden the appeal of the party to wider groups.

¹⁸In 1918 Max Weber commented that both the Center and the Social Democrats were special interest parties, and that they preferred to remain so. From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, trans. and ed. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), "Politics as a Vocation", p. 112.

six major political parties. Two of the six were socialist parties--the SPD and the USPD, and two were traditionally liberal parties--the Democratic Party (Deutsche Demokratische Partei or DDP, successor to the Progressive Party) and the German People's Party (Deutsche Volkspartei or DVP, successor to the National Liberal Party).¹⁹ The remaining two parties were the Catholic Center Party²⁰ (essentially the same party as in Imperial Germany), and the National People's Party (Deutschnationale Volkspartei or DNVP, successor to the Conservative Party). The number of seats each obtained in the assembly was as follows: 22 USPD, 165 SPD, 75 DDP, 90 Center, 22 DVP, and 43 DNVP.²¹ Since no party managed to secure a majority, formation of a coalition was necessary.

¹⁹The best secondary source on Weimar liberalism is Larry Eugene Jones, German Liberalism and the Dissolution of the Weimar Party System, 1918-1933 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

²⁰For the Center Party see Herbert Hömig, Das Preußische Zentrum in der Weimarer Republik (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald, 1979); Günther Grünthal, Reichsschulgesetz und Zentrumsparlei in der Weimarer Republik (Düsseldorf: Freien Universität Berlin, 1968); and Ellen Lovell Evans, The German Center Party 1870-1933: A Study in Political Catholicism (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981).

²¹Ernst Rudolf Huber, Deutsche Verfassungsgeschichte Seit 1789. Band V, Weltkrieg, Revolution und Reichserneuerung 1914-1919 (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1978), p. 1069. A few splinter parties also received enough votes to earn a few seats at the assembly.

What were the possible combinations? A return to an all-socialist government composed of the USPD and SPD, as in November and December 1918, was numerically impossible because the two parties together fell short of a majority. A coalition of the USPD, SPD, and DDP was a possibility, but the DDP refused to join as a junior partner holding less than a third of the votes, and facing domination by the other two parties.²²

What about an SPD-DDP-DVP coalition? After all, the DVP was a liberal party. And such a coalition was numerically possible. But there were tensions in the liberal camp. The DDP was established in late November by members of the Progressive Party. Although they hoped the National Liberals would join their new party, they were rather cold to Gustav Stresemann who had led the National Liberals in forming their own party, the DVP.²³ Division in the liberal camp was similar to the division of the socialists--both movements were weakened.

SPD coalition with the DNVP was out of the question. But was a Center-DVP-DNVP combination possible? The Nationalists had defended Catholic religious freedom in Imperial Germany, giving the two parties a possible basis of co-operation. But this coalition was numerically

²²The DDP felt it had to be careful and not appear to be too friendly to the socialists. Frye, p. 71.

²³Jones, pp. 18-20.

impossible, falling several votes short of the necessary majority. If the DDP joined the group, however, more than enough votes was secured. DDP-DVP animosity, however, could not be overcome.

Only one possible combination remained--the SPD-DDP-Center, commonly called the Weimar coalition. This group was responsible for writing a new constitution for the German nation. All three parties were united in their commitment to the establishment of democracy.²⁴ Although there was a basis for co-operation in general matters, could the three compromise on religious and educational matters when writing the constitution?

The positions of all three parties remained essentially unchanged from their pre-war programs. The Center conceded that school administrators should be professionally trained educators, but still insisted that confessional segregation of elementary schools must be maintained. The Center also opposed formation of a centralized unitary state; the Catholics were ardent champions of "states' rights". Their preference was for regional (local or state), rather than federal control of the schools.²⁵

²⁴Orlow, vol. 1, pp. 3-10.

²⁵GSStA (Merseburg) Rep. 169D, Xc C2 Die Konfessionelle Verhältnisse der Schule (Konfessions-, Simultanschule), Ldtg. Bd. 1: 1919-27, Verfassunggebende Preußische Landesversammlung, 16. Sitzung am 11. April 1919.

Although the DDP was slightly warmer to the churches than the SPD, the two parties were nevertheless allies on issues concerning religion and education. Democrats wanted to solidify national unity by creating a stronger central government. A standardized educational system throughout the Reich, in which children of all religions were mixed, was their ideal. They called their school a "community school".²⁶

While in theory the SPD still continued to support the idea of a free, secular, and integrated school, the party leadership was practical enough to realize that coalition with the Center would prevent complete implementation of its ideal. Considering the fact that the SPD and DDP commanded slightly more than two-thirds of the votes in the Weimar coalition, it is remarkable that the Center was able to realize any part of its educational program. External events, however, decisively affected negotiations on the constitution.

When Germany was presented with the Versailles Treaty, the DDP left the assembly rather than sign the document. Without the support of its erstwhile ally, the Social Democrats were forced to make concessions to the Center. This resulted in what came to be known as the first school compromise. In this compromise, the favored school types

²⁶Frye, p. 60-61.

of all three parties--the SPD's secular school, the DDP's community school, and the Center's confessional school--were given equal legal status in the constitution.²⁷

Before this draft of the constitution could be ratified, the DDP returned to the negotiating table and the education clauses were rewritten.²⁸ A close scrutiny of these problematical articles is in order.

THE WEIMAR CONSTITUTION

Many observers at the time believed that the constitution produced by the Weimar coalition was one of the most democratic documents that the world had yet seen. The clauses on education and religion seemed to offer a sound basis for construction of a viable school system. But these articles proved to be extremely contradictory and subject to varied interpretation throughout the 1920s. This source of partisan strife proved debilitating for the new democracy.

The third section, consisting of articles 135-141, dealt with the issue of religion.²⁹ Articles 135 and 136 guaranteed a number of basic freedoms, including the

²⁷Wittwer, p. 95.

²⁸Frye, pp. 80-81.

²⁹Die Verfassung des Deutschen Reichs vom 11. August 1919, Testausgabe mit ausführlichem Sachregister, ed. Karl Pannier (Leipzig: Verlag von Philipp Reclam jun., n.d.) "Dritter Abschnitt. Religion und Religionsgesellschaften" pp. 40-42.

freedom of belief and conscience. No citizen could be required to reveal his or her religious beliefs or be forced to participate in church ceremonies or to take religious oaths. The holding of public office was independent of an individual's religious confession. Religious beliefs would only be taken into account if such beliefs were relevant for the position.

Article 137 flatly stated that "There is no state church." The article went on to guarantee the churches' complete control over their own affairs. At the same time, religious societies that had previously enjoyed all the rights of a public corporation would continue to do so. The article proceeded to define what this meant--public corporations were entitled to receive tax monies collected by the state. These two provisions meant that the churches retained all the benefits of the old church-state partnership, while at the same time eliminating state interference in their affairs. This article added that other societies which had not previously enjoyed these rights might earn them if their "constitution and number of members offered assurance of permanency." This provision allowed previously banned dissident groups the chance to earn the same rights as the churches. The article concluded that if further regulations were necessary, the individual states would be responsible for passing such legislation.

The remaining articles in this section guaranteed the churches security of their property, provided members of the military free time to fulfill their religious duties, and permitted religious organizations the right to provide services in hospitals and prisons as long as they were not coercive. Finally, article 139 deserves special mention because its tortured language so vividly illustrates the problem of socialist-Catholic co-operation. This article stated that "Sunday and state-recognized holidays remain legally protected as days of rest and spiritual elevation."

The next section, articles 142-150, dealt with education and the schools.³⁴ These articles generally guaranteed the free pursuit of knowledge. Article 143 provided that "teachers in the public schools have all the rights and duties of state officials." This article could be construed as standing in contradiction to article 136, which had stipulated that the confession of state officials was not a consideration, unless the duties of the office were dependent on religious membership.

Article 144 stated that the entire school system was subject to state supervision. It went on to add that "School supervision will be exercised by full-time professionally educated officials." This article reinstated the decree of November 27, 1918 that Haenisch had rescinded.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 43-46.

School inspections would no longer be performed by local church officials who lacked pedagogical training. The teachers' demands of 1848 for professional supervision seemed to be satisfied at last.

Article 145 mandated free education for at least eight years, to be followed by occupational training (which was also free) until the student was eighteen years old. This provision caused little problem. But Article 146, like article 143, was the source of numerous problems in the 1920s. It stipulated that a common elementary school would provide the basis for the middle and high schools. The variety of professions was to be taken into account in establishing post-elementary institutions. While complete integration of the various levels was not achieved, the constitution provided that admission to any of the school types depended on the student's "predisposition and inclination, not the economic and social position or religious confession of one's parents."

The next paragraph of the same article returned to the issue of the character of the elementary schools. Upon petition, parents were granted the right to secure a school of their confession or *Weltanschauung*, as long as "orderly school administration" was not jeopardized. Details would be regulated by the states according to general principles established by a national law. But this law was never passed.

The final paragraph of this article required that national, state, and community means be used to financially support poor students who were considered suitable to attend a middle or high school. Article 147 abolished private schools intended to segregate wealthy students from other children. State approval was necessary for private schools with legitimate missions. Private schools would be permitted if the public school in that area did not provide for a particular "confession or Weltanschauung . . . or special pedagogical interest." This provision had the potential to fragment the school system. The article concluded by abolishing private preparatory schools of the elementary grades. These schools had been used by the wealthy to secure rapid and certain admission into the high schools.

Article 148 showed its SPD-Center authorship in its provision that "all schools are to strive to bring about moral growth, civic character, and personal and professional excellence in the spirit of the German nation and national reconciliation." Paragraph two stated that "care is to be taken that the sensitivities of dissenters not be injured." Paragraph three made "civic and work instruction" subjects in the schools. In addition, every student would receive a copy of the constitution upon graduation.

Article 149 stated that "Religious instruction is an ordinary subject of the schools with the exception of

non-confessional (secular) schools."³¹ The article continued, "religious instruction will be taught in accord with the principles of the concerned religious community without prejudice to the supervisory rights of the state." The article concluded with the provision that participation in religious instruction or religious holidays and ceremonies was completely voluntary for both teachers and students. No student could be coerced into taking religious instruction, nor could teachers be required to teach the subject. Although the article seems straightforward, we will see in chapter seven that this provision provoked a barrage of letters to the Education Ministry by local officials concerned about the proper way to interpret and carry out this provision.

Although not in this section, one additional article touched on the issue of education. It nullified many of the guarantees made in the articles just discussed. This was article 174, known as the "status quo" article. It stated that "until enactment of the national law foreseen in article 146, paragraph 2, the existing legal position would remain in force."³²

The National Assembly ratified the constitution on July 31, 1919. The parties of the Weimar coalition voted for

³¹Parenthesis in the original.

³²Ibid., p. 53.

it, while the USPD joined the DVP and DNVP in voting against ratification. Having received a majority, the document went into effect on August 11, 1919.

* * *

Although the SPD, DDP, and Center voted to ratify the constitution, none of them was entirely satisfied with it, especially the clauses dealing with education and religion. The Democrats were disappointed that federal control of education had not been established. The Center was pleased with the status quo article because it guaranteed continuation of confessional schools, at least for the time being. Catholics now turned to the task of achieving legal preference for the confessional school through enactment of the promised national education law.

Many socialists vehemently objected to the education clauses. Haenisch thought contradictions in these articles would lead to chaos in school administration. Like the Democrats, he had hoped for greater federal control of education, in order to counteract the particularistic influences of religion and region.²³

Independent Socialists criticized the SPD for not getting the secular school clearly established. Socialist teachers of both parties had hoped for removal of church

²³"Kultusminister Haenisch gegen das Schulkompromiß", Vorwärts, July 22, 1919.

influence from education.³⁴ In defense, Majority Social Democrats pointed out that the SPD had done the best it could, considering that the DDP, its ally against the Center, had abandoned the negotiations. Despite this, the SPD had triumphed by obtaining parity of the secular and confessional schools.³⁵

In any event, the SPD did not yet enjoy majority support at the polls. Until then, freedom from compulsory religious instruction and abolition of private preparatory schools were considerable achievements.³⁶ Now that Germany had adopted a democratic form of government, the voters had to learn to accept majority decision, even if this meant the continuation of confessional schools for the time being. The task was now to persuade the voters of the necessity of the secular school.³⁷

Although the SPD remained formally committed to the principle of secularizing the elementary schools, members in the party disagreed on the specific meaning of secularization. The next chapter will examine the attempts of one socialist educator to define the term and formulate an

³⁴"Das Lehrer gegen das Schulkompromiß", Vorwärts, July 19, 1919 and an untitled article, July 21, 1919.

³⁵"Der Kampf um die Schule", Vorwärts, July 20, 1919.

³⁶"Das neue Schulkompromiß", Vorwärts, July 31, 1919.

³⁷"Das Schulkompromiß in der Nationalversammlung", Vorwärts, July 19, 1919.

educational reform plan consistent with the principles of the larger socialist movement.

CHAPTER FOUR THE SECULARIZATION OF EDUCATION; THE REFORM IDEAS OF KURT LÖWENSTEIN

Kurt Löwenstein began his political career in the Independent Social Democratic Party. He was the socialist movement's most tireless proponent of the secularization of education. He objected not only to confessional segregation of the elementary schools, but also to the inclusion of religious instruction in the schools. This chapter will examine the basis for Löwenstein's deep antipathy for the established churches and the Christian religion.

Löwenstein's ideas were not restricted merely to criticizing religion. Rather, he sought to develop arguments which would persuade parents that the secular school, as he defined it, could best prepare the nation's youth to deal with their tasks in the modern world. While his ideas seem to be a logical interpretation of Marx's criticism of religion, not all socialists agreed with Löwenstein. A more serious obstacle to implementation of his ideas, however, was that Löwenstein was unable to secure the active support of the party's leadership. While he was free to publicize his ideas, they were to remain unrealized.

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Kurt Löwenstein was born May 18, 1885 in Bleckede, a small town on the Elbe.¹ His father, a merchant, and his mother, a milliner raised him in the orthodox Jewish religion, sending him to a private Jewish *Realgymnasium*. As a student, he worked at odd jobs to help pay the tuition fees. After completing high school, he studied philosophy, education, and national economy at several German universities, graduating in 1911 from the University of Erlangen. Löwenstein intended to become a rabbi at first; in 1908, however, he had a change of heart and abandoned not only Judaism, but religion altogether. Although qualified to teach in a *Gymnasium*, he worked as a free-lance journalist until the outbreak of the World War.

Löwenstein served at the front as an ambulance orderly. Like many of his generation, he experience a loss of faith in the established order.² At the end of the war, his

¹The following biographical information comes from Nachlass Dr. Kurt Löwenstein, Findbuch, 1982, pp. 2-6, a guide written for the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (hereafter cited as FES) in Bonn, where Löwenstein's papers are located. One of his favorite pseudonyms was Kerlów-Löwenstein; Kerlów was a combination of the first syllables of his wife's maiden name, Kerwel, and his own. This pen name expressed his commitment to the idea of the equality of men and women. Although his intention might be praiseworthy, use of this name can cause the researcher some confusion. For purposes of simplification, only the name Löwenstein will be used throughout this dissertation.

²Modris Eksteins, Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1989); Eric J. Leed, No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

conviction that society and economy needed to be completely transformed led him to join the Independent Social Democratic Party. Löwenstein represented the USPD at the National Assembly of 1919.

From 1920 to 1933 he was a member of the Reichstag and a town councillor for school administration in Berlin. In addition to his political and administrative responsibilities, Löwenstein also actively participated in the *Kinderfreunde*, a children's organization dedicated to cultivating a sense of civic responsibility in youth. In February 1933, Löwenstein's home was raided by the Nazis, who hated him because of his race and his politics. He left Germany and eventually settled in Paris, where he continued to work with socialist educational organizations and children's movements. On May 8, 1939 he died of a heart attack in Paris.

Although Löwenstein addressed different aspects of educational reform, he focussed on eliminating church domination of the schools. His ideas on the secularization of education reflected his prior political affiliations.

1979); and Robert Wohl, The Generation of 1914 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979). These three books discuss various aspects of the affects of the war experience. Wohl concluded that few generalizations could be made about the war; it affected different people with the same kinds of experiences in different ways--there was no such thing as a front "generation", he maintained.

LÖWENSTEIN AND THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

Before the war, Löwenstein had vaguely identified with liberal ideology without becoming politically active or joining a party. But the war experience propelled him into politics--social and economic reform, he believed, were necessary to ensure that such a catastrophe would never recur. Like many of his contemporaries, Löwenstein lost faith in abstract liberal concepts, which seemed hollow after the experience of witnessing the carnage at the front.³ He turned to Marxist ideology because it seemed more concrete--unlike liberalism, Marxism claimed to account for the social and economic conditions that shaped the lives of individuals.⁴

Löwenstein thought that the concrete realistic nature of Marxism promoted a positive attitude to life.⁵ While previous ideologies were remote from reality, socialism

³Eksteins, p. 256.

⁴FES 3.3.2., 8, 217, "Die Lage der sozialistischen Erziehung", Sozialistische Erziehung, 1, January, 1929.

⁵Kurt Löwenstein, Das Kind als Träger der werdenden Gesellschaft (Vienna: Jungbrunnen, 1. Auflage 1926; 2. verbesserte Auflage, 1928), p. 30. This is Löwenstein's most important book. The best translation for "werdenden Gesellschaft" is "developing society". The phrase can be translated as "future society" as well, but the connotation of the process of dialectical development is lost, giving too much import to the final result as opposed to present reality--Löwenstein mixed the past, present, and future, a difficult theme to relate. Another possible translation is "becoming society" which conveys the notion of change and reminds one of Nietzsche, but is awkward in English.

united theory and practice. Löwenstein embraced Karl Marx's famous dictum that "the philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it."⁶

But what could one do to change a world which Marx himself had asserted was historically determined? Löwenstein thought that belief in historical determinism did not preclude belief in the ability of the individual to change things. He wrote, "It appears to us that historical events both in their totality as well as in their individual phases are neither mechanical nor passive."⁷ What part, then, did the individual play in the process?

Löwenstein thought that "past, present, and future exist simultaneously."⁸ While unenlightened individuals acted as representatives of their estate or class and failed to grasp the necessary direction of historical change, those who were armed with the gospel of Marx could divine the future in the present. The task of the leaders of the socialist movement was to share its knowledge of the necessary direction of history. As Löwenstein put it, "Our task is to accelerate the process in which the consciousness becomes ripe and strong enough to become decisive

⁶Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach", p. 145.

⁷Löwenstein, Das Kind, p. 7.

⁸Ibid.

action."⁹ Although one could not alter the future, one could hasten its coming. Liberal ideology did not offer such a compelling vision.

Löwenstein's emphasis on the individual's ability to shape history was not uncommon among socialists--the Hungarian Communist Georg Lukács (1885-1971) expressed the same attitude. Although he never directly cited Lukács,¹⁰ Löwenstein was undoubtedly familiar with his book of 1923, History and Class Consciousness. Lukács believed that the totality was more important than isolated facts; facts could even be deceptive and misleading.¹¹ By grasping the totality, one could overcome the limitations of time and place and anticipate the future. To overcome time, one must adopt the standpoint of the proletariat because it was the only universal class, the only class that could transcend its narrow, "special" interests. As individuals, however, proletarians failed to comprehend the totality.

⁹Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁰The three reformers I discuss in this dissertation aimed at a more general audience; their works lacked footnotes, so it is often difficult to draw a direct connection between the reformers' ideas and those of their contemporaries.

¹¹The following discussion draws heavily from Leszek Kolakowski, Main Currents of Marxism. Its Origin, Growth, and Dissolution, vol. 3, The Breakdown, trans. P.S. Falla (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), pp. 258-306. Kolakowski's discussion of Lukács betrays a great deal of anger; as a socialist, Kolakowski felt that the cause was betrayed by those who twisted the ideology.

Only the socialist leadership understood the totality; it would inform the proletariat of its own best interests. If individual workers questioned the validity of the leadership's position and attempted to cite facts on their behalf, their arguments should be dismissed as misguided due to their partial and limited understanding of historical reality.

Löwenstein was not as dismissive of facts as was Lukács. Nevertheless, there are some similarities in the two men's positions. In post-war Germany feelings of insecurity were widespread. While many Germans tried to escape the pressing problems of the day by fleeing into a mythical past,¹² socialists dreamt of a utopian future. When one could no longer believe in liberal values or in Christianity, Marxist ideology could serve as a substitute. With its claim to be based on science, and its promise of hope for the future, it could serve to still the qualms of anxiety in the chaotic world of the 1920s.

Both Löwenstein and Lukács would have done well to heed the advice of the sociologist Max Weber. Weber drew a distinction between an ethics of responsibility and an ethics of ultimate ends. Although he recognized that serving a

¹²Richard Bessel, Germany after the First World War (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 255-284.

goal gave one faith and passion, it could also blind the devotee.¹³

Given his attraction to Marxist ideology, why did Löwenstein choose to join the USPD in 1918 rather than the Communists? His choice must be attributed to his firm belief that consciousness-raising was the proper means of bringing about change and to his deep-seated aversion to violence. Löwenstein insisted that "The best weapon of humanity is reason. The irrationality of the masses is the greatest enemy of socialism."¹⁴ He remarked that he too had experienced revolutionary excitement in the Republic's early days. But he pointed out that emotion never hastened change; only reason did.¹⁵ The KPD was too emotional and too eager for violence to suit Löwenstein's tastes.

Why did Löwenstein join the USPD, rather than the larger and more powerful SPD? He rejected the SPD because of its collaboration with the Center Party. The Catholic Church had its own gospel; its religious message was anathema to Löwenstein. Political compromise with the Center made the socialists' task of consciousness-raising impossible, he thought.¹⁶ When the USPD and SPD reunited

¹³Weber, "Politics as a Vocation", p. 127.

¹⁴Löwenstein, Das Kind, p. 140.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶FES 3.3.1., 1, "Koalitions- und Kulturpolitik", Freiheit, June 1, 1920.

in 1922, about two-thirds of the Independents joined the Communists, while the other third, including Löwenstein, joined the SPD. He never ceased, however, criticizing the SPD's collaboration with the Center. Why was he so adamantly opposed to the established churches?

LÖWENSTEIN AND THE ESTABLISHED CHURCHES

While liberals had insisted on the supremacy of state authority, both the DDP and the DVP allowed the churches a public role in the life of the nation.¹⁷ The majority of socialists opposed this; party programs insisted on the complete exclusion of the churches from the public sphere. The Eisenach Program (1869) had called for "separation of church and state and separation of education from the church";¹⁸ the Erfurt Program (1891) demanded the "secularization of the school";¹⁹ the Görlitz Program (1921) repeated the old formula "separation of church and state";²⁰ and finally, the Heidelberg Program (1925) insisted on "separation of church and state, separation of school and church".²¹

¹⁷Treue, pp. 120, 127.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 77.

²⁰Ibid., p. 105.

²¹Ibid., p. 109.

Löwenstein took these platforms seriously. He criticized both the Catholic and the Evangelical churches; he viewed the Catholic Church, however, as the greater threat because of its excellent organization and the pivotal position of its political representative, the Center Party.²² Both churches were nevertheless suspect because of their long collaboration with the old caste-ridden, capitalist, authoritarian state.²³ As Löwenstein put it:

Throne and altar were bound closely with one another. One cannot therefore precisely distinguish who was the maidservant and who the master in the reciprocity of the relationship.²⁴

The churches posed as guardians of morality and gatekeepers to a spiritual life; in fact their real goal was political: to recapture the power they had enjoyed in the old authoritarian state. Löwenstein found the churches more despicable than monarchists because the latter were at least honest about their goals. The churches' leadership pretended to be moral and above politics, when in fact,

²²FES 3.3.2., 6, 178, "Klerikalismus, Sozialreaktion und Reichsschulgesetz", Der Klassenkampf, October 1, 1927, pp. 12-13.

²³FES 3.3.1., 1, "Die Kulturreaktion", Freiheit, January 12, 1921.

²⁴Löwenstein, Das Kind, p. 142.

they were merely hypocrites intent on playing, and winning, the game of power politics.²⁵

The churches preached the virtue of obedience, but this was true only in an authoritarian state; attitudes of subservient obedience would handicap citizens in a democratic state. The promises of equality contained in the nation's constitution could only be realized when the power of those who supported the hierarchical class society was broken.²⁶ The established churches had compromised any true spirituality they may have ever possessed by serving the authoritarian state.

Löwenstein felt that the dishonesty of the churches betrayed people who remained loyal to the established churches only because they believed the churches were truly religious and moral, as the churches claimed.²⁷ Löwenstein labored to free people from the yoke of illusions which he believed the churches deliberately fostered in order to serve their own political ends. The new democratic republic could only thrive if the powers of the old authoritarian state were broken. The established churches were

²⁵3.3.2., 6, 178, "Klerikalismus, Sozialreaktion und Reichsschulgesetz", Der Klassenkampf, 1, October 1, 1927, pp. 12-13 and GStA (Dahlem) Rep. 76 VII neu Sekt 1B-I Nr. 2 Bd. XXV, p. 241, USPD speech in the Prussian Landtag, January 26, 1922.

²⁶Löwenstein, Das Kind, p. 37.

²⁷Kurt Löwenstein, Die weltliche Schule (Bochum: Graf, 1924), pp. 9, 17.

inextricably entwined with the old order, an order that was inimical to the modern secular democratic state, the state Löwenstein believed to be in accordance with dialectical historical development.²⁸

Such mistrust of both established churches was widespread among socialists. The mistrust was mostly due to the churches' role in supporting the state during the World War²⁹ and their support of the old ruling classes.³⁰ Pollsters reported that workers' perceptions of the Evangelical Church were slightly more negative--the Catholic Church seemed to be more willing to help the needy.³¹ In any case, did condemnation of the behavior of the churches mean a rejection of religion in general?

SOCIALIST ATTITUDES TO RELIGION

It is necessary to consider party programs again, in order to determine the official position of the SPD on

²⁸Ibid., pp. 4-8.

²⁹"Die religiöse Wahlperiode. Zum Wahlaufdruck des Deutschnationalen", Vorwärts, November 6, 1924; "Bemerkungen über das Verhältnis des Sozialismus zur Religion" Sozialistische Monatshefte, February 20, 1922; GStA (Dahlem) Rep. 76 VII neu Sekt. 1B-I Nr. 1 Bd. VIII, pp. 33-35, Landtag session of June 20, 1918.

³⁰"Für die weltliche Schule", Vorwärts, September 25, 1919, and "Kirche und gesellschaftliche Neugestaltung", Sozialistische Monatshefte (June 14, 1926): 390-395.

³¹"Der Sozialistische Arbeiter und die Religion. Das Ergebnis einer Rundfrage in Groß-Berlin", Vorwärts, May 1, 1924.

religion. The programs at Gotha and Erfurt stated that "religion is a private matter."³² The Görlitz Program elaborated: "religion is a private matter, of inner conviction, not a party or state matter."³³ Although the Heidelberg Program called for a secular school, it remained silent on religion. A wide range of opinion existed in the socialist movement on the validity and usefulness of religion in the modern world. Socialists disagreed on whether religion was necessary for maintenance of public morality.

The issue had arisen even before the end of the war. On March 14, 1916, the National Liberals in the Prussian House of Deputies introduced a bill that would have abolished compulsory religious instruction in the schools. The intention was to free the children of dissidents, those who had left the established churches, from compulsion.³⁴ Dissidents were dying in the war too, liberals asserted, and they should have the right to abstain from religious instruction.³⁵ The proposal opened a debate that lasted until May 1917, when the bill was finally defeated.

³²Treue, pp. 67, 76.

³³Ibid., p. 105.

³⁴GStA (Dahlem) Rep. 76 VII neu Sekt 1B-I, Nr. 37, Bd. VII, p. 107, unidentified newspaper clipping of November 30, 1916, "Zur Dissidentenfrage".

³⁵Ibid., p. 118, "Die Dissidentenfrage", Berliner Morgenpost, January 28, 1917.

The debate centered around whether a substitute moral instruction class, in place of confessional religious instruction, should be required. Many socialists opposed the idea--they argued that children did not learn morality from books or in special classes. Rather, they learned morality by watching their elders. Since the capitalist system forced adults to act immorally, only implementation of a socialist economy and society could result in a truly moral society. Furthermore, since all education built on morality, no separate classes were necessary.³⁶

Löwenstein agreed that morality was not learned in abstract lessons. Neither a substitute non-confessional morality course nor confessional religious instruction could produce moral citizens. He wrote,

Religion could not now, nor did it in earlier times, protect us from moral disintegration. . . . The religious lesson is a very poor means of achieving morality.³⁷

He went even further, however. Not only was religion useless in forming a moral sense; it actually could inhibit development of moral character. The teaching of Christianity encouraged immorality, Löwenstein believed,

³⁶"Unterricht in Sittlicher Lebenskunde", Vorwärts, September 4, 1920 and "Sittlichkeitsfragen und Lehrerinnenzölibat" September 24, 1920; GStA (Merseburg) Rep. 169D xf A1, Bd. 2, 29. November 1919, Hoffmann in Prussian Landtag.

³⁷Löwenstein, Das Kind, p. 154.

because it bred hypocrisy and a cavalier attitude towards reality. The Christian focussed too much on the afterlife, which led to an indifference and passivity towards this life.³⁸ In his belief that religion fostered illusion and tried to make one ignore exploitation and abuse Löwenstein echoed Marx, whose most famous sayings is that religion "is the *opium* of the people."³⁹ Marx expounded on this theme:

The abolition of religion as the *illusory* happiness of men, is a demand for their *real* happiness. The call to abandon their illusions about their condition is a *call to abandon a condition which requires illusions*.⁴⁰

Löwenstein found Marxism attractive because he believed it was scientific. Much of Christian teaching flatly contradicted commonly accepted scientific axioms. Löwenstein thought that "it is easy to prove that numerous religious assertions are scientifically impossible and historically false."⁴¹ He added that we must "recognize our superstitions and subject them to scholarly explanation".⁴²

³⁸FES, 3.3.2., 6, 162, "Weltlicher oder religiöser Sozialismus? Vortragsabend des sozialistischen Jugendarbeits", Schleswig-Holsteinische Volkszeitung, April 25, 1927.

³⁹Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction", p. 54.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Löwenstein, Das Kind, p. 10.

⁴²Ibid., p. 152.

Many socialists agreed with Löwenstein. In the dawning age of aviation, children could see that the story of Jesus' ascension to heaven was a patent impossibility.⁴³ Teaching children to believe something that was so obviously untrue could only result in a distorted attitude toward objective reality. Old religious forms were dead; repeating them was hypocritical. "Ten Commandments" Hoffmann added that since adults no longer believed in religion, it should not be forced on children.⁴⁴

Socialists were not the only ones to criticize religion. Max Weber believed that rationalization was the mark of the modern age. This meant the disenchantment of the world. Many people could not bear the loss of religion. But in adhering to faith, they sacrificed reason.⁴⁵ Löwenstein agreed with many of Weber's arguments, but did not think that abandoning religion necessarily had to lead to disenchantment:

Life, history, nature offers the eyes and the heart an unending abundance of possibilities and opportunities. We should absolutely not shrink from these occasions. Elevation and sacredness are not special privileges of the churches, on the contrary.⁴⁶

⁴³GStA (Dahlem) Rep. 76 VII neu Sekt 1B-I Nr. 37 Bd. VII, pp. 8-9, letter to the Prussian House of Deputies, May 21, 1914.

⁴⁴"Für die weltliche Schule", Vorwärts, September 27, 1920.

⁴⁵Weber, "Science as a Vocation", pp. 139, 155.

⁴⁶Löwenstein, Das Kind, p. 158.

Sigmund Freud also believed in the march of science and rationalism, although he did not believe that this was necessarily progress. Religion, he wrote, had originally arisen from a sense of helplessness.⁴⁷ As humans learned more about the environment and how to control it, the less they needed religion. Religion, Freud thought, was a fairy tale. And contrary to what its supporters thought, it was not a necessary fiction.⁴⁸ Freud believed that retaining religious illusion was more dangerous than giving it up, quite simply because religious instruction impeded the development of reason.

Because religion did not promote morality, and even inhibited development of a moral sense, and because religion was irrational, Löwenstein rejected the arguments that insisted on its necessity. Religion only posed an obstacle in the task of educating the new generation of German youth. The school of the "developing society", Löwenstein insisted, could only be the secular school.

SOCIALISM AND THE SECULAR SCHOOL

Löwenstein argued that "the state is a secular power, therefore the separation of church and state is necessary;

⁴⁷Sigmund Freud, The Future of an Illusion, trans. James Strachey (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1961; original German 1927), p. 23.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 36.

the state school must be a secular school."⁴⁹ He defined a secular school as one that offered absolutely no religious instruction nor any references to God in the form of school prayers, songs, reading material, or holiday celebrations.

Many socialists debated the definition of the secular school. Could it be considered a *Weltanschauung* school, as its critics charged?⁵⁰ If so, secular schools were special schools, no different from a Moslem school, for example. Löwenstein strongly rejected the notion of the secular school as a *Weltanschauung* school--the secular school was meant for all youth, not only those holding a particular outlook.

Löwenstein believed that the secular school was the school of the proletariat. But this did not make it a special-interest or *Weltanschauung* school. Rather, it was the true community school,⁵¹ the school type favored by the constitution; most contemporaries considered the term "community school" to refer to the liberals' ideal of an inter-confessional school. Löwenstein insisted that the proletariat was the core of the "developing society" or the

⁴⁹Löwenstein, Das Kind, pp. 142-143.

⁵⁰GSStA (Dahlem) Rep. 76 VII neu Sekt 1B-I Nr. 2 Bd. XXV, pp. 65-70, pamphlet by the Bishop of Paderborn.

⁵¹"Sozialdemokratischer Kulturtag", Vorwärts, March 25, 1921.

community. As such, the interests of this class were the interests of the whole future society.⁵²

Löwenstein disagreed that the German "soul" was fundamentally religious; on the contrary, it was secular, and so the community school should be secular too.⁵³ He wrote,

Secularization seems to many as only a negative attitude to church and religion, but secularization has a greater positive content; it provides the new inner structure for the developing society.⁵⁴

Opponents claimed that a school of the proletariat was none other than a party school--a socialist party school.⁵⁵ In these schools, a religious interpretation of history was replaced by the socialists' economic interpretation. The socialist secular school was no less dogmatic than any of the traditional denominational schools--the secular school, was in fact, a confessional school.⁵⁶ Löwenstein hotly denied the comparison:

Christian education can only be binding for the circle of believers who belong to the religious community. . . Therefore, Christian education can never become a

⁵²GSStA (Dahlem) Rep. 76 VII neu Sekt. 1B-I Nr. 60 Bd. III, p. 18 and "Bundestag der weltlichen. Die Freien Gesellschaften versammeln sich", Vorwärts, May 27, 1931.

⁵³"Gemeinschaftschule in gefahr!", Vorwärts, March 13, 1923.

⁵⁴Löwenstein, Das Kind, p. 159.

⁵⁵"Bürgerliche Kampf gegen die weltliche Schule. Ein Stadtverordnetenbesuch fordert mehr Erwerblosenfürsorge", Vorwärts, October 27, 1922.

⁵⁶GSStA (Dahlem) Rep. 76 VII neu Sekt. 1B-I Nr. 2 Bd. XXV, p. 80, "Die Parteien sind in Stellung", Die Schulfrage, an Evangelical newspaper, November 30, 1921.

general demand in our time; socialist education alone can lay claim to this right.⁵⁷

Defenders of the secular school insisted that their schools were not political; in class, socialism was never mentioned--since the evolutionary path to socialism was inevitable it was not necessary to drum it into students.⁵⁸

The constitution of 1919 gave parents the right to choose their children's school. Löwenstein saw his task, and his party's, as one of consciousness-raising. He wrote, "We who have confidence, we who have the firm belief in the necessity of socialism, we should press on with the work of enlightenment." Enlightenment meant educating parents on the necessity of choosing the secular school as the appropriate school for workers.

Like many members of the socialist movement, Löwenstein began the decade with high hopes; as the 1920s wore on, however, his articles began to express an increasing mood of exasperation. Parents were not responding to his appeals.

Löwenstein insisted that children were not the property of their parents; parents could not do exactly as they chose with their offspring. The needs of the whole society overrode the wishes of individual parents. Löwenstein

⁵⁷Löwenstein, Das Kind, p. 46.

⁵⁸"Sozialdemokratischer Kulturtag", Vorwärts, March 25, 1921.

pointed to the restriction of child labor in factories and mandatory inoculation as examples of how the needs of society and state took precedence.⁵⁹

Many socialists viewed the patriarchal family as a conservative institution that inhibited change. Since many parents tried to use education to advance the interests of their own children, the state, as the representative of the whole society's interests, should have the final say in educational matters.⁶⁰ Löwenstein disliked the educational clauses of the Weimar Constitution that gave parents choice of school types.

The constitution had provided for the creation of democratically elected parents' councils to aid the work of the schools. Originally intended to promote parental involvement, these councils soon became weapons in partisan strife. Indeed, many came to be dominated by reactionary and religious groups. Socialists were outraged when Catholics and Protestants united forces and captured control of many of the parents' councils.⁶¹ They felt that this was a blatant misuse of an institution meant to

⁵⁹Löwenstein, Das Kind, pp. 18, 20.

⁶⁰"Die Neuordnung der Volksschullehrerbildung in Preußen", Sozialistische Monatshefte (September 7, 1925): 548-552.

⁶¹"Ein neues Kulturinstrument. Die Bedeutung der Elternbeiratswahlen", Vorwärts, May 27, 1922 and "Schulkampf und Elternbeiratswahl", June 18, 1924.

promote democratization. Socialist educators tried to rouse working-class parents from their apathy to public education. They hoped that the party leadership would do more to promote interest in educational issues so the proletariat could capture these councils.⁴²

The leadership of the SPD, however, did not offer much help; it could not exert the necessary leadership because it was worried about maintaining good relations with the Center. Löwenstein and others were free to express their positions on these issues, but the party would not take an active role in promoting the secularization of education. While both Catholics and Protestants actively pursued the goals of protecting religion, the family, and the confessional segregation of education, the socialists were hampered by lack of organization and their inability to offer workable alternatives. As a result, the school system remained confessionally divided and retained religious instruction.

Löwenstein insisted that the promotion of the interests of the proletariat was not the promotion of special interests. He tried to support his contention by identifying the interests of the proletariat with those of the future society. But Löwenstein could not convince those who did

⁴²"Unsere Elternbeiräte", Vorwärts, September 22, 1922; "Eltern, merk es euch!", May 31, 1924; and "Von christlich-unpolitischer Kampfesweise", June 20, 1924.

not accept the premises of his arguments. To them, Marxist ideology was no more scientific than the Bible. Socialist ideology offered a substitute religion for some whose Christian faith was shaken by the war.

Although Löwenstein was not oblivious to the reality around him, his insistence on interpreting everything with reference to the "developing society" made it impossible for him to judge the present accurately. Löwenstein's influence on Prussian education was limited by his inability to deal with the inconsistencies and inaccuracies in his new faith, problems the party leadership also chose to ignore.

CHAPTER FIVE THE INTEGRATION OF EDUCATION: THE REFORM IDEAS OF PAUL DESTREICH

The issue of integration excited less debate than did the problem of secularization of the schools. Nevertheless, a discussion of socialist attitudes to educational reform would be incomplete without considering the SPD's position on integration.

Paul Oestreich vehemently objected to occupational specialization of the post-elementary schools. He believed that such segregation was inherently unfair to the working class. Furthermore, he maintained that the talents of each individual were better cultivated when all children were educated together. Not only the working class, but the whole community would benefit if education were integrated.

Like Löwenstein, Oestreich failed to secure the support of the party's leadership. In addition, although he penned numerous pamphlets, books, and articles, Oestreich was unable to communicate effectively with workers who were, on the whole, simply indifferent to cultural issues.

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Paul Hermann August Oestreich was born March 30, 1878 in Kolberg, the son of a carpenter.² His education began

²Oestreich's private papers are located in the Institut für Pädagogik at the Universität Würzburg. Plans to move these documents to the University Library were to be carried out late summer 1994. Basic biographical material taken from Biographisches Lexikon zur Weimarer Republik,

in the local *Volksschule*; Oestreich then attended the *Gymnasium* in Kolberg. This was quite unusual at the time--*Gymnasium* students were primarily drawn from exclusive private preparatory schools. *Volksschule* students were admitted only after passing a difficult entrance examination, a test not required of private school students.

Young Paul felt isolated in the *Gymnasium*. He lived in a working-class neighborhood in which most children attended other schools. This early experience made a great impression on him. He later remarked that the humanistic education he received seemed far removed from the practical demands of daily life.² He wondered if the exclusivity of the *Gymnasium* really served to protect and promote Germany's rich cultural heritage, as its defenders claimed;³ from his personal experience, he concluded that the real purpose was to maintain the privileges of the elite and perpetuate class segregation. Oestreich's subsequent attendance at the even more exclusive university, first in

ed. Wolfgang Benz and Hermann Graml (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1988), p. 242. Another invaluable source on Oestreich is Winifred Böhm, Kulturpolitik und Pädagogik Paul Oestreichs (Bad Heilbrunn\Obb: Verlag Julius Klinkhardt, 1973), pp. 48-68 for Oestreich's personal biography.

²Paul Oestreich, Menschenbildung. Ziele und Wege der entschiedenen Schulreform (Berlin: Ernst Oldenburg Verlag, 1922), p. 194. The abstract nature of modern education was criticized by many reformers, including non-socialist educators.

³Ringer, p. 78.

Berlin, then Greifswald, only intensified his feelings of isolation and estrangement. The problem of class segregation continued to agitate Oestreich throughout his life.

In 1900, Oestreich passed the state examination for *Gymnasium* teachers, the *pro facultate docendi*, in the fields of math, chemistry, physics, and mineralogy. Although he chose the practical and modern field of science, as a member of the educated class he received a thorough grounding in the classics and humanities. After serving as a student teacher for two years, he obtained a position in an exclusive boarding school in Ilfeld. This experience only intensified his feelings of class exclusion. He taught briefly in Barmen until 1905 and then obtained a position in a Berlin *Gymnasium*, where he taught until 1933.⁴

During the World War, Oestreich remained on the home front. Soldiers and civilians alike were deeply affected by the catastrophe, leading many of them to a political reorientation; the war proved to be the catalyst that turned Oestreich from liberalism to socialism. Unlike Löwenstein however, Oestreich chose to join the Social Democrats, rather than the Independents. He remained true to the socialist movement for the rest of his life.

⁴Böhm, pp. 62-63.

Early in 1933 Oestreich joined Thomas Mann and Käthe Kollwitz in signing a petition asking, in vain, for the SPD and KPD to unite to fight the rise of Hitler.⁵ Soon after the Nazis came to power, Oestreich was arrested and imprisoned. An old colleague with connections to the nationalists managed to secure his release. For the remainder of the Nazi period, Oestreich was free, but barred from teaching and publishing. He nevertheless continued to develop his school reform theories, in anticipation of the end of the Thousand Year Reich. Oestreich was determined that if the socialists ever held power again, the mistakes of the vacillating SPD in 1918-19 would not be repeated.

In April 1946 Oestreich joined the Socialist Unity Party, a combination of the old KPD and SPD.⁶ He finally saw his cherished ideal of a comprehensive school system implemented by the Soviet dominated East German government. What the Weimar Social Democrats had been unwilling to implement by fiat in 1918-19 and unable to obtain later by compromise was now a reality.

Commitment to socialist ideals prompted Oestreich's activities in the 1920s. His understanding of Marxist ideology affected his relationship with the SPD and shaped his educational reform plans. A consideration of these issues is in order.

⁵Ibid., pp. 153-176.

⁶Ibid., p. 158.

OESTREICH AND THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

Before the war, Oestreich had been associated with the liberal, Friedrich Naumann, who in 1919 helped establish the Democratic Party.⁷ Oestreich declined to join the DDP, opting instead for the Social Democrats. The liberals' defense of capitalism alienated Oestreich; he had come to believe that capitalist competition was a major cause of the World War. As a militant pacifist, Oestreich embraced Marxism because he thought a socialist system would better serve the preservation of peace.⁸

Marxism also attracted Oestreich because he thought socialism could restore meaning to human life by restoring meaning to work. Unlike Löwenstein, who was attracted to Marx's criticism of religion, Oestreich was especially drawn to Marx's description of man as the producing animal. According to Marx, humans are distinguished from animals in that humans "*produce* their means of subsistence. . . ."⁹

⁷For more on Naumann, see Peter Theiner, Sozialer Liberalismus und deutsche Weltpolitik: Friedrich Naumann im Wilhelminischen Deutschland (1860-1919) (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1983). Also see Frye, pp. 13-15; Jones, pp. 8-10. Naumann died shortly thereafter. Many observers lamented his loss, speculating that the DDP was crippled from the start by the deaths of some of its key leaders, among them Naumann and Max Weber.

⁸Böhm, p. 89. After World War II, Oestreich disliked the West German chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, because of his rearmament policies.

⁹Marx, "The German Ideology", p. 150. Marx often stressed certain words and phrases--all italics appear in the original.

Marx wrote that "as individuals expressed their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with *what* they produce and with *how* they produce."¹⁰

According to Marx, capitalist economy subverted the natural order of things by emphasizing the consumption of products rather than the process of production. Worse yet, however, capitalism depended on the exploitation of the worker's labor power. Since human essence lies in productivity, capitalism dehumanized workers by robbing them of the very activity that separated them from the rest of the animal kingdom, the very activity that made them human. Capitalism, in short, was both inhuman and unnatural.

Unlike supporters of capitalism, Dostoevich was interested in work as a process, as an end in itself, not as a means to the goal of making money. Protesting the materialism of capitalism, he believed in the primacy of the spirit: "The spirit should form the material, the idea should penetrate the daily!"¹¹ Elaborating on the theme of anti-materialism, Dostoevich claimed that machines now ruled

¹⁰Ibid. A contrast to Feuerbach's materialism: "One is what one eats." ("Man ist, was man ißt.") Marx might be paraphrased thus: "One is what one does."

¹¹Paul Dostoevich, Aus dem Leben eines Politischen Pädagogen, Selbstbiographie (Berlin: Volk und Wissen Verlags GmbH, n.d.), p. 7.

man, not man the machines.¹² We need to stop and ask ourselves why we are producing more and more, Oestreich insisted. The process of work shaped humanity--that was the true value of work, not the material goods produced.¹³ The capitalist system devalued humanity by worshipping commodities, something the Hungarian Georg Lukács called reification.¹⁴

Oestreich's concern with work as a process (as opposed to the usual concern with wages and hours) was not unusual among socialist intellectuals. The monthly party journal Sozialistische Monatshefte was a forum for socialists like Löwenstein and Oestreich who were concerned with cultural problems. Fritz Karsen, a socialist school reformer noted for his involvement in pilot schools, equated the process of work with the process of self-realization. When work became meaningless, as it did in industrial capitalism, life became meaningless.¹⁵ Martin Weise, a colleague of

¹²Right-wing reactionaries also had mixed feelings about technology. See Geoffrey Herf, Reactionary Modernism. Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

¹³Paul Oestreich, Die Produktionsschule als Nothaus und Neubau: Elastische Einheits-, Lebens-, Berufs-, und Volkskulturschule (Berlin: C.A. Schwetschke und Sohn, 1924), pp. 223-235.

¹⁴Kolakowski, pp. 275-276.

¹⁵Ingrid Neuner, Der Bund entschiedener Schulreformer 1919-1933. Programmatik und Realisation (Bad Heilbrunn\Obb: Verlag Julius Klinkhardt, 1980), pp. 165-166.

Oestreich's, concurred--work brought about the process of self-transformation. In other words, one attained humanity through work.¹⁴

A socialist school reformer active in the state of Thuringia, Anna Siemsen, protested against the German tendency to over-emphasize work and occupation. The English, she wrote, knew how to balance their lives between work and leisure. The Germans could learn something from them.¹⁷ For their part, foreign observers admired German vocational training for its efficiency.¹⁸

Oestreich rejected liberalism because its support of capitalism made it too materialistic. Why did he join the SPD, however, rather than the USPD or KPD? Like Löwenstein

¹⁴Martin Weise, Paul Oestreich und die Entschiedene Schulreform (Leipzig: Kurr'sche Buchhandlung, 1928).

¹⁷Anna Siemsen, "Schulprobleme in England und bei uns", Sozialistische Monatshefte (November 9, 1925): 693-697.

For a completely different view of the English see Oswald Spengler, Preussentum und Sozialismus (Munich: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1924; manuscript written late 1919). Spengler detested the English view of work. The English, he wrote, viewed work only as a means to money and status, whereas the German, and specifically the Prussian, saw work as an end in itself. Spengler did not like capitalism, but he did not like Marxism either. He thought that Marx had spent too much time in England.

¹⁸GSStA (Dahlem) Rep. 76 VII neu Sekt. 1B-I Nr. 1 Bd. IX, pp. 241-242, Liverpool Echo, April 24, 1928, "The Key to Success", manuscript draft sent to the Education Ministry from the author, Mr. F.B. Brown, chairman of the Liverpool Education Committee. He had been a delegate to the first International Education Conference held in Berlin. He waxed ecstatic about the wonders of German vocational training.

and many other socialists, Oestreich abhorred the Communists because he believed them to be violent revolutionaries. As a passionate pacifist, Oestreich would not consider revolution a viable option; revolution destroyed more than it built, he thought.¹⁹ Oestreich also opposed the Communists' position that social and economic changes had to precede educational reform.²⁰

Oestreich rejected the Independents because he thought the USPD did not give the need for school reform sufficient emphasis. The SPD proved to be disappointing in this regard as well, and although Oestreich remained in the party, his attitude to parliamentary politics and political parties was generally hostile.

Preferring to maintain his freedom from party dictation, Oestreich established an independent organization, the Alliance of Decided School Reformers (*Bund entschiedene Schulreformer* or BESCH) in October 1919. Although BESCH remained independent of SPD control, it consisted mostly of socialists; Adolf Grimme, although a Democrat at this time, was an exception. Oestreich defined the organization's relationship to political parties:

[BESCH] is not party political, but its individual members are members of parties; only they cannot

¹⁹Böhm, p. 237.

²⁰Paul Oestreich, Unabhängige Kulturpolitik. Vom graden Weg eines "Disziplinlosen". Gesammelte Aufsätze (Leipzig: Ernst Oldenburg Verlag, 1924), pp. 9-12.

become a tool of a party, can never see in a party anything other than an instrument.²¹

Consonant with its founder's beliefs, BESCH affirmed its commitment to the democratic republic, promoted social change, and denied violent revolution as a valid means to these ends. Instead, the Decided School Reformers believed change would result peacefully, through the gentle art of persuasion, an "intellectual revolution". In the early years BESCH members often accepted official administrative positions, so they could exert influence on the system from within. But Oestreich began to disapprove of this tactic, writing that,

Whoever believes that individuals in secure positions can take decisive and energetic action against economic and political powers is in error. We need, I say it again and again, scorn for the petty and personal daily advantages. . . .²²

Many members were angered by Oestreich's dictatorial behavior and left BESCH.

Oestreich's outspoken criticism of the SPD angered many party comrades. Like Löwenstein, Oestreich protested vehemently against SPD participation in coalition governments.²³

²¹Paul Oestreich, "Mitten im Kampf!", Die Neue Erziehung (January, 1921): 8-10.

²²Ibid.

²³Paul Oestreich, "Der Minister und der entschiedene schulreformer", Die Neue Erziehung (October 1919): 721-726; "Neuland oder versumpfung?" (January 1922): 1-6; and "Rettet das Zentrum" (April 1925): 235-241.

Oestreich's attitude to the party, however, was more sharply critical than Löwenstein's because Oestreich objected not only to *coalition* politics, but to *party* politics. How did Oestreich conceive of politics then? And how did he link the realms of politics and the cultural life of the nation?

KULTURPOLITIK AND MODERNITY

The term "culture" is used here to mean the traditional culture of the educated class in Germany. Fears of cultural decline began around 1890, when the effects of industrialization first began to be felt in Germany. After the war, complaints became increasingly strident.²⁴

Oestreich shared these concerns. He too felt that Germany's culture was endangered, but his solution was radically opposed to the prescriptions of the conservative "mandarins". While the latter group wanted to protect culture by maintaining its exclusivity, Oestreich thought culture could be invigorated only by broadening access to it, permitting the participation of the whole nation, irrespective of socio-economic position. The recovery of the nation would accompany the rejuvenation of its culture.

But what does the second part of the word, "*politik*" mean? Oestreich contrasted cultural politics to party politics. Party politicians, he insisted, represented

²⁴Ringer, pp. 1-3, 253-256.

special interest groups. A *Kulturpolitiker*, however, represented the interests of the whole nation. (Compare to Löwenstein's insistence that representing the interests of the workers should not be considered as a special or class interest, but a national interest.) Furthermore, members of the socialist movement would be the new guardians of culture because only they understood that culture was the concrete external expression of human productivity or creativity. For Oestreich, to be a socialist was to be a defender of culture and hence of the nation.

The socialist Education Minister, Konrad Haenisch, advanced similar ideas. He hoped to promote the image of the SPD as the party of culture. To do so, the Social Democrats needed to demonstrate their goodwill to academics by supporting state expenditure on books and journals needed by scholars. Rising costs had forced libraries to discontinue subscriptions to scholarly journals. German scholarship would suffer when academics were isolated. The SPD's support of their interests would win many academics over to the socialist banner. The party would then break out of its role as representative of special interests and truly be a people's party.²⁵

²⁵Konrad Haenisch, Die Not der geistigen Arbeiter. Ein Alarmruf (Leipzig: Verlag von Dr. Werner Klinkhardt, c. 1920). Also, see Haenisch's book Kulturpolitische Aufgaben (Berlin: Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Staatsbürgerliche und Wirtschaftliche Bildung, 1919). Haenisch first expressed many of these ideas in the Prussian Assembly, April 11, 1919. See GStA (Merseburg) Rep. 169D, Preuß.

Although Haenisch and Oestreich agreed on the necessity of protecting culture, Haenisch and many other socialists branded Oestreich as a utopian dreamer. This phrase echoed Marx's derision of various eighteenth and nineteenth century socialists as utopians.²⁶ Oestreich defended himself, writing that, "The creative, active human must have ideals before he can create reality."²⁷

Oestreich's constant criticism of party politics was not completely unfounded. Although the political scene in Prussia was not as tumultuous as on the national level, parliamentary politics nevertheless earned a bad reputation, one not completely undeserved. Oestreich's aversion to party politics was shared by many during Weimar, all along the political spectrum. Thomas Mann's Reflections of an Unpolitical Man²⁸ is one instance of an expression of distaste for politics. Oswald Spengler joined in the

Landtag, xc, C2, Die Konfessionelle Verhältnisse der Schule, Ldtg. Bd. 1: 1919-27.

²⁶Untitled articles, Vorwärts, October 9, 17, and 18, 1919; "Kulturpolitik und Koalition", November 24, 1921. Oestreich defended himself in his book, Es reut mich nicht! Schulpolitische Kämpfe zwischen Revolution und Kapp Putsch. Gesammelte Aufsätze, Leipzig: Ernst Oldenburg Verlag, 1923. The common argument throughout these essays is Oestreich's insistence that his ideas were not impractical; many could be easily implemented.

²⁷Paul Oestreich, "Die Voraussetzung als Ziel", Die Neue Erziehung (November 1922): 347-350.

²⁸Thomas Mann, Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man, trans. Walter D. Morris (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1983). The original German appeared in 1918.

attack on the new republic in his book of 1919, Preußentum und Sozialismus. These criticisms are perhaps not so surprising, since artists and intellectuals tend to pride themselves on the "divine nature of the muses" and quite often scorn such materialistic realms as politics and finance.²⁹

But it is surprising to find that even some politicians dissociated themselves from party politics. Hans Luther, Reich chancellor in 1925, entitled his memoirs Politician without Party.³⁰ Other educational reformers, such as Carl Becker, who served as Prussian Minister of Education from 1925 to 1930, shared in the distaste for modern parliamentary political parties and refused to join a political party.

Oestreich shared many of these attitudes. When his party comrades charged him with being too inflammatory, Oestreich responded,

I want to be provocative, against imperfection, mental laziness, satisfied affects, even in my own 'estate' and party. . . . Criticism is the beginning [of change].³¹

Oestreich saw his role as raising the consciousness of the

²⁹Gay and Laqueur both make these points.

³⁰Hans Luther, Politiker ohne Partei (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1960).

³¹Paul Oestreich, "Die Voraussetzung als Ziel", Die Neue Erziehung (November 1922): 347-350.

voters and keeping school reform issues in the public eye, even if this made some socialists uncomfortable.³²

Many of his contemporaries agreed that culture was in danger in the modern world. Max Weber believed that increasing specialization was part of the modern trend of increasing rationalization.³³ Oestreich believed that the increasing specialization of the modern world posed the greatest threat to culture. His solution: a broader type of education, one not defined narrowly by occupation. Critics on the right wing of the political spectrum could agree with this solution. What made Oestreich different? He was different in that he insisted that *all* of the nation's youth should share in this broader education. He was resuscitating Fichte's ideas following a lost war a century before.

Oestreich thought that educational reform would revive culture; cultural revival was synonymous with national revival. Germany would recover from the war and could then make its unique contributions to humanity. And Germany had quite a world historical task to perform; according to Oestreich:

We have but one mission: to conquer the earth for humanity! . . . To banish hell from the world, the hell of baseness through the heaven of joyful pain! To outlaw the use of force! To make love manly and

³²Paul Oestreich, "Parteidiens t oder Bundesarbeit", Neue Erziehung (1924): 66-69.

³³Weber, "Science as a Vocation", p. 135.

aggressive! We have a mission and an adventure without end, a trip of discovery into the infinite!³⁴

Oestreich insisted that divisions in the nation's school system only served to divide its people and hindered performance of its national task. Furthermore, education for a specific occupation was unjust in that it led to inequality. While a favored minority received an education which led to satisfying careers free from exploitation (professional jobs), the education of the masses ensured that they would continue in poor-paying, low-status jobs that offered scant opportunity for personal growth. Segregated education only served to maintain the positions of the middle and upper classes. An integrated school system, Oestreich believed, would serve the whole nation, not particular class interests.³⁵ Just what did Oestreich mean by the integration of education?

THE INTEGRATION OF EDUCATION

Before 1919, it was possible for a child from a wealthy family to attend school without having ever had a class with children of working-class parents. The Weimar Constitution changed this by providing that the first four years

³⁴Paul Oestreich, "Wir sind Deutsche!", Die Neue Erziehung (June 1922): 161-163. Such poetic language was not unusual in Oestreich's articles and books.

³⁵Ibid. and Die Produktionsschule, pp. 236-241. Oestreich differed from right-wing nationalists who desired regeneration so Germany could avenge itself on the West.

of schooling would be common for all children. Beginning with grade five, however, students were still separated, ostensibly according to inclination and ability, into different tracks. Because the child was only nine years of age, the decision was made by parents, in consultation with teachers. Many socialist educators believed that the division of students should begin at a later age. This would allow a more accurate assessment of the child's abilities, as well as permitting a greater decision-making role for the student.³⁶

Although the constitution forbade the parents' socio-economic or religious affiliation from determining which track was pursued, Oestreich insisted that only an integrated system of elementary, middle, and high schools could assure the realization of these constitutional provisions. He proposed a system similar to that of the United States, in which all students attended a free common school throughout their education.

People differed, Oestreich acknowledged, but their differences should not result in inequality.³⁷ In his view, talents were not natural, but developed through contact with the environment. Oestreich could point to John Locke's *tabula rasa* for support. Closer to his own

³⁶"Gedanken zur Einheitsschule", Sozialistische Monatshefte (May 1919): 448-455.

³⁷Paul Oestreich, Aus dem Leben, pp. 40-58.

field, the educators Maria Montessori and John Dewey both advanced similar ideas.³⁸ Oestreich thought that any intelligence or talent that one might exhibit were the result of an environment that had cultivated those talents. Since environment was the key factor, Oestreich believed that the only way to ensure equal opportunity for all youth was to give them the same advantages early in life.

In order to ensure that all youth shared roughly the same environment, Oestreich insisted that kindergarten must be mandatory for all children, rich and poor.³⁹ The first kindergarten, a German invention as the word implies, was opened in 1837 by the educational reformer Friedrich Froebel. Its purpose was not intellectual development, but socialization of the child.⁴⁰ Oestreich adopted these ideas--he thought attendance by all the nation's tots would lower the barriers between rich and poor.

³⁸Maria Montessori, Spontaneous Activity in Education (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), p. 160. Montessori said that the same environment produced different individuals only because their inclinations, not their talents differed.

John Dewey, Liberalism and Social Action, The Page-Barbour Lectures (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1935). Dewey believed that intelligence was not natural, but shaped by society. Hence, social planning was necessary. Dewey was not a socialist, however, but a liberal reformer of the activist, rather than laissez-faire variety.

³⁹Böhm, p. 262.

⁴⁰The reactionary Prussian government banned it as a subversive institution in 1851; the ban was lifted ten years later and the popularity of the kindergarten began to grow. See Gutek, pp. 225-231.

Basic elementary education would begin at age seven; there would be a gradual transition from the play of kindergarten to more disciplined work.⁴¹ The middle level, would gradually introduce students aged eleven to sixteen to more advanced studies. This level would also include both manual and intellectual training, combining practical and theoretical work. Oestreich believed that an education which combined both of these elements would result in a more balanced, harmonious individual. The dangers of one-sided intellectualization of the traditional *Gymnasium* would be avoided. He wrote,

We must struggle tirelessly against the intellectualism of the old schools, in order to achieve full humanity, which is attainable only through the training of all aptitudes in the community.⁴²

Criticism of traditional abstract book-learning was not uniquely socialist. Jean-Jacques Rousseau began the revolt with his novel *Emile*; the lead character learned more from his experiences in life and from nature than he ever could from a book.⁴³ The German novelist Hermann Hesse included similar characters in his stories.⁴⁴ The Swiss educational

⁴¹"Ein Schulprogramm", *Vorwärts*, February 23, 1921.

⁴²Paul Oestreich, "Kulturerziehung", *Die Neue Erziehung* (May 1921): 129-131.

⁴³Gutek, p. 208; Hayward, p. 25.

⁴⁴Hermann Hesse, *Tales of Student Life*, ed. Theodore Ziolkowski, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976).

reformer Heinrich Pestalozzi expressed the same sentiments and emphasized the importance of concrete sense experience as opposed to abstract book learning.⁴⁵ Later in the nineteenth century, Julius Langbehn's best seller, Rembrandt as Educator, expressed the belief that art education could counteract the stultifying effects of too much book-learning.⁴⁶ While foreigners admired the German *Gymnasium* for providing an excellent intellectual education, these schools were criticized at the same time for ignoring physical education.⁴⁷ Finally, John Dewey criticized abstract theoretical knowledge because of its distance from life and growth.⁴⁸ The constitution of 1919 had provided that "Arbeitsunterricht" or "work instruction" would be as the preferred method in education.

Socialist educators welcomed this provision. The old schools had emphasized learning from books; work instruction meant using one's hands as well. A more well-rounded

⁴⁵Gutek, p. 200; Hayward, pp. 38-40.

⁴⁶Albisetti, p. 151.

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 37-43.

⁴⁸John Dewey, Democracy and Education, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916).

student with character would be the result.⁴⁹ On a more practical note, implementation of "work instruction" allowed students to produce some of the school's needs, saving the hard-pressed state money.⁵⁰

Oestreich maintained that if work were to become meaningful and joyful once again, it had to be self-initiated, a cardinal point in his thinking. There could be no goal outside of the activity itself. Although Oestreich drew these ideas from his understanding of Marxist ideology, we again see that non-socialist educators had been advancing the same principles for some time.

Froebel, of kindergarten fame, stressed the importance of self-activity of the child; the self-activity of a child is play. In this way, the child learned about the environment.⁵¹ Montessori also recognized the importance of play. Her concern was how to channel the child's spontaneity. Spontaneity could be both encouraged yet disciplined by controlling the environment. Children did

⁴⁹"Gedanken zur Einheitsschule", Sozialistische Monatshefte (May 1919): 448-455; "Sozialdemokratische Schulreform" (March 8, 1920): 194-196; and "Der Gemeinschaftsgedanke in der Neuen Schule" (October 19, 1923): 602-607.

⁵⁰GSStA (Dahlem) Rep. 76 VII neu Sekt. 1B-I Nr. 61, Bd. II, pp 64-66, "Richtlinien zur Aufstellung von Lehrplänen für die oberen Jahrgänge der Volksschule", 15. Oktober 1922. For instance, book binding taught students a skill as well as providing textbooks for the school.

⁵¹Gutek, pp. 225-231.

not shun work, but would choose to do work spontaneously, if it interested them, even when outsiders were unable to see a purpose or goal in the activity.⁵² She added that active intervention by adults did not produce a positive result that did not already reside in the child's innate spirit.⁵³

Dealing with older students, Oestreich believed that occupational segregation should occur only in the final stage of education, when students ranged in ages from sixteen to twenty. Three tracks would be offered: practical, technical-industrial, and intellectual-scholarly. In all levels, including the final stage, education would be completely free, supported by a progressive income tax.⁵⁴ Oestreich called his school an "elastic integrated school" (elastische Einheitsschule), a school that he believed combined discipline with freedom, unity with individuality. It did so by offering a basic core curriculum which provided a sound foundation common to

⁵²Maria Montessori, Childhood Education (Chicago: Henry Regnery Col., 1949), p. 58.

⁵³Montessori, Spontaneous Activity, p. 6.

⁵⁴"Die Schulgeldfrage", Vorwärts, February 12, 1921; Paul Oestreich, "Fordert die Schulsteuer!", Neue Erziehung (1922): 211-214.

all students, while also allowing students to choose a certain number of electives.⁵⁵

Oestreich criticized the traditional practice of requiring the study of foreign languages. In his ideal school,

Ancient and modern languages are pursued precisely and thoroughly if one needs them as a teacher, traveller, interpreter, translator, etc. For those specialties, education can begin around age eighteen. Basic education has nothing to do with learning foreign languages.⁵⁶

He thought that Latin and Greek had been required in the past only as a method of maintaining upper class exclusivity. There was no compelling pedagogical reason, however, to retain mandatory study of these languages.⁵⁷

Many non-socialists agreed. Herbert Spencer, the social Darwinist, thought dead languages did nothing to aid one in the struggle for survival; study of the sciences was more useful in modern society.⁵⁸ Ex-Kaiser Wilhelm

⁵⁵Paul Oestreich, Die elastische Einheitsschule: Lebens- und Produktionsschule (Berlin: C.A. Schwetschke und Sohn, 1921). This work is a 61 page pamphlet in which Oestreich outlines his idea of the comprehensive school. See also his article, "Die elastische Oberstufe", Neue Erziehung (1921): 287-292 and untitled article, Vorwärts, June 20, 1920.

⁵⁶Paul Oestreich, "Die Schulreform", Die Neue Erziehung (1919): 659-661.

⁵⁷Oestreich had a particular fondness for Esperanto; other than this personal preference, he thought language learning should be connected to utility. Böhm, p. 265.

⁵⁸Gutek, p. 260.

also shared an aversion for the ancient languages.⁵⁹

Montessori's position was most similar to Oestreich's in that she maintained that a child learned a language from his or her environment. Possession of language did not signify special talent, only that one had been exposed to it.⁶⁰

Many socialist pedagogues agreed that foreign language study had been over-emphasized in the past. Even those who wanted to retain foreign language study suggested modifications. For example, the elementary schools should offer languages--this made good pedagogical sense and also served to break the upper-class monopoly on the subject.⁶¹ Anna Siemsen believed that learning modern languages was just as valuable as learning Latin or Greek--what one studied was not as important as how one studied it.⁶²

If elementary, middle, and high schools were to be integrated as Oestreich called for, then teacher training needed to be integrated too.⁶³ Oestreich called for all

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 328.

⁶⁰Montessori, Childhood Education, pp. 81-88.

⁶¹"Prinzipielles zur Umwandlung der Berliner Real-schulen", Sozialistisches Monatshefte (March 2, 1925): 151-155.

⁶²"Humanismus und Gegenwartsschule", Sozialistisches Monatshefte (June 24, 1924): 381-386.

⁶³"Studentenschaft und Hochschulreform", Vorwärts, December 9, 1919.

teachers to receive a general humanistic education in the university, along with preparation for their intended future position in either the lower or upper grades. In Oestreich, elementary teachers at long last found a champion of their demands for equality with middle and high school teachers.

Although many middle-class educational reformers may have supported the integration of the different levels of the school system, many Weimar politicians rejected these ideas. One Prussian Landtag deputy made a very revealing comment about the German attitude towards education when he said, "The *Volksschule* is for life, the high schools prepare for scholarly studies. Therefore the transfer from one to the other is hardly possible without difficulty."⁴⁴ Notice that pursuit of scholarship was contrasted to life. This was precisely the point that reformers made when they criticized the high schools for being too abstract--they were useless because they were unconnected with life. Conservatives nevertheless insisted that the elementary schools must not become preparatory schools for higher education--scholarship would only suffer as a result.

Educators who supported segregation in the upper grades insisted that different types of high schools were necessary in order to deal with the multiplicity of culture.

⁴⁴GSStA (Dahlem) Rep. 76 VII neu Sekt. 1B-I Nr. 1, Bd. VIII, p. 12, Sitzung am 20. Januar 1917.

Only different kinds of high school, with their unique specialties, could prevent the overburdening of the student in the modern age of information. Without different high school types, depth of knowledge would be sacrificed and superficial knowledge would result. The different types should be co-ordinated but not abolished.⁶⁵ Different school types did not necessarily imply inequality; each of the four main types was equal to the others.⁶⁶

Opponents criticized Oestreich's idea for an elastic comprehensive school because they thought the students were offered too many choices; the student simply had too much freedom. It would be possible to graduate without being properly educated. This kind of school would not integrate education, but would rather fragment it, because when students were left to choose, they would all study different subjects.⁶⁷

Oestreich's own party comrades tended to agree with him on the integration of the various types of high school. As long as the high schools remained divided, however, the

⁶⁵GStA (Dahlem) Rep. 76 VII neu Sekt. 1B-I, Nr. 1, Bd. VIII, pp. 349-379, Education Ministry pamphlet of 1924. See also The Reorganization of Education in Prussia, trans. I.L. Kandel and Thomas Alexander (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1927).

⁶⁶GStA (Merseburg) Rep. 169D Preußischer Landtag, xf, A3, Bd. 1: 1919-28, December 13, 1921 Landtag speech.

⁶⁷GStA (Dahlem) Rep. 76 VII neu Sekt. 1B-I, Nr. 1, Bd. VIII, pp. 349-379, Education Ministry pamphlet of 1924.

question arose of whether proletarian children should attend them. The debate centered around what was known as the "rise of the gifted". One position held that if workers' children attended high schools in increasing numbers, integration would be achieved *de facto*. Another view was that by allowing gifted but poor children the opportunity to rise, the whole class and the whole society would benefit. Others disputed this, saying that these gifted children quickly adopted the mores of their new environment and abandoned their poorer brethren, further impoverishing the working class, by robbing it of its brightest members.⁴⁸

The issue of how to determine which students were talented also excited debate. Critics of the traditional system believed that tests which supposedly determined intelligence were rigged to favor the middle and upper classes; these tests only confirmed what the testers wanted to find. They only measured socio-economic differences, not differences in intelligence.⁴⁹ The idea of the "rise of the gifted" was a bourgeois idea, based on

⁴⁸"Sozialdemokratische Schulreform", Sozialistische Monatshefte (March 8, 1920): 194-196.

⁴⁹"Psychologie", Sozialistische Monatshefte (December 29, 1919): 1235-1239 and "Prinzipielles zur Umwandlung der Berliner Realschulen" (March 2, 1925): 151-155.

selfish individualism, which only divided the community.⁷⁰ Oestreich's position was that "We want to replace ranking through tests by . . . estimation of personal individuality in the service of the community."⁷¹ Who did the estimating and on what basis was not specified.

Oestreich, like Löwenstein, insisted that he represented the best interests of the nation, indeed of humanity itself, rather than merely advancing the cause of a special interest group. Oestreich's ideas excited a certain amount of debate among Social Democrats interested in educational and cultural problems but made no discernible impact on the Prussian school system.

Oestreich's ideas were intended to benefit blue-collar workers. This group, however, remained unresponsive. Issues connected with education and culture seemed to have little to do with their daily lives; workers tended to regard these problems with indifference. Furthermore, the leadership of the SPD would not take an active part in promoting Oestreich's plans because to do so would only antagonize the SPD's relationship with the middle class. It made no political sense to antagonize its coalition partners for a cause that was not popular with its

⁷⁰"Die Sozialistische Schule", Sozialistische Monatshefte (September 29, 1919): 903-908 and "Weltaufgaben der Erziehung" (May 17, 1920): 381-388.

⁷¹Paul Oestreich, "Stufung oder Gliederung", Die Neue Erziehung (August 1922): 243-245.

constituency and would not earn it any votes. The discussion of the integration of post-elementary schools remained largely restricted to socialist intellectuals.

CHAPTER SIX ADOLF GRIMME AND SOCIALIST SCHOOL REFORM

Adolf Grimme joined the Social Democratic Party after a brief membership in the DDP; as a religious socialist, he belonged to the right wing of his new party. While Löwenstein wanted to accelerate the modern trend of secularization and Oestreich aimed at retarding the modern trend of specialization, Grimme focussed less on the present and the future. He was more interested in the past, in preserving what was valuable in traditional culture.

Grimme reconciled the teachings of Jesus Christ with those of Karl Marx. Such a synthesis, he thought, preserved religion, which was valuable, while eliminating corruptions of the true faith. Grimme was also interested in promoting the welfare of the whole nation by promoting the rise of talented individuals. He believed that the ideal of equality was compatible with a promotion of talented individuals who could ably lead the community. Education was the key to both the preservation of true religion and the cultivation of "personalities" who would become the nation's leaders.

Grimme's position on religion and individualism led him to arrive at interpretations of the party planks calling for the secularization and integration of education very different from those of Löwenstein and Oestreich. Unlike these reformers, Grimme enjoyed the party leadership's

support, which culminated in his appointment as Education Minister in 1930. His rise illustrates that the SPD was truly a moderate party that offered few fresh or viable approaches to the problem of reforming the schools.

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Adolf Berthold Ludwig Grimme was born on December 31, 1889 in Goslar, son of a royal stationmaster.¹ He attended the local elementary school for the first four years, then enrolled in the *Gymnasium* in 1900, earning the *Abitur* in 1908. From 1908 to 1914, he studied in the universities in Halle, Munich, and Göttingen. After passing qualifying examinations in philosophy, German studies, French, and religion in 1914, he secured a position in a *Gymnasium* in Leer, where he taught until 1919.

Under the new republic, Grimme transferred to a *Gymnasium* in Hannover. A year after joining the Social Democratic Party, he began his career as an administrator in the school system, serving first on Hannover's provincial school board from 1923 to 1924 and then as

¹Grimme's papers are to be found at the Geheimes Staatsarchiv der Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz in Berlin-Dahlem. Biographical information from Biographisches Lexikon zur Weimarer Republik, ed. Wolfgang Benz and Hermann Graml (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1988), p. 111; Biographisches Staatshandbuch: Lexikon der Politik, Presse und Publizistik (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1963), pp. 424-425; Who's Who in Germany, ed. Horst G. Kliemann and Stephen S. Taylor (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1956), p. 417. Unfortunately, none of these sources, nor Grimme's own writings, offers much information on his personal life.

district superintendent in Magdeburg until 1927. The following year he joined the staff of the Education Ministry. From 1929 to 1930, he was vice-president of the provincial school board for Berlin and Brandenburg.

For a socialist to hold such high administrative positions was quite unusual in the 1920s.² Right-wing politicians insisted that socialist officials in the school system antagonized Christian parents, who had a right to insist that, since the schools were religiously identifiable, the educational personnel should be as well. Since many socialist politicians were negative towards or indifferent to religion, Grimme's outspoken identification with Christianity, attested to by numerous speeches and newspaper articles, led middle-class circles to trust him in public office, despite his party orientation.

In February 1930, Grimme's rapid rise in office culminated in his appointment as Minister of Education in Prussia, the first socialist to hold the post since Konrad Haenisch's resignation in 1921. He headed the ministry until Reich Chancellor Franz von Papen dissolved the Prussian government on July 20, 1932. When Hitler came to

²"Kulturpolitik und Koalition", Vorwärts, November 24, 1921; "Militärappell für Schuldirektoren", January 13, 1922; "Der Kampf um die Schule", January 14, 1922; "Schulreaktion in Berlin", November 23, 1922; "Radaustatt Kulturdebatte", November 4, 1925.

power six months later, Grimme had to retire from public life. In 1942 he was arrested for consorting with an opposition movement and spent the rest of the war years in jail.

In the immediate post-war period, Grimme participated in the reconstruction of German education in the western sector, serving as Education Minister of the new state of Lower Saxony. In 1948 he embarked on a new career, becoming General Director of the Northwest German Radio, a position he held until his retirement in 1956. He died on August 27, 1963 at Brannenburg/Inn.

GRIMME AND THE POLITICAL PARTY SYSTEM, TO 1922

Grimme's political activity began in 1919, with the establishment of the democratic republic. Grimme never spoke or wrote much about his personal life so we cannot be certain about the reasons for his new-found interest in politics. We can surmise, however, that Grimme, like many others of his generation, was so shocked by the catastrophe of the war that he felt impelled to become involved in public life in order to help create a better world so that such a disaster could never happen again.³

These beliefs led Grimme to join the German Democratic Party in 1919. He was attracted to the DDP because it championed the ideals of freedom and democracy, ideals that

³See note two in chapter four.

he believed expressed the true yearnings of the German soul. He defended the new constitution--it was neither unnatural, nor un-German, as its critics charged.⁴ Nor was it merely an abstract intellectual construction divorced from reality, but a natural development for a nation which had produced Immanuel Kant. The ideal of democracy in Germany, Grimme asserted, had its roots in Kant's insistence that the individual was responsible for the whole community;⁵ the new constitution provided the framework for realization of this ideal.⁶

Grimme initially viewed the SPD as too materialistic; he was interested in reviving spirituality. The DDP's favorable attitude towards religion, combined with its criticism of the established churches, paralleled Grimme's beliefs. Even during his brief stint as a Democrat (he left the party after a year), however, Grimme displayed socialist leanings. For example, he welcomed the Revolution of 1918, because he believed it was a spiritual revolution.⁷ He also cultivated personal contacts with

⁴GStA (Dahlem) 1 HA Rep. 92 Grimme, "Glänzende Kundgebung der SPD", Landsberg, August 29, 1930.

⁵Ibid., 45\1, "Grimme in Osnabrück", unidentified and undated newspaper clipping.

⁶Ibid., 547, "Politik und Intellektuellen", Leerer Anzeigebblatt, November 29, 1929.

⁷Ibid., unidentified newspaper clipping from December 1918.

many socialists. In 1919, Grimme established a regional chapter of the Bund entschiedener Schulreformer in Hannover. Although not part of the SPD, its membership consisted primarily of socialists. The Hannover chapter's program called for "a school without confessional ties which educates religious humans."⁹ The program also contained demands for an integrated school system in which tracks would differ only by students' inclinations and abilities.⁹

Grimme left the Democratic Party in 1920; for two years he remained unaffiliated with any political party. Although we have no direct evidence, a newspaper article of May 1920 provides a clue to his reasons for temporarily abandoning politics.¹⁰ In this article, Grimme expressed disillusionment with the election campaigns of all the parties. He believed that Germany desperately needed a leader in its time of crisis, but the party system did not seem to be producing one. Like Oestreich, but for different reasons, Grimme was disillusioned with party politics.

⁹Ibid., 22, "Programm Entwurf der Ortsgruppe Hannover des Bundes entschiedener Schulreformer", June 25, d.J. [1919].

⁹Ibid. Although Oestreich later changed his mind, originally he too had favored "rise of the talented".

¹⁰Ibid., "Wolken am Horizont", Leerer Anzeigebblatt, May 22, 1920.

After two years, however, Grimme was once again engaged in party politics, this time as a socialist. Why would a devout Christian and ardent champion of the rights of the individual choose to join the Social Democrats, a party with an ideology ostensibly hostile to religion and individualism?

GRIMME BECOMES A SOCIAL DEMOCRAT

Upon entering the SPD in 1922, Grimme abandoned neither his religiosity nor his strong belief in individualism. Ironical as it may seem, it was his very commitment to both Christian ideals and individualism that provoked him to join the Social Democrats.

Although Grimme continued to harbor reservations about the ability of parliamentary political parties to produce the leadership Germany so desperately needed, the assassination of Walther Rathenau in 1922 provoked him to join the SPD. Terror and violence could be combated only by working within the system. The citizen had a duty to participate in the public life of the nation; passivity was an unacceptable position.

Grimme believed that religion and politics were connected. Religion cultivated feelings of responsibility for the whole society; the new democracy needed individuals conscious of their duties to the community. Religious teachings could aid in civic training.

When Grimme became Education Minister in 1930, he hastened to assure his fellow Social Democrats in the legislature that he was one of them. He pointed at independent Carl Becker, Grimme's predecessor in the education ministry, as an example of the last of the individuals. The modern age, Grimme said, was an age of the masses. He did not abandon his belief in the necessity of cultivating individuality; he only insisted that it could be attained only within the framework of the larger group. Becker's fall from power, Grimme insisted, resulted from his refusal to affiliate himself with a political party. The individual alone was too weak to survive in party politics. Security lay only in the larger group.¹¹

Despite the common perception of socialism as anti-religious and anti-individualistic, Grimme found a ready reception in the SPD for his ideas. Although maintaining coalition with the Democrats and the Center may have influenced the party leadership in a more moderate direction, political considerations do not completely explain the party's acceptance of Grimme and his rapid rise in the ranks. His ideas were very similar to many other socialists. For Grimme, the important topics of religious socialism and attitudes to individualism were linked.

¹¹Ibid., "Die Koalitionsverhandlungen in Preußen", Frankfurter Zeitung, January 29, 1930; "Die große Preußen-Koalition gescheitert!", General Anzeiger, January 31, 1920; "Vor der Krise in Preußen?", unidentified and undated newspaper clipping.

RELIGIOUS SOCIALISM

As chapter four showed, many socialists took Marx's criticism of religion literally. His characterization of religion as "the *opium* of the people"¹² only confirmed the position of this group. The SPD's party planks calling for separation of church and state and its insistence that religion was a private matter gave the impression that the party was hostile to religion. Some socialists, however, reconciled Marxist ideology with Christian teachings. Religious socialists were anxious to emphasize Marxism's idealistic heritage.

Opposition to materialism predated the War. The classic studies by Fritz Ringer and Fritz Stern discussed the antipathy which many intellectuals felt for the modern industrial age and mass production that had led to an alleged over-emphasis on material prosperity. Indeed, "mandarins", along with the majority of the nation, welcomed the outbreak of the War in 1914 because they thought it would sweep away this "English disease".¹³ Cultural critics before the war criticized bourgeois

¹²Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction", p. 54.

¹³Ringer, pp. 188-189; Spengler, pp. 40, 45, 48-49, 78, 79.

capitalism because they believed that it deadened the spirit.¹⁴

But while conservative cultural critics have received the attention of scholars, anti-materialism in the socialist movement has attracted less notice. Perhaps this is due to the fact that Marxist ideology is commonly considered to be centered around "historical materialism". Even in the 19th century, however, some socialists had rejected this centerpiece of Marxist ideology and attempted to return Marxism to its Idealist heritage.¹⁵

"Ethical" or idealist Marxism was quite developed during the 1920s and appears to have had many adherents, even if they did not always define themselves in these terms. Marxists concerned with theoretical purity have spilled much ink over the question of defining orthodoxy and deviation. Suffice it to say that using the measuring rod of materialism as the standard for determining orthodoxy is no longer a useful way to think about socialism.

One recent scholar has suggested that Marx strongly emphasized materialism only because he was trying to refute

¹⁴Stern, p. xix.

¹⁵Thomas E. Willey, Back to Kant (Detroit: Wayne State University Press), pp. 116-117.

the dominant ideology of idealism.¹⁶ He described the attempts of Ernst Bloch (1885-1977) to reinstate the idealistic, utopian elements of Marxism. Both the emphasis on ethics and belief in utopia are found in the religious socialism of the 1920s.

Party journals often printed articles which expressed positive attitudes to religion. Most parents continued to send their children to confessional schools and declined to exercise their constitutional right to abstain from religious instruction. We must conclude that religious beliefs were more prevalent in the socialist movement than previously believed.

Religious socialists distinguished themselves from their more secularly-oriented comrades by insisting that Marxism consisted of more than a materialist interpretation of history. Rather, it was a moral and ethical, even a spiritual movement. Like Spengler and other cultural critics traditionally associated with conservatism, they thought that materialism was one of the defining features of the 19th century--and a sickness to be overcome.¹⁷

Grimme agreed. Striving for profit could never be a meaningful or satisfying goal to pursue. The core of

¹⁶John Joseph Marsden, Marxian and Christian Utopianism. Toward a Socialist Political Theology (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1991), p. 40.

¹⁷"Ökonomischer und Religiöser Sozialismus", Sozialistische Monatshefte (May 3, 1920): 338-341.

Marxist ideology did not concern materialism, Grimme believed, but spirituality. Socialism could restore meaning in human life, the meaning which had been robbed by materialistic capitalism and called into question by the experience of the war.¹⁸ Grimme, like Destreich, thought that the purpose of work was not merely production of commodities; Grimme thought that the very process of work shaped the individual engaged.¹⁹ He preached the dangers of a purely materialist outlook. What was valuable about Marx was his recognition of the true nature and meaning of work.²⁰

Many religious socialists disagreed with Löwenstein's contention that religion served no purpose in the modern rationalized and increasingly secularized society. On the contrary, reason did not, and could not banish the realm of feeling. There were limits to reason; religion began where reason ended.²¹ Religion cultivated the feeling that everything was inter-connected; this was not a subject of

¹⁸GGStA (Dahlem) 1 HA Rep. 92 Grimme 557, "Kampf und Frieden", unidentified newspaper dated December 23, 1930.

¹⁹Adolf Grimme, Auf freiem Grund mit freiem Volk, Ansprachen und Aufsätze (Berlin: J.H.W. Dietz, 1932), "Vom Sinn der Arbeit", pp. 71-77.

²⁰GGStA (Dahlem) 1 HA Rep. 92 Grimme 557, "Gedanken über Kultur und Wirtschaft", unidentified newspaper dated June 5, 1930.

²¹"Denken und Andacht. Ein Beitrag zum religiösen Problem", Sozialistische Monatshefte (October 31, 1921): 953.

knowledge, not subject to proof.²² Löwenstein's attempt to reduce everything to reason was fruitless; the totality of man would not allow itself to be so contained. Grimme asserted that,

One incorrectly understands knowledge as exclusively that which is subject to proof and everything else is readily labelled a matter of faith. . . . But there is also an unproveable knowledge. One may call this "belief" . . . But the basis of science is not less a matter of faith than the fundamental idea that we have an earthly mission because one is not less proveable than the other.²³

A clergyman writing for Vorwärts appealed to the workers to realize that reason and religion could be reconciled.²⁴ Theologians such as Karl Barth disagreed. He thought that if one combined faith with reason and science, religion would be profaned, become too worldly. Grimme, however, thought just the opposite--he wanted to make religion a daily affair, not restricted to Sundays. For him, meaningful work was the link between the objective material world and the subjective spiritual inner world of the individual. By removing capitalist exploitation, work became meaningful, or spiritual, even holy--God's kingdom realized on earth.

²²"Religion und Wirtschaft", Sozialistische Monatshefte (March 6, 1922): 225-229.

²³Adolf Grimme, Der religiöse Mensch. Eine Zielsetzung für die neue Schule (Berlin: C.A. Schwetschke und Sohn, 1923), p. 9.

²⁴"Arbeiterschaft und Kirche", Vorwärts, June 25, 1920.

The reformer Anna Siemsen agreed with many of these ideas. She thought that complete secularization was impossible because absolute knowledge was impossible--the process of learning would never be complete.²⁵ As long as there was a realm of the unknown, religion would be necessary. The rational secular realm and the realm of faith or religion were not enemies, Siemsen insisted, but complementary aspects of the total human condition. Her position was echoed by others.²⁶ She warned, however, about the dangers of over-emphasizing the importance of feeling; subject neither to rational argument nor empirical proof, the domination of feeling could lead to irrationalism. Irrationalism posed a danger if it was expressed in acts. Romantics like Rousseau and Nietzsche were wrong in stressing the realm of irrational feeling too much.²⁷

Religious socialists believed that while reason divided, socialism unified, by recognizing the underlying common soul in reality. Socialism had its roots in reason and materialism--it had begun as a political and economic

²⁵Anna Siemsen, Erziehung im Gemeinschaftsgeist (Stuttgart: Ernst Heinrich Moritz, 1921).

²⁶"Zum Religionsproblem", Sozialistische Monatshefte (June 1919): 544-549.

²⁷"Das rationale und das irrationale Element in der Religion", Sozialistische Monatshefte (December 15, 1921): 1106-1115.

program. But it had now developed into a cultural-historical movement, in which the realms of reason and feeling could become one.²⁸ Religion combined the subjectivity of the observer to the objectivity of reality, which combined the spiritual and the material.²⁹ Spirit was the source of culture; materialism divided while spirit united.³⁰ Socialism would reunite spirit and matter, which had become separated in the capitalist, materialist dominated world.³¹

Socialists of this persuasion argued that Marx was not just a materialist; the Kantian or Fichtean "should" was an integral part of his ideology. Socialism was, in fact, ethical and spiritual.³² Historical materialism precluded individual responsibility necessary for moral behavior-- youth must be trained to shoulder responsibility.³³ For

²⁸"Sozialismus, Religion und Kirche", Sozialistische Monatshefte (April 1919): 334-342.

²⁹"Der Religiöse", Sozialistische Monatshefte (July 7, 1919): 642-645; "ökonomischer und religiöser Sozialismus" (May 3, 1920): 338-341.

³⁰"Physische Gewalt und geistige Kraft", Sozialistische Monatshefte (June 6, 1921): 473-475.

³¹"Aktivismus und Sozialismus", Sozialistische Monatshefte (December 20, 1920): 1089-1091.

³²"Dialektik, Geschichtliche Volksbildung, Geschichtsphilosophie, Positivismus", Sozialistische Monatshefte (June 27, 1921): 573-577.

³³"Zur geistigen Erziehung der Arbeiterklasse", Sozialistische Monatshefte (August 29, 1921): 751-757.

Grimme, responsibility played a key role. Capitalism encouraged the exploitation, not the respect, of one's fellows. This encouraged an attitude of "every man for himself". Now that Germany had adopted democracy, assumption of responsibility was even more critically important than ever before. Only when Germans pooled their resources and cooperated with one another could Germany be rebuilt. Grimme's ideas on responsibility will be dealt with in greater detail in the next section, because responsibility was the link between the individual and the community.

When religious socialists turned their attention to Jesus's place in modern life, they generally tended to emphasize the Jesus who delivered the Sermon on the Mount. If this aspect of his teaching was revived, the corruptions of the established churches would become obvious. Purified, Jesus' message could once again live in the human heart.³⁴ Grimme echoed these ideas. The message of the Sermon on the Mount was that of brotherly love. Capitalist society could not realize Jesus' message--while it taught love as the ideal, the system depended on its members violating Jesus' injunction to love others. Socialism

³⁴"Sozialismus und Jesus", Sozialistische Monatshefte (September 19, 1921): 816-818.

would allow the unity of theory and practice--one would finally be able to truly live a Christian life.³⁵

To religious socialists, the religion of the established churches was not true religion because these churches were too secular and materialistic--they worshipped things, degrading humanity.³⁶ This type of religion corresponded to capitalism; both turned humans into material commodities.³⁷ Proletarian religion, however, restored the central position of humanity, which would result in true brotherly love.

Religious socialists did agree with Löwenstein and other "secular" socialists that the established churches had used religion as a tool of class oppression.³⁸ But while for Löwenstein this discredited religion and Christianity, for religious socialists this misuse only discredited the churches. They had deviated from Jesus' message of brotherly love. Old forms of religious worship had lost their meaning; if they continued to be used, only

³⁵Grimme, Der religiöse Mensch, pp. 28-29 and GStA (Dahlem) 1 HA Rep. 92 Grimme 388, rough draft for a speech, dated August 30, 1931.

³⁶"Die Religion des Arbeiter", Sozialistische Monatshefte (November 22, 1920): 1007-1009.

³⁷Kolakowski, pp. 274-275.

³⁸"Zum Religionsproblem", Sozialistische Monatshefte (June 1919): 544-549 and "Christentum und Sozialismus" (January 26, 1920): 61-63.

hypocrisy could result.³⁹ In his day, Luther had broken with the Catholic Church precisely because the old forms no longer stimulated belief and feeling which led to right action. And this is exactly the same reason socialists were breaking with the established churches now--in order to revive true religiosity.⁴⁰ On a more practical note Vorwärts advised workers to retain their church membership and try to change them from within.⁴¹ Grimme echoed these ideas.⁴²

For many religious socialists, religion alone was useless if it did not promote activity and channel it to positive ends. In its hour of need, Germany needed to tap every source of energy in order to rebuild and recuperate from the war. Religion, Christianity specifically, was indispensable in cultivating the necessary attitudes. True religion did not lead to passivity, religious socialists maintained. Traditional religion did--it tended to focus on the afterlife. But religious socialism was different in that it attempted to realize God's kingdom here on earth.⁴³

³⁹"Neue Religion", Sozialistische Monatshefte (August 25, 1919): 810-816.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹"Religion und Sozialdemokratie", Vorwärts, February 28, 1920 and "Arbeiderschaft und Kirche", June 25, 1920.

⁴²Grimme, Der religiöse Mensch, pp. 28-29.

⁴³"Die Befehle Gottes", Sozialistische Monatshefte (January 26, 1920): 44-48.

Grimme expressed this eloquently: "Our high-spirited mission, the task of the community of all nations is: to be God's collaborator in the victorious erection of his kingdom on earth."⁴⁴ He added, "There are no two worlds in the sense that one is for humans and the other entirely for God."⁴⁵ Religious socialists believed that the future utopia could be realized in the present.⁴⁶

To Grimme, true Christianity was not flight from the world, but immersion in it. In his own words: "Religion is not submission, religion is task."⁴⁷ Religion, Grimme added, did concern inwardness; but it was useless unless this inwardness was outwardly expressed.⁴⁸ Inwardness was individual subjectivity; outward expression meant activity and activity meant work--not the alienated labor of the capitalist economy, but socially useful work that contributed to both the individual and the community. The needs of the individual and the community were not opposed, but mutually beneficial.

⁴⁴Grimme, Der religiöse Mensch, p. 37.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 38.

⁴⁶"Religion und Sozialismus", Sozialistische Monatshefte (May 15, 1922): 442-447.

⁴⁷GStA (Dahlem) 1 HA Rep. 92 Grimme 560, "Frieden der Menschen auf Erden, die guten Willens sind!", Der Leuchtturm, December 25, 1931.

⁴⁸Grimme, Der religiöse Mensch, pp. 44-45. Although Grimme was a practicing Protestant, he attempted to correct a major problem with Lutheran theology--its passivity, particularly regarding the state.

CONCEPTS OF THE INDIVIDUAL, COMMUNITY AND NATION

In the early years of the Republic, Grimme was suspicious of the Social Democratic Party not only because of its materialistic orientation, but also because he was concerned with the extension of individual freedom.⁴⁹ Socialist ideology had at least a partially deserved reputation for wanting to level society. Such levelling was usually seen as a levelling down, as the restriction of individual opportunity.

Reformers like Oestreich, with ideas of radical egalitarianism, seemed to confirm this opinion. Many people believed that all individuals deserved equal opportunity, but that actual talents were unequally distributed. Indeed, we have seen that even articles in the normally moderate SPD journal, Sozialistische Monatshefte often protested against the "rise of the talented", agreeing with Oestreich on this point. What these socialists really objected to, however, was not recognition that aptitudes were unequal; what they objected to was that the measures used to determine aptitudes were not fair because they were

⁴⁹GStA (Dahlem) 1 HA Rep. 92 Grimme 546, "Was soll nun werden?", Rede des Studienassessors Grimme aus Leer in den Sälen der Stadthalle zu Osnabrück am 7. Januar 1919 auf Einladung der DDP, pp. 1-7.

skewed to favor the middle and upper classes.⁵⁰ In effect, these socialists parted company with Oestreich, in that while he denied the existence of natural inequality, they only called for more objective, fairer means for determining ability. Grimme belonged to this group. His ideas on the nature of individuality and the functions of community and nation all come together and are linked to his religious ideas.

Grimme insisted that all life was intrinsically equal. Ranking, however, did occur, at the supra-individual level or in the community. Grimme wrote,

The more a person shapes his life, the more a personality is he. Higher than mere existence . . . stands the developed person, the personality . . . A person is more human to the extent that he develops into a living personality.⁵¹

Ranking based on amount of possessions was improper because amount of wealth does not indicate talent beneficial for the whole community. For Grimme, the inner worth of the individual and external ranking by one's ability to contribute to the community were linked by the individual's capability to shape him or herself as a personality. The more one was able to do so, the more talent one developed in the process, hence the more one had to give to others.

⁵⁰"Gedanken zur Einheitsschule", Sozialistische Monatshefte (May 1919): 448-455; "Die Sozialistische Schule" (September 1919): 903-908; "Psychologie" (December 1919): 1235-1239.

⁵¹Grimme, Der religiöse Mensch, p. 13.

The very shaping of one's personality was the only meaningful goal worth striving for.⁵²

These ideas were not unique to Grimme. The philosopher Karl Jaspers believed in equality of opportunity, to become what you were. But what people *were* varied from person to person; all people were not equally endowed with special gifts.⁵³ The success of democracy depended on selection of the best in all areas of life, according to Jaspers.

The constant "becoming" or shaping of the individual was not merely a matter for self-congratulation, according to Grimme. He reconciled the individual's interests with the interests of the community in a way that should be familiar way--by asserting that the individual became an individual only in service to the community.⁵⁴ Grimme believed he had advanced beyond the one-sided focus on the individual characteristic of the bourgeois capitalism, by re-introducing the element of community. Grimme put it thus:

I risk the assertion that a socialism which effaced the personality would have forgotten its purpose. But I hear you protest, is it not exactly the mark of our time that the individual only thinks of himself? Is not socialism the assault against this curse?⁵⁵

⁵²Ibid., p. 12.

⁵³Karl Jaspers, Was ist Erziehung? Ein Lesebuch, ed. Hermann Horn (Munich: Piper, 1977, 1992), pp. 324-327.

⁵⁴Grimme, Der religiöse Mensch, p. 20.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 14.

Grimme insisted that his concept of personality was not that of the self-seeking ego. Neither should the individual become a herd animal. Instead, one became an individual in the community.

Others agreed. Martin Buber's ideas similarly emphasized community.⁵⁶ Buber thought that the realization of self could occur only in relationship with another. Inwardness of the individual was realized only when it was shared with another. Life was something to be worked at; individuality was not a given. Buber was careful to avoid both the radical isolation characteristic of Kierkegaard's philosophy, as well as the complete immersion in the group, which would extinguish true individuality. Buber called this third possibility the realm of the "Between".⁵⁷ While the collective annihilated the individuality and the possibility of responsibility, the community exalted personality and included freedom and responsibility.⁵⁸ There are obvious parallels here with Grimme's ideas. Indeed, while Buber disapproved of "materialist" socialism

⁵⁶Adir Cohen, The Educational Philosophy of Martin Buber (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983).

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 83.

⁵⁸Buber's use of the terms "collectivity" and "community" parallels Ferdinand Tönnies' distinction between "society" and "community".

because he thought it would result in stifling over-regulation, he favored "religious" socialism.⁵⁹

The capitalist notion that everyone was but a replaceable cog was a mistaken idea, Grimme said. We all have our own unique talents and should be treated as individuals, not merely part of a homogenized, undifferentiated mass. Parents and teachers had to recognize the differences in children, rather than ignoring their peculiarities. Democracy did not have to lead to mediocrity, or worse yet, a levelling down. It should lead to cultivation of the most talented leaders. Equality was not necessarily incompatible with the development of individuals into personalities. Grimme wrote, "Democracy need not be the sworn enemy of personal individuality."⁶⁰ He expanded on the theme:

I suggest, moreover, . . . that an organization of the people can never wipe out the distinction between leaders and followers. . . . Genuine democracy wants that those should lead who best understand how to lead. It [democracy] wants that each will be placed where he can most productively serve the whole.⁶¹

Spengler too had called for an aristocracy of talent. Only the English, he said, measured value by the amount of goods

⁵⁹Cohen, p. 97.

⁶⁰Grimme, Der religiöse Mensch, p. 21.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 22.

one possessed; the Germans, on the other hand, measured value by achievement and ability.⁴²

The yearning for a strong leader to end division predated the war.⁴³ This longing was magnified by the enormity of the problems of the post-war world. What Germany needed, many thought, were not politicians beholden to their party organizations, unable to be creative and bold, but real leaders.⁴⁴ The Nazis are infamous for their exaltation of the leadership principle. But they were not alone in calling for a strong leader; Stefan George, Ernst Jünger, Gustav Stresemann, Max Weber, and Ernst Kantorowicz were among notable public figures who shared this yearning.

Parallels between Grimme and non-socialists can also be seen in their concepts of the nation. Grimme thought that all nations were different from one another, and all were irreplaceable. He maintained that it was sinful to want to be other than what you were. One must accept one's own individuality. This applied to nations as well. The self-consciousness of a people made them a nation. No one nation was superior to another; they were indeed all different, but nevertheless equal. Each had their own

⁴²Spengler, p. 102.

⁴³Stern, p. xxviii.

⁴⁴Detlev J.K. Peukert, Die Weimarer Republik. Krisenjahre der Klassischen Moderne (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1987), p. 218.

God-given mission, specific to the peculiar strengths of that people.⁶⁵ And that mission was "to be God's co-workers in the victorious erection of his rule on earth."⁶⁶

A few socialists thought that Germany should follow the Bolsheviks' lead in instituting the brotherhood of mankind. Grimme insisted that Germany must remain independent of both the spiritual imperialism of the East, as well as the economic imperialism of the West. Germany's unique task was to emphasize the worth of the individual. And Germany could best represent this idea by combining the ideas of religion and those of socialism. Germany could never be a true nation in the sense of being a united Volk until

The owner overcomes his ego and through his example promotes the idea that, higher than his own interests is his love for the nation . . . [and] to prove this love through the renunciation of property.⁶⁷

He added,

We will no longer fail to recognize that nationalism and socialism are opposites. They have the same source; they are only two forms of the same manifestation of love: the will to brotherhood. This source is Christianity.⁶⁸

What does all this have to do with education? Grimme, like Löwenstein and Oestreich, was more concerned with larger political and social problems; he did, however,

⁶⁵Grimme, Der religiöse Mensch, pp. 24-25.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 37.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 59.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 56.

provide a broad outline on how education should be structured to produce the kind of society he envisioned.

GRIMME ON THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Although Grimme was a religious socialist and Löwenstein was a free-thinker, the two reformers shared many of the same attitudes towards the established churches and their links to the school system. Grimme's attitude is best expressed in his own words: "The history of Christianity is the history of the constant falsification of its pure teachings through the churches of both confessions."⁴⁹ Grimme maintained that there was a big difference between Jesus' teachings and those of the representatives of the churches who had supported the state in the World War. To Grimme, the churches did not display true Christianity--socialism was the best expression of Jesus' teachings of brotherhood.

Grimme believed religious education was important, but his definition of the term was so broad as to almost empty it of its meaning. Religious instruction would not be divided by denomination. Although he was often vague about the content of his proposed course, he intended that it would train youth in their duties to society, cultivate their love of community, and provide an insight to the

⁴⁹GStA (Dahlem) 1 HA Rep. 92 Grimme, "Besitz ist Schuld!", unidentified newspaper clipping of April 5, 1930.

meaning of life, a critical part of education in the modern nihilistic age.⁷⁰ Grimme equated religious education with the study of philosophy.⁷¹ He believed that history taught what was and what is; philosophy, however, taught one what could be. Although some people thought philosophy had no connection with daily life, Grimme thought that it did, that it could enrich everyday life and infuse work with joy. The study of philosophy was the way to an ever greater clarity.

In the same pamphlet, Grimme anticipated the objections of religious authorities, that philosophical questioning might result in a loss of respect for religion. He replied that true religion was more durable, that it could survive the questioning. The age of blind obedience to the churches was over; youth today must be taught to question all authority. Although it might be true that philosophical questioning would arouse skepticism, such questioning was also the only cure for growing skepticism.

Grimme insisted that the study of philosophy was not an escape from this world; rather "We are the eternal seekers after the connection between world and spirit."⁷² By equating philosophy with religious education, Grimme could

⁷⁰Grimme, Der religiöse Mensch, p. 62.

⁷¹GStA (Dahlem) 1 HA Rep. 92 Grimme, "Wozu Philosophie?" undated 31 page pamphlet by Grimme.

⁷²Ibid.

reassure his fellow socialists that he supported the socialist party planks respecting education, including the demand that it be secularized.⁷³

Many non-socialists were confused--how could someone who claimed to be religious support a secular school? They concluded that it must be a political ruse, a smokescreen, in order to camouflage a socialist take-over of the schools.⁷⁴ Other opponents maintained that even if Grimme were sincerely devoted to Christianity, as a socialist he could never hope to successfully oppose the free-thinking atheistic elements, men like Löwenstein, that dominated the SPD.⁷⁵

One did not have to be a socialist to oppose the prevailing practice of religious segregation. While still a Democrat, Grimme had formed a BESCH chapter in Hannover. Its program provides a good account of Grimme's specific reform ideas. In the list of goals of the schools is the demand for "a school which desires to educate religious

⁷³GStA (Dahlem) 1HA Rep. 92 Grimme, "Ein sozialistisches Bildungsprogramm", unidentified newspaper clipping of April 5, 1930.

⁷⁴Ibid., "Die sittliche Einstellung des preußischen Kultusminister", unidentified and undated newspaper clipping.

⁷⁵Ibid., "Ehrendes Mißtrauen. Reaktionärer Vorstoß gegen den Kultusminister Grimme", Vorwärts, November 26, 1931.

persons, but without denominational connections."⁷⁶ Grimme agreed with Löwenstein that denominational division only sustained division of the community. He disagreed with Löwenstein, however, in his insistence that all children, even those of dissidents, must take religious instruction.⁷⁷ Grimme is worth quoting at length on the subject:

The religious human is socialist . . . The struggle against the confessional school is a struggle for the religious school . . . the struggle for a church-free school should make the way clear for the school of the true church . . . It is a school for the world, a secular [weltliche] school, which to call godless is done in evil or folly.⁷⁸

Turning to the problem of integrating education, Grimme agreed with Oestreich that class privileges in pursuit of a higher education must be abolished. Grimme differed from Oestreich in that he believed specialization and branching were necessary. The different branches, however, should be better co-ordinated and access to each open to all students.⁷⁹ This would result in an integrated system.⁸⁰

⁷⁶Ibid., "Programm Entwurf der Ortsgruppe Hannover des Bundes entschiedener Schulreformer".

⁷⁷Ibid., "Volksversammlung der deutschen dem. Partei", Ostfriesische Zeitung, December 17, 1918.

⁷⁸Grimme, Der religiöse Mensch, p. 44.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 61.

⁸⁰GStA (Dahlem) 1 HA Rep. 92 Grimme, 546, "Was soll nun werden", unidentified and undated newspaper clipping of 1919.

Like Oestreich, Grimme adamantly rejected any organization of the educational system that would allow unfair advantage to the propertied. A student's education and profession would be decided solely on the students' inclinations.⁸¹

It was not the organization of education that was of primary importance to Grimme; he was concerned more with its content. As Education Minister during the Depression, he had to consider how problems of education were linked with employment. As unemployment increased, the various types of schools all scrambled to secure special privileges for its graduates. Grimme criticized this as selfishness; the crisis could be overcome only when individuals assumed responsibility and thought about the needs of the whole society, not just their own special interests.⁸²

With large numbers of unemployed, employers raised standards in their hiring decisions; this often resulted in good positions being reserved for secondary school graduates, even when the nature of the job did not specifically require that type of preparation.⁸³ Grimme criticized this practice; he thought that a good basic education in the *Volksschule* was often more suitable than

⁸¹Ibid., "Programm Entwurf (BESCH)".

⁸²Ibid., "Minister Grimme gegen die 'Knopfloch-Gesinnung' und gegen das Zeugnisunwesen", unidentified newspaper clipping, March 31, 1930.

⁸³Ringer, p. 32.

an interrupted course of study in a higher institution. Command of Latin did not make one person better qualified for a job than the applicant who lacked this mostly useless skill.⁸⁴

Like Grimme, university mandarins deplored the numbers of students enrolled in the university who were motivated by the desire for social mobility, for privileges and titles. The mandarins wanted to restrict the numbers of those admitted to these institutions. While they insisted that their position was based on their concern for maintaining high standards of scholarship, their real motivation seemed to be to maintain their exclusivity.⁸⁵ Grimme disagreed--he thought that only greater access to higher education could result in the true "rise of the talented".

While Grimme rejected socio-economic position of the student as the measure of value, he failed to offer a workable substitute. Although he thought that moral and spiritual qualities should be decisive, neither he nor other socialists were able to offer a standard for measuring these elusive qualities. Lacking an objective standard of judgment, the yearning for a strong leader was decided by irrational, or at least non-rational feeling.

⁸⁴GSStA (Dahlem) 1 HA Rep. 92 Grimme, "Programmrede Grimmes", Volkswacht, April 1, 1930.

⁸⁵Ringer, p. 287.

Hitler came to power and socialist attempts to build a new society were at an end, at least for the time being.

CHAPTER SEVEN WEIMAR POLITICS REVISITED

Despite the best efforts of Löwenstein, Oestreich, and Grimme to develop a practical program of educational reform consistent with Marxist principles as they understood them, the three theorists made little impact on either their party or the schools. This becomes apparent when attention is shifted from theoretical debate to the actual political situation in the 1920s.

THE NATIONAL SCHOOL CONFERENCE OF 1920

In 1917, the Social Democrats had proposed a national conference to discuss educational issues after the war. This suggestion was adopted by the government; on March 6, 1920 the national Minister of the Interior formally announced that the conference would meet in Berlin in June. It was intended to be a non-partisan discussion conducted by pedagogical professionals in order to publicize the issues and problems of the schools. SPD leaders agreed with the Interior Minister that party politics should not play any part in this public discussion of experts.¹ The hope was that an open, non-partisan discussion of the issues would allow both parents and politicians to make informed decisions concerning the school system.

¹"Die Reichsschulkonferenz", Vorwärts, June 11, 1920.

In order to keep the conference from becoming engaged in political issues, the socialist Heinrich Schulz, head of the Division of Culture in the Interior Ministry, kept the issue of religion off the agenda.² Instead, the delegates focussed on issues such as the proper number of grades for the elementary school, work education as a method of instruction, the role of the newly created parents' councils, and teacher training. Not only were the sensitive issues of religious instruction, confessional segregation, and the proper role of the established churches in the schools ignored, but the issue of integration of the high schools was also kept off the agenda. As a consequence, even the modest intentions of educating the public and influencing politicians were unrealized.

Even though both Oestreich and Löwenstein objected to the proceedings, the majority of the delegates leaned to the left.³ Löwenstein objected to the inclusion of any non-socialist educators--he completely rejected cooperation with other political parties and quoted Karl Marx's dictum that only the proletariat could free itself.⁴ Oestreich's complaints were similar--he thought that reactionaries,

²"Die Reichsschulkonferenz", Vorwärts, June 20, 1920.

³"Die Reichsschulkonferenz. 4. Tag: Lehrerbildung", Vorwärts, June 15, 1920.

⁴FES, 3.3.1, 639-681, unidentified and undated newspaper clipping of 1920.

miffed at left-wing domination, had stooped to obstructive tactics to wreck the conference.⁵

The conference made no discernible impact on education. Intended to be non-partisan, it degenerated into petty squabbling between would-be reformers and conservatives. The arguments had no effect on politicians in power, who were more concerned with the intricacies of conducting politics in the new republic than in the theoretical debates of peripheral issues and the bickering of pedagogues. The decisive and meaningful debates could only be partisan, occurring each time a legislative proposal for the national school law promised by the constitution was made.

PROPOSED LEGISLATION FOR THE NATIONAL EDUCATION LAW

Four pieces of legislation for the promised national education law were proposed in the 1920s. Each time, the issue of the relationship between the established churches and the elementary schools was the central issue. Since secular schools had not existed during Wilhelmian Germany, their legitimacy was brought into question by article 174 of the constitution, the "status quo" provision. One would expect a political party that publicly insisted on

⁵"Die Reichsschulkonferenz. Fortsetzung der Ausschlußberichte. Erklärungen über Erklärungen" and "Die Reichsschulkonferenz. Ein Verzweiflungsakt der Reaktion", Vorwärts, June 18, 1920.

separation of church and state and which supported the establishment of secular schools to be active in trying to get a national law passed. Yet not one of these four legislative proposals originated with the SPD or enjoyed socialist support--the SPD voted against every one of these proposals, yet offered none of its own. Unable to agree on a common direction for educational reform, the SPD was incapable of introducing its own proposals; it could only reject bills proposed by the other parties.

The first proposal was the only one that the SPD even considered. Offered in 1921, it would have given secular schools full legal equality with the confessional school type. The legislation thus permitted both secular and confessional schools; although it weakly repeated the constitution's preference for the community school, it did nothing to promote this type. The legislation further provided that the individual states would have wide latitude in deciding what fit the definition of "orderly school operation" provided for in article 146 of the constitution.

Both the SPD and DDP objected to the proposed legislation. The Democrats objected because they believed that only mixed religious schools could promote solidarity of

the community; confessional schools destroyed unity.⁶ The Democrats also maintained that only the churches, not the parents, really wanted confessional segregation.⁷

In its objections, the SPD repeated its assertion that separation of state and church meant the separation of church and school. The community school referred to in the constitution, the party maintained, was actually the secular school, the only type of school in which the rights of freedom of thought and conscience could actually be realized.⁸ The SPD's party program of 1921 repeated its standard position, that "religion is a private matter, of inner conviction, not a party or state matter: separation of church and state."⁹ The program went on to call for a secular, free, and integrated school system. Since the proposed legislation violated these principles, many socialists rejected this proposal.

Löwenstein, speaking for the USPD, dismissed the legislation as part of the Independents' rejection of participation in any compromise which made concessions to

⁶GStA (Merseburg) Rep. 169D Preußischer Landtag, xc C2, Die Konfessionelle Verhältnisse der Schule (Konfessions-Simultanschule), Ldtg. Bd. 1: 1919-27, Berlin, den 7. Juni 1921.

⁷Ibid., xc C3, Der Religionsunterricht Allgemein Ldtg. Bd. 1: 1919-33, 38. Sitzung am 12. Juli 1921.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Treue, p. 105.

the Center. Always ready with his acid wit, the Independent "Ten Commandments" Hoffmann claimed that Schulz would not be happy until the pope ruled Berlin.¹⁰ Schulz replied that negotiating with moderates in the Center Party undercut the position of Catholic reactionaries. Besides, this legislation deserved consideration because it would at least legalize the secular schools.¹¹ The SPD-USPD disagreement ended when the USPD dissolved itself in 1922; the majority of the party joined the Communist Party, while about one-third, including Löwenstein, chose to join the SPD. Löwenstein nevertheless continued to criticize the propriety of a socialist-Catholic coalition and warned that the Center could not be trusted.

The first piece of legislation was finally shelved in 1924. The second proposal came in 1925. Before it was made, the SPD adopted a new program at its yearly conference in Heidelberg that year. The new program was necessary to cement the SPD-USPD reunification. It reflected the leftward push the USPD members gave the party. Not only must church and religious influence in the schools be struggled against, stated the program, but "no expenditure of public funds for church and religious goals" should be

¹⁰"Die Schuldebatte des Reichstags", Vorwärts, January 25, 1922.

¹¹Ibid.

made.¹² The usual affirmation for a secular, free, and integrated school system was repeated.

The 1925 proposal was a DNVP-sponsored bill supporting confessional segregation. It was of short duration because the national government at the time was so unstable; when the government fell, the proposal was dropped. In 1926, a DDP-sponsored bill was offered. The SPD considered negotiating on this proposal. But this government was unstable too and the legislation was shelved when the government fell. Both of these bills would have implemented the DDP's favored type of school of mixed denominations.

The final legislative proposal for the national education law illustrated the problem of a SPD-Center coalition --that their differences were irreconcilable as many socialists, including Löwenstein had been maintaining for a long time. It is known as the Marx-Keudell bill after its authors, Wilhelm Marx, prominent Center politician and head of the Catholic School Association, and Herr von Keudell, a reactionary German Nationalist. Their proposal, while ostensibly claiming to grant equality to confessional, secular, and community schools, actually favored the confessional schools by providing that not only would all teachers and non-religious subjects in the curriculum be oriented to the school's confession, but that all of that

¹²Treue, p. 109.

school's inspectors would share the same religion. In addition, religious instruction would be required, not voluntary, in schools of mixed confession.¹³

The bill seemed to vindicate members of the SPD, such as Löwenstein, who had always maintained that the Center could not be trusted. The provisions in the Marx-Keudell Bill not only favored the confessional school but actually tried to reverse rights granted by the constitution, rights the SPD especially cherished. Administrators had always attempted to match the religion of the teacher with that of the school, in order to minimize conflict. But for the Center and DNVP to insist that school inspectors also had to be of that religion seemed outrageous. Even more outrageous was the infringement on the right of a student to abstain from religious instruction. Dissidents had been persecuted before and during the World War. This provision seemed to signal a return to the coercion of Imperial days.

Löwenstein viewed the bill as a renewal of the class struggle, disguising itself in the cloak of religion and morality. Other party members agreed with him. Schulz felt betrayed by the Center alliance with the DNVP. The SPD had patiently co-operated with the Center, only to be betrayed by Catholic reactionaries. Schulz nevertheless

¹³"Das Reichsschulgesetz und die Verfassungsparteien", Sozialistische Monatshefte (August 8, 1927): 613-618 and Dietrich Orlow, Weimar Prussia, vol. 2, pp. 35-66.

insisted that opposition to the bill did not mean opposition to religion or even the established churches, only opposition to the churches' attempt to play the game of power politics. The party conference that year in Kiel passed a resolution which affirmed SPD support for the secular schools and called for support of inter-confessional schools in places where secular schools did not yet exist.¹⁴

Indeed, although the Marx-Keudell Bill antagonized relations between the SPD and the Center, the coalition between the two parties continued to flourish, if not at the federal level of government, at least in Prussia. Successful conclusion of a concordat, or treaty, with the Pope in 1929 illustrated the SPD's commitment to compromise with the Center, as Schulz consistently advocated and Löwenstein and Oestreich consistently criticized.

The failure of the Marx-Keudell Bill in November 1927 ended attempts to enact the constitutional provision that promised a national education law. In lieu of this law, which was supposed to reconcile contradictory clauses of the constitution, educational matters were left to state governments to solve. In Prussia, lack of the national law led to a chaotic situation. Since there was a lack of

¹⁴Heinrich Schulz, Kirchenschule oder Volksschule? Ein Kampf gegen den Reichsschulgesetzentwurf der Rechtskoalition (Berlin: J.H. W. Dietz, 1927).

legal precedents to refer to, quite often there were no good answers to the very difficult problems. Appeals to Imperial law were disputed by socialists, but the SPD could offer no alternative.

THE PRUSSIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN THE 1920S AND THE ISSUE OF SECULARIZATION

Prussian elementary schools during Imperial Germany were divided by confession, included religious instruction in the curriculum, and were administered primarily by the established churches. The SPD was able to alter only the third point, and even on this issue, the established churches continued to successfully challenge state authority.

Although education certainly was not secularized by the constitution, positive steps were made in that direction: school supervision was made a matter of the state, not the churches, although the state was required to consult the churches on religious instruction; teachers were given all the rights of state officials, one of which was that religious denomination was not to be considered unless this were relevant to the office; religious instruction and participation in church ceremonies and holidays was no longer compulsory but voluntary; secular schools were mentioned in the constitution, implying their legitimacy; and finally, care was to be taken to protect the sensitivities of dissenters.

Every one of these provisions proved difficult to implement in practice. A barrage of letters from local officials to the Education Ministry requested advice on how to apply these clauses in particularly difficult cases. One might be amused at the ridiculous ways in which the meanings of words could be stretched and distorted if the end result had not been cynicism about government and politicians.

The state had always retained authority over the schools in principle, even during the 19th century; the state had only used the churches as administrators because it was been convenient to do so. Teachers resented supervision by clergymen not professionally trained as educators. They preferred pedagogues as state officials in overseeing the schools. Their desires seemed to be realized by articles 143 and 136 of the constitution. Article 143 granted teachers all the "rights and duties of state officials".¹⁵ Article 136 stipulated that the religion of state officials was not to be a consideration, unless the duties of the office were dependent on religious membership.¹⁶ Since teachers believed that the duties of the teaching profession were not dependent on religious confession but on professional training, they thought they

¹⁵Die Verfassung, p. 43.

¹⁶Ibid.

were now free from church interference. The leadership of both the Catholic and Evangelical churches insisted otherwise; the essence of the confessional school, they maintained, was that its lesson plans and school books must reflect the spirit of that particular religion.¹⁷ A teacher of a different confession could not adequately teach properly in such a school. Jewish teachers as well as dissidents were barred from the confessional school.¹⁸ And certainly Jewish educators could not serve as rectors of Evangelical or Catholic schools.¹⁹ But not only did the churches oppose the idea of Jewish administrators of Christian schools; they also insisted that all school officials must belong to the religion of that school.²⁰ If a teacher left the church after securing employment in a secular school, then that teacher must be removed from the confessional school. The argument that a teacher had the

¹⁷GStA (Dahlem) Rep. 76 VII neu Sekt 1B-I Nr. 61 Bd. I, p. 388, letter to Kultusministerium, January 27, 1922.

¹⁸Ibid., Nr. 2 Bd. XXV, p. 351, letter from Education Minister Boelitz to Provinzialschulkollegium in Berlin-Lichterfelde, June 26, 1924.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 435, Kultusministerium to Berlin-Lichterfelde, November 28, 1924.

²⁰Ibid., Nr. 2 Bd. XXVI, p. 190, Evangelical church official to the Kultusminister, May 31, 1930 and Nr. 60 Bd. I, p. 204, undated resolution of the Catholic School Organization of Germany.

constitutional right to freedom of belief and conscience did not dissuade church authorities.²¹

Chronic financial problems of the period aggravated the situation. Whenever it became necessary to reduce the number of personnel in the schools, supporters of the confessional school insisted that the official's religion should be a factor. Their argument was that the remaining teachers would have to be prepared to teach all subjects, including religion.²² But then where could a teacher who chose to exercise the constitutional right to abstain from religion find employment, since the supporters of the confessional school also insisted that secular schools were illegal?²³

When proponents of confessional education insisted that most teachers did not choose to abstain from religion because they believed in its validity and necessity, the USPD insisted that if teachers were reluctant to exercise their

²¹"Katholischer Schulstreik", Vorwärts, June 20, 1920, an interesting report on a school strike at a Westphalian Catholic school, conducted by Catholic parents who demanded the removal of four Catholic teachers who had left the Church. School strikes by both supporters of confessional schools and of secular schools were quite common throughout the decade. The Education Minister was firm that local authorities not capitulate to strikers or to the threat of a strike.

²²GStA (Dahlem) Rep. 76 VII neu Sekt 1B-I, Nr. 2, Bd. XXV, p. 331-332, Directive of Boelitz to the local governments, March 1, 1924.

²³Ibid., p. 381-363, unidentified newspaper clipping of November 2, 1924.

constitutional right to refrain from religion it was because they were afraid they could neither obtain nor keep their positions otherwise.²⁴ Quite often non-religious teachers were the first to be laid off, not only because they would not teach religious instruction, but also because, since the right to refrain from religion was so recent, they tended to be the newest teachers.²⁵ Religious teachers might then fill these positions, even in schools without religious instruction. Proponents of confessional education worried that religious teachers might be transferred against their will to schools they considered to be godless. Education Minister Boelitz instructed local officials not to violate the rights of teachers in confessional schools by transferring them to non-confessional ones.²⁶

One attempt to address this problem was to assign teachers to the schools of their religions whenever possible, or in the case of non-religious teachers, to secular

²⁴Ibid., p. 250, USPD speech in the Prussian Landtag, March 8, 1922.

²⁵Ibid., Nr. 60 Bd. III, pp. 39-40, teachers' petition to the Kultusministerium, August 13, 1931. Married teachers were usually targeted for early retirement as well; the SPD tried to defend this group, while the Catholics maintained that married teachers could not properly devote themselves both to the profession and to their marital and motherly duties.

²⁶Ibid., Bd. 1, p. 437, Kultusminister Boelitz to Provinzialschulkollegium in Berlin-Lichterfelde, September 23, 1922.

schools.²⁷ The Education Minister also ruled that if a teacher in a Catholic school converted to Protestantism, that teacher would be transferred to the appropriate school. In addition, that teacher could teach religious instruction only after one year had elapsed since the conversion and only after taking a state examination in religious instruction.²⁸ Most teachers, even those who considered themselves personally religious, resented what they regarded as infringement by the churches into state authority.²⁹ Many insisted that the churches had no role in public education, not even in religious instruction.³⁰ Despite the protests of the teachers, however, the churches continued to assert their authority over the schools,

²⁷Ibid., Nr. 2 Bd. XXV, p. 478, Kultusminister Becker to Provinzialschulkollegium, April 8, 1926; and GStA (Potsdam) Rep. 76 VII neu Sekt 1B-I, p. 117 Kultusminister Grimme to Prussian Minister President Braun, October 17, 1930. The problem with dissident teachers was that the Teachers' Academies were also confessionally segregated. When he became Education Minister, Grimme insisted that the academies had to accept dissidents too; the government would then try to assign them to schools which corresponded to those beliefs. Also see GStA (Merseburg) Rep. 169D Preußischer Landtag, xc J9 Die Dissidenten, Ldtg. Bd. 1: 1920-33, March 17, 1931.

²⁸GStA (Dahlem) Rep. 76 VII neu Sekt 1B-I Nr. 2 Bd. XXVI, p. 131, Kultusminister to the Evangelical Church, October 15, 1927.

²⁹Ibid., p. 39, "Religionsunterricht und Kirche", Allgemeine Deutsche Lehrerzeitung Nr. 16 (May, 1927).

³⁰Ibid., p. 218-220 and pp. 235-240, teachers' petitions to the Kultusministerium August 1930.

insisting that in the matter of religious instruction, church officials were superior to civil servants.³¹

Article 144 of the constitution made the entire school system subject to state supervision. Article 149 provided that religious instruction was ordinarily a subject of the schools (except for the secular schools) and added that it would be "taught in accord with the principles of the concerned religious society without prejudice to the supervisory rights of the state."³² This latter provision gave the churches the right to involvement in the schools, a right they used as a wedge to broaden their influence over other areas of education whenever they could.

In a Landtag debate, the Social Democrats insisted that religious instruction in the schools was still subject to state supervision and control--the constitution had not intended that religious instruction would be dogmatic, but a more general type of religious instruction. Confessional religious education was actually incompatible with the constitutional provisions for freedom of belief. The Democrats agreed that while dogma had to be avoided, religious instruction should remain confessional.³³

³¹Ibid., p. 190, Letter from an Evangelical church official to the Kultusminister, May 31, 1930.

³²Die Verfassung, p. 45.

³³GSStA (Merseburg) Rep. 169D Preußischer Landtag, xf A3, Bd. 1: 1919-28, Sitzung am September 13, 1923.

Despite pressure from both churches, the state partially agreed with the SPD and insisted on limitations on church interference in education. When one Evangelical church official attempted to pay a surprise visit to inspect a religious instruction class, the school turned him away. He responded by writing a letter of grievance to local officials, claiming the church's right to inspect those classes had been violated. The Education Minister rejected his complaint, supporting the school in this instance, stating that the requirement to give notice was a reasonable one.³⁴ The Education Minister also instructed local officials that, although the churches might be consulted on matters pertaining to religious instruction, it was not mandatory to obtain their approval.³⁵

One of the ways in which the churches tried to maximize their influence over the schools was through an insistence on their right to determine how many hours a week religious

³⁴GStA (Dahlem) Rep. 76 VII neu Sekt 18-I Nr. 2 Bd. XXVI, p. 246, Evangelical Office in Schlesien to Breslau officials, December 30, 1930 and p. 247, Breslau local officials reply of January 20, 1931. For other instances of the Evangelicals' insistence that religious instruction was strictly a church matter see Bd. XXIV, p. 428, a petition to the Kultusministerium to this effect, dated April 6, 1921. The Catholic Church repeatedly made similar claims--see Bd. XXIV, p. 107, press clipping from the Kölnischer Volkszeitung of November 13, 1919 and p. 259, press clipping Germania, February 25, 1920 which forcefully insisted that the state could not abridge the church's right to supervise religious instruction.

³⁵Ibid., Nr. 2 Vol XXV, p. 352, Kultusministerium to Provinzialschulkollegium, June 26, 1924.

instruction should be. This was one of the few instances in which the Evangelical Church was at odds with the Catholics, claiming that Catholics received more hours per week of religious instruction than did Protestants.³⁶ When the Education Ministry attempted to mediate the dispute by equalizing the number of hours of religious instruction, the Bishop of Osnabrück protested that there were reasons unique to Catholicism that necessitated more than the stipulated number of hours.³⁷ The Kultusministerium believed that if the number of hours was too high, students would not take it and teachers would refuse to teach it.³⁸

We have dealt with the problem of teachers and how they could not really exercise their constitutional right to refuse to teach religious instruction. What was the situation with the students? Article 149 again proved problematical in its stipulation that participation in religious instruction depended on a "declaration of intent" by the guardians of the student. The constitution did not stipulate the form, however--would students have to declare that

³⁶Ibid., Nr. 61 Bd. II, p. 160, unidentified report dated January 1923.

³⁷Ibid., p. 76, letter by the Bishop of Osnabrück to the Kultusminister, September 21, 1922.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 471-475, undated minutes of a meeting between Kultusministerium, Evangelical church leaders, school administrators, and teachers.

they wanted religious instruction or the opposite? The issue aroused heated debate.

The Independent Socialists, Oestreich's organization BESCH, and socialist teachers all insisted that the intent of the constitution clearly was that the parent must specifically request religious instruction for the child, otherwise none would be provided.³⁹ Representatives of the Center Party scoffed at this argument. They maintained that since the earlier part of article 149 had provided that religious instruction was ordinarily part of a school's curriculum, the declaration of intent surely must be one of abstention.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the Center insisted, since the majority desired religious instruction, it would be ludicrous to have them all make statements of intent.⁴¹

Socialist Education Minister Haenisch hedged by claiming that there was no stipulated form; it could be positive or negative, oral or written, as long as it was as

³⁹GStA (Dahlem) Rep. 76 VII neu Sekt 1B-I Nr. 2 Bd. XXIV, p. 99, USPD and BESCH representatives' speeches in the Prussian Constitutional Convention, October 17, 1919; pp. 187-189, session of December 6, 1919; and p. 172, petition to the convention by a socialist teachers' organization, September 30, 1919. Also, see GStA (Merseburg) Rep. 169D Preußischer Landtag, xc, C3 Der Religionsunterricht Allgemein, Ldtg. Bd. 1: 1919-33, October 20, 1919 and "Teilnahme am Religionsunterricht", Vorwärts, November 15, 1919, for BESCH's protests.

⁴⁰GStA (Dahlem) Rep. 76 VII neu Sekt 1B-I Nr. 2 Bd. XXIV, p. 189.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 100, Center representative speech at the Prussian Constitutional Convention, October 17, 1919.

simple as possible--officials could not purposely make the process more complicated than necessary. In addition, one could not repeatedly change one's mind about whether to participate in religious instruction or not.⁴²

Haenisch's successor, Otto Boelitz, agreed with the Center's position--if religion were an ordinary school subject, surely the student should not have to specifically request the course.⁴³ National Minister of the Interior Walter Koch agreed; if parents sent their children to confessional schools, they probably wanted them to receive religious instruction, and it would be wasteful and time-consuming to force them to make formal statements to that effect.⁴⁴ Applying this argument to the secular schools, one would assume that a positive declaration of intent to take religious instruction would be necessary at this type of school.⁴⁵

Were the secular schools even constitutional? Although the secular school was mentioned in article 149, opponents

⁴²Ibid., Nr. 60 Bd. I, p. 110, Kultusminister to the local Cöln government, January 19, 1921; Nr. 2 Bd. XXIV, p. 126, unidentified newspaper clipping of December 6, 1919; and pp. 13-15, letter from Haenisch to local governments and Provinzialschulkollegium.

⁴³Ibid., Nr. 2 Bd. XXV, pp. 301-320, letter from Boelitz to the Reich Interior Minister, June 29, 1923.

⁴⁴Ibid., Bd. XXIV, p. 272, unidentified and undated document.

⁴⁵Ibid., Nr. 60 Bd. I, p. 110, Haenisch to the local government in Cologne, November 26, 1920.

insisted that article 174, the status quo article, invalidated the earlier provision until a national school law was passed. In the 1920s, the Education Ministry dealt with the problem by maintaining that secular schools did not exist. Instead there were "collection schools" or "collection classes" or "Evangelical schools without religious education".⁴⁶

The last term provoked outrage from Protestants. If a school were Evangelical, then religious instruction was an ordinary school subject--this meant that an "Evangelical school *without* religious education" was a constitutional impossibility.⁴⁷ Although no school was ever designated a "Catholic school without religious education", a Center Landtag representative wanted to know if this, or a "Jewish school without religious education" were possible.⁴⁸ Education Minister Haenisch had to concede that those type

⁴⁶Ibid., Nr. 2 Bd. XXIV, p. 258, Haenisch's address to the Prussian Landtag, April 10, 1920 and Bd. XXV, p. 12, Kultusminister to Potsdam local officials, December 1921; Nr. 60 Bd. I, p. 138, Haenisch's address to the Prussian Landtag, January 13, 1921; p. 279, article in the Kölnische Volkszeitung, July 12, 1921; p. 380 Boelitz to the President of the Landtag, December 28, 1921.

⁴⁷Ibid., Nr. 60 Bd. I, p. 40, letter from an Evangelical church official to the Education Minister, November 18, 1920; p. 43, article in Deutsche Zeitung, November 4, 1920.

⁴⁸Considering the fluidity of language use, one can almost imagine a "secular school with religious instruction". The proposal is not made in jest--it seems an apt phrase to describe Grimme's ideal school.

of schools were indeed possible if the majority in that type of school chose to refrain from taking religious education.⁴⁹ But the term was never used except in reference to Protestant schools. Socialists insisted, however, that use of the term was accurate; these schools still retained Evangelical books and teacher plans; they only omitted religious instruction.⁵⁰

In practice, even supporters of confessional segregation and religious instruction realized that the administration of the schools was much more efficient when those students who did not take religious instruction were "collected" into their own schools. Although some of these supporters argued that non-confessional moral instruction should be held for these students while other students attended confessional religious instruction, socialists insisted that not even a non-confessional course could be required.⁵¹ To prevent the chaos that would arise from

⁴⁹GStA (Dahlem) Rep. 76 VII neu Sekt 1B-I Nr. 60 Bd. I, pp. 29-30.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 39, Haenisch letter of November 19, 1920; pp. 432-433, Kultusminister to local government in Münster, August 31, 1922 and GStA (Merseburg) Rep. 169D Preußischer Landtag xc C3, Der Religionsunterricht Allgemein, Ldtg. Bd. I: 1919-33, December 7, 1920, DNVP speech and Haenisch's reply.

⁵¹Ibid., Nr. 2 Bd. XXV, p. 365, Division of Church and School Affairs to the Kultusminister, November 1, 1924; p. 364, Kultusministerium response, December 4, 1924; GStA (Potsdam) Rep. 76 VII neu Sekt 1B-I Bd. 8, p. 31, Haenisch to local governments and Provinzialschulkollegium, March 13, 1920.

either dismissing those not participating in religious instruction early or allowing them to arrive late, the Education Ministry approved of the practice of "collecting" these students in their own schools.⁵²

Whatever these schools without religious instruction were called, there were very few of them; less than two per cent of the nation's youth received an education in a "secular school" by the end of the period.⁵³ Furthermore, not even the principle of the secular school was accepted. The socialist plank of secularization of education remained unrealized.

THE PRUSSIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN THE 1920S AND THE ISSUE OF INTEGRATION

Although the issue of religion in the schools attracted more time and attention from Prussian politicians and educators, the issue of integration of the school system was not entirely ignored. Hopes for integrating the educational systems of the various states to create a uniform system throughout the nation became increasingly dim as the 1920s wore on and chances for a national school

⁵²Ibid., Nr. 60 Bd. I, p. 135, SPD representative speech in the Prussian Landtag, January 13, 1921; p. 379, Landtag President to the Kultusminister, December 10, 1921.

⁵³GStA (Merseburg) Rep. 169D, x d A1, Bd. 1, Unterricht und Erziehung Allgemein, Preußische Statistik (Amtliches Quellenwerk), herausgegeben in Zwanglosen Heften vom Preußischen Statistischen Landesamte in Berlin (Berlin: Verlag des Preußischen Statistischen Landesamtes, 1931).

law being passed diminished. Integration of education in the sense of mixing the confessions not only failed, but introduction of *Weltanschauung* and secular schools further divided the system. Likewise, the occupational segregation of post-elementary education not only prevailed, but even worsened during the 1920s, with the introduction of two new types of high schools--the *Aufbauschulen* and the *Deutsche Oberschulen*. While these schools were intended to allow greater flexibility, greater fragmentation resulted.

The intent of several constitutional clauses was to soften the previously inflexible divisions of the upper grades, a division that largely followed class lines. The constitution provided for eight years of free education, followed by free occupational training until the student turned eighteen years of age. All children were required to attend a common elementary school; subsequent enabling laws set this for four years. Before attending middle or high schools, all students from all social classes were required to attend this four year school. Admission to middle and high schools was to depend only on the student's predisposition and inclination, not economic, social, or religious background. Private schools whose purpose was to segregate the wealthy from others and ensure admission to the high schools were abolished. Financial aid for capable but needy students was to be awarded in order to make higher education accessible to the economically

disadvantaged. Every one of these articles was undermined in one way or another throughout the 1920s.

Even during the war, the issue of vertical integration of Prussia's school system arose. In 1916, a Prussian legislative session considered the issue after the SPD repeated its demand that education be secularized, integrated, and free.⁵⁴ Supporters of the status quo said that free high schools would allow too many unprepared students in these schools. Since people differed in intelligence, they could not be educated together; different tracks were necessary. Even the Progressives insisted on maintenance of different types of high schools.⁵⁵

In this debate, Haenisch maintained that students in private schools should not enjoy special privileges. He called for greater access to high schools and universities.⁵⁶ Adolph Hoffmann insisted that open admissions would not result in hordes of unprepared students in the high schools; the SPD only wanted to make sure that talented but poor students had the opportunity to attend them.⁵⁷

⁵⁴GStA (Dahlem) Rep. 76 VII neu Sekt 1B-I, Nr. 1, Bd. VIII, p. 88-101, Landtag session, March 16, 1916.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 13.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 88-101. Hoffmann's address to the Landtag, March 15, 1916.

Those who supported the continuing division of the upper grades, however, insisted that this was necessary for maintaining the country's great cultural heritage. Education Minister Boelitz expressed this point of view in a pamphlet of 1924.⁵⁸ The only way to deal with the multiplicity of culture was to continue maintaining four different high school types, each with its emphasis on a different, but equally important aspect of culture. This way the students could re-experience a certain aspect of culture in depth; then they all worked together as an educated community to maintain the entirety of culture. But the different parts had to be co-ordinated, rather than each concentrating solely on their respective specialties.⁵⁹

Although the Center and the Social Democrats clashed on the issue of religion in the schools, both wanted the upper grades better integrated with the elementary level. During the war, the Center joined the SPD in denouncing private preparatory schools that served as class institutions, ensuring their students admission into the exclusive high

⁵⁸Ibid, pp. 349-379, "Die Neuordnung des preußischen höheren Schulwesens. Denkschrift des Preußischen Ministeriums für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Volksbildung" (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1924).

⁵⁹GStA (Merseburg) Rep. 167D Preußischer Landtag, xc C2, Die Konfessionelle Verhältnisse der Schule (Konfessions-, Simultanschule), Ldtg. Bd. I: 1919-27, Boelitz's address to the Landtag, May 8, 1923.

schools.⁶⁰ Haenisch pointed out that the three-year private school students were not as well prepared as students who had attended a four year public elementary school. To support his contention, he pointed out that areas which had no private schools sent students to the high schools who did just as well, and very often better than their private school counterparts. The conservatives' insistence that private schools were necessary to maintain high standards was unjustified.⁶¹

When he became Education Minister, Haenisch was determined that the constitutional provision phasing out existing private schools which served as class institutions would be enforced. He instructed local governments to refuse permission for establishment of new private schools.⁶² Despite this, Independents and Social Democrats drew the Education Minister's attention to what they viewed as violations of this provision. In 1921, the USPD protested that some private schools were continuing to send their students to the high schools after three instead of the required four years. Boelitz was Education Minister by

⁶⁰GSStA (Dahlem) Rep. 76 VII neu Sekt 1B-I Nr. 1, Bd. VIII, p. 42, discussion of a Center proposal in the Landtag, January 20, 1917.

⁶¹Ibid, pp. 11-13, Landtag session of January 29, 1917.

⁶²Ibid., p. 121, Haenisch directive to local officials, November 12, 1919.

this time; he said that this was permissible until the 1923-24 school year.⁴³

Despite these protests, and the constitution's position on the issue, private preparatory schools kept their doors open throughout the 1920s. The DNVP expressed support for these schools, insisting that these students were so well-prepared that they should be allowed to go to the high schools after three years of elementary education. The SPD scoffed at this claim; the DDP, although it believed in "rise of the talented", had to agree with the SPD on the necessity of four years of elementary education.⁴⁴

The DNVP offered a better case for retaining the private schools when it asked the state how the public system would deal with the dramatic and sudden increase in enrollment if the private schools were closed. And where were all the newly unemployed teachers to find work? Considering that finances were a constant problem throughout the period and lay-offs periodic, these questions could not just be brushed aside.⁴⁵

⁴³GStA (Merseburg) Rep. 169D Preußischer Landtag xf, A1, Die Volksschule Allgemein, Ldtg. Bd. I: 1919-24, June 1921.

⁴⁴Ibid., adh 2, Ausschlußverhandlungen zu den Akten über die Volksschule Allgemein, Ldtg. Bd. II, March 1925 Landtag session.

⁴⁵Ibid.

Not only were all levels of the school system not integrated in the manner Oestreich called for, but even the constitutional provision for a common four year elementary education for all students proved difficult to implement. One must conclude that integration of the school system by any definition of the word was not realized in the course of the 1920s.

* * *

Despite the earnest attempts of educational reformers, Prussia's school system continued to be characterized by class and religious segregation throughout the brief existence of Germany's first republic. Both the inability of the Social Democrats to unite behind a common educational reform program and the necessity of conducting coalition politics with parties hostile to general socialist ideology prevented the implementation of any meaningful changes. Except for superficial alterations, schools during Weimar were almost identical to those of Imperial Germany. The fragmentation of the schools reflected the fragmentation of Weimar politics and society. It is ironic that in striving for unity, fragmentation only increased.

CHAPTER EIGHT CONCLUSION

Prussian schools in 1932 were almost exactly as they had been before 1918--confessionally divided at the elementary level and occupationally divided in the upper grades. The only political party that professed a desire to reform the system was the Social Democratic Party. Certainly the necessity of political compromise in a coalition government posed obstacles to the implementation of any reforms. A more important reason, however, for the SPD's inactivity in this area is that the party lacked a common plan. While there was no dearth of ideas, the leadership could not agree to coordinate the forces in the party and unite behind one program. Quite simply, the party proved incapable of consistently applying Marxist principles to the practical problem of reforming the schools. Educators in the party could not agree on the fundamental issues of the role of religion in the modern world and the place of the individual in society.

Following unification in 1871, Prussia's sizeable Catholic minority hoped to protect their traditional way of life in the predominantly Protestant Reich and formed a political party to help them do so. The Center was an erstwhile defender of the confessional segregation of elementary schools. Middle-class liberals opposed the public power of the established churches; according to

them, the power of the state should not be checked by any outside power. Since the schools were state institutions, the state's authority over education was supreme. Despite their negative attitudes to the churches, liberals were not hostile to religion itself. As an important part of Germany's cultural heritage, religion could not be excluded from the schools. Furthermore, the occupational segregation of the upper grades was necessary for the transmission of culture, education's main task. Neither Catholics nor liberals contemplated major reforms of the state's schools.

In the years before the War, the Social Democratic Party had grown rapidly. While the party adopted the liberals' criticism of the established churches, its position on religion appeared to be more negative. Because the SPD was excluded from power in the Second Empire, however, its commitment to its programs remained untested. As long as socialists were considered pariahs, they could retain the language of opposition that proved attractive to so many of the nation's disaffected elements. Ambiguities and contradictions did not have to be resolved as long as the party remained outside the halls of power.

When the socialists--the SPD, along with its offspring, the USPD--unexpectedly found themselves in power in November 1918, they were forced to make many difficult decisions. The SPD had already exhibited its collaborationist tendencies during the war when it supported the

state. At the war's end, the party went even further, revealing its character as a liberal party, committed to the realization of the liberal ideal of democracy. The USPD, on the other hand, was more radical--it wanted to impose permanent changes on the prostrate nation immediately, while the socialists were still exclusively in power. The viewpoint of the SPD prevailed, and elections were held for the National Assembly. If it wanted to continue to rule, the Social Democrats had to form a coalition with the liberal parties.

While the leadership of the SPD could justly claim that the necessity of coalition politics inhibited the pursuit of educational reform, the fact remains that the party failed to unite behind a common plan. Part of the problem was that the SPD was more interested in issues that more directly affected its constituency--wages and hours. Socialists who were concerned with cultural issues often expressed frustration at the party's indifference to these problems.

But there was a more serious obstacle to forming a common program of educational reform--quite simply, the Marxist ideology that underpinned the party's position proved to be difficult, if not impossible, to apply to actual situations. Specifically, the party's positions on both religion and individualism were unclear. Three different educators in the party attempted to work out

these contradictions and apply Marxist principles to educational reform; in the process, all came up with very different theories. The ideas of these reformers had very little impact on the educational system because the assumptions and attitudes embedded in their approaches lessened their potential appeal.

Kurt Löwenstein tried to persuade both parents and the leadership of his own party of the necessity of completely eliminating religion from the public sphere. Although his arguments often had merit, his attitude of smug certitude was grating. His insistence on separation of church and state originated with liberals. His potential allies, however, could not stomach his prophecies of the inevitable triumph of the proletariat. Löwenstein grew increasingly disillusioned as the 1920s wore on; he could not understand why others were not as persuaded by the "truth according to Marx" as he was. Despite his belief that Marxism was scientific, while religion was based merely on faith, in the final analysis his behavior was no less sectarian than his religious opponents.

Paul Oestreich focussed on the problem of integrating the upper grades of the Prussian schools. He was constantly obliged to combat the charge that his ideas were impractical and utopian. While he repeatedly defended himself against these accusations, we must conclude that his critics were correct. Oestreich's ideas logically lead

to the erroneous conclusion that if the schools were reformed and all children received an equal education, then as adults they would never have to accept dull, unsatisfying, exploitative employment; furthermore, status distinctions would disappear. Even had all of his ideas been implemented, however, Oestreich's vision of a society without status distinctions could not have been realized.

Both Löwenstein and Oestreich claimed the high moral ground for their ideas. Although they were primarily interested in the welfare of blue-collar workers, both reformers identified service to this strata of the population with service to the whole German nation. Recovery from the war could occur only when all vestiges of the old authoritarian order, particularly religious and class divisions, were abolished. To fight the established churches or undermine the exalted position of the upper classes were not negative actions, in Löwenstein's and Oestreich's eyes--they merely sought to create a better future for all. But unless one was already predisposed to accept Marxist ideology, these arguments lacked cogency.

Adolf Grimme rose rapidly through the party ranks because he expressed a more moderate position on the issues of religion and individualism. As Education Minister, he had a forum by which he could reach the public. But like Oestreich, his ideas were too utopian, although for different reasons. Grimme wanted to realize God's Kingdom on

Earth; this was quite a grandiose dream for a nation which had just suffered a major defeat. A more serious problem, however, is that Grimme's statements could be misleading. When he wrote that "the secular is, in fact, religious", confusion was inevitable. While his approach might be valid in the course of a philosophical or theological discussion, in the political arena it could only serve to obscure the issues.

All three of these reformers participated actively in politics. Nevertheless, the examination of their ideas showed that, although they were more practical than "unpolitical" academic critics, quite often Löwenstein, Oestreich, and Grimme were just as guilty of flights of fancy. (This generalization applies less to Löwenstein than the other two.) All three of them embraced socialism partly because they thought it provided a more concrete way of viewing the world than did liberalism. But quite often, in their attempts to justify their own beliefs, they resorted to extremely abstract arguments. In short, part of the problem with Weimar politics was that not only its detractors, but even its active participants could be wildly impractical and unpolitical. The blue-collar constituency of the SPD was simply uninterested in the message of white-collar political theorists in the party, who discussed issues that seemed to have little relevance for the citizen's daily life.

Disgust with politics was widespread throughout the period. The behavior of the SPD regarding the issue of education provides an example of why so many turned away from the system. Much of the partisan debate over the schools was restricted to semantics. While politicians quibbled about terminology, nothing really changed. As long as politicians could argue over things that did not really matter, they were able to ignore the real problems of post-war Germany, problems that were intractable, almost unresolvable. It seemed to be easier to escape into petty squabbling than to acknowledge the enormity of the nation's problems. Despite the fact that the SPD's very ideology, Marxism, was based on "Reason", the Social Democrats were not immune from the emotional irrationalism that was rampant at the time.

The Social Democratic Party failed to define its fundamental beliefs, other than a commitment to the realization of democracy. Its commitment to democracy forced the leadership of the party to ensure the loyalty of its electoral base. This necessity forced the SPD to act as a special-interest party; despite this, socialist theorists preferred to think of the party as one above class. Its emphasis on social issues in the proletariat's interest belied its moralistic claims.

In the matter of education, the party failed to define its position. Social Democracy could not offer a vision

behind which the whole party, much less the entire working class, and even less so the entire nation, could unite. Our examination of the socialist theory and practice of educational reform demonstrates that the party could exert very little influence on the schools because its members were only loosely united by an ideology subject to a variety of interpretations, some of them contradictory. Unable to define its mission, German Social Democracy in the 1920s was paralyzed by its own inner contradictions.

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APPENDIX LIST OF SCHOOL TYPES

I. The **ELEMENTARY** or **primary schools** (Grundschule) encompassed the first four years and could be designated by the following terms:

Preparatory school (Vorschule), exclusive elementary schools with high tuitions; they were abolished by the 1919 Constitution.

Special schools (Sonderschulen), usually referred to schools for those with handicaps, for example, schools for the deaf. Sometimes, however, used to refer to schools with a unique character, also called **Weltanschauungsschulen**.

Most Prussian Grundschulen were **denominational schools** (Bekenntnisschulen).

A few were **mixed confessional schools** (Simultanschulen).

A very few were **secular schools** (weltliche Schulen). Since these were technically unconstitutional, they were sometimes called **collective schools** (Sammelschulen)--schools that collected students without religious instruction in one place, to prevent the confusion and disorder of mixing students.

II. Post-elementary education, by specialty:

A continuation of the **elementary school** (Volksschule), four more years, grades five through eight; academic training is now complete for these students. Vocational training begins.

The **MIDDLE** or **intermediate school** (Mittleschule) of six years, grades five through ten; these students generally enter lower white collar professions.

The **HIGHER** schools (Höhere Schulen), nine year schools, grades five through thirteen (Sexta through Oberprima). Many different types:

Gymnasium, with a humanistic curriculum containing nine years of Latin and six years of Greek.

Realschule, with a curriculum emphasizing the study of modern culture, with nine years of Latin and no Greek.

Oberrealschule, concentrating on math and natural science, with no Latin or Greek but two modern languages.

Deutsche Oberschule, centered on German culture, with two foreign languages.

The **Aufbauschule** was considered a high school, though it was only a six year school, which one attended after seven years in the elementary school.

VITA

In August 1986, Patricia McFarland received the Bachelor of Arts from the University of Southern Mississippi; the major field of study was history, complemented by a dual minor in political science and German. In May 1989, Ms. McFarland received the Master of Arts degree from the University of Southern Mississippi, graduating with a 4.0 grade point average. The major field of study was Modern European History. The Master's thesis, "Communism and Social Democracy in the Weimar Republic: A Case Study of the Presidential Election of 1925", was written under the direction of Dr. Glenn Harper

Ms. McFarland has attended Louisiana State University since August 1989. The major field of study was European history since 1500; minor fields included medieval history and German philosophy. Her dissertation, "Educational Reform and the Social Democratic Party in Weimar Prussia, 1918-1932", was written under the direction of Dr. David Lindenfeld. In the course of her research, she has visited archives in Amsterdam, Bonn, Berlin, Würzburg, and Merseburg. She is scheduled to receive the doctorate in December 1995.

Throughout her graduate career, she has served as a teaching assistant. For the academic year 1994-95, Ms. McFarland received the T. Harry Williams Fellowship, a departmental grant awarded on the basis of academic merit.

Upon graduation, she hopes to secure a teaching position in an institution of higher education.


DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

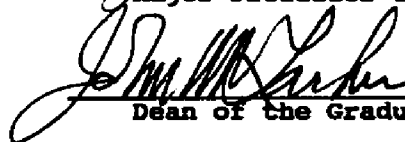
Candidate: Patricia Gebhart McFarland

Major Field: History


Title of Dissertation: Educational Reform and the Social
Democratic Party in Weimar Prussia,
1918-1932

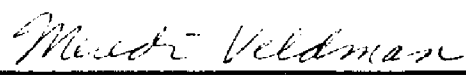
Approved:



Major Professor and Chairman



Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:


Thomas C. Allen


M. Veldman


Stanley R. R.


J. M. B.

Date of Examination:

September 15, 1995