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## **On the Treatment of the Holocaust at School**

A contribution from the Länder

Issued by the Secretariat of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany, PO BOX 2240, 53012 Bonn, Tel.: 02 28/501-0, 1997

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**Preface**

The Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany unanimously believe that one of the obligations facing schools is to deal in an intensive and thorough manner with the National Socialist reign of violence. In this respect, the memory of the Holocaust is of central importance.

In the form of various resolutions<sup>1)</sup> the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany

<sup>1</sup>See

(Kultusministerkonferenz - KMK) has repeatedly affirmed the need for this, the darkest episode of German history, to be confronted in schools. The respective resolutions, all passed unanimously by the Standing Conference, constitute a binding political commitment on the part of each and every Land to make the whole subject area a firm component of school syllabuses and actual classroom teaching. Special mention should be made of the following recommendations which will continue to guide work in this area:

- "Treatment of National Socialism in teaching" (Resolution of the KMK, April 20, 1978) and
- "Treatment of the resistance during the National Socialist period in teaching" (Resolution of the KMK, December 4, 1980).

With their accession to the Federal Republic of Germany the new Länder have embraced the principles and values of the free democratic basic order. The values laid down in the Basic Law find expression in the legislation of the Länder and are also crucial in determining the internal organisation of the school system.

In its "Saarbrücken Declaration on Tolerance and Solidarity" of October 9, 1992 the Standing Conference condemned all xenophobic tendencies and associated acts of violence. At the same time it expressed its determination to promote behaviour based on consideration for our fellow humans in daily school life.

On the occasion of the Federal President's proclamation on January 3, 1996 that January 27 was to be declared a day for commemorating the victims of National Socialism, the Standing Conference once again emphasised the need to ensure that the memory of the crimes against humanity committed during the National Socialist reign of violence be kept alive in the minds of

schoolchildren. The Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder have declared that they will take responsibility for developing a suitable approach to this day of commemoration in schools.

As a public information service for use both in Germany and abroad, the Standing Conference issued for the first time in 1991 a report entitled "On the Treatment of the Holocaust at School", containing Länder contributions from Bavaria and North Rhine-Westphalia. The present updated edition has been extended to include a contribution from Saxony.

The aim of the report is to make it clear by means of examples that schools throughout the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany are continuing to deal with National Socialism and the memory of the Holocaust. Dealing with these topics in education and socialisation work is of the utmost importance for the Federal Republic of Germany as a democratic state based on the rule of law.

### **Passing on knowledge of the Holocaust in the schools of the Free State of Bavaria**

"The dignity of man shall be inviolable." (Art. 1, Para. 1, Basic Law). "No one may be prejudiced or favoured because of his sex, his parentage, his race, his language, his homeland and origin, his faith, or his religious or political opinions." (Art. 3, Para. 3, Basic Law).

With these words the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany professes to a centuries-old ethical tradition. Its authors were also making a decisive break with the practices of National Socialism, which had systematically negated and disdained these values. Fully in line with the values adopted by the Basic Law, the authors of the constitution of the Free State of Bavaria formulated the following goals for its state education system and schools as early as 1946:

"The highest educational goals are reverence before God, respect for religious convictions and the dignity of man, self-control, a sense of responsibility and pleasure in taking responsibility [...]. Pupils shall be educated in the spirit of democracy [...] and in the spirit of international understanding." (Art. 131, Para. 2 and 3, Bavarian Constitution).

In consequence of this, Article 2, Para. 1 of the Bavarian Law on Education and Teaching of September 10, 1982 charges schools with the task of educating children and young persons

"to exercise freedom responsibly, to show tolerance, a peaceful attitude and respect for other people [...as well as] in the spirit of international understanding."

These requirements set two very specific goals for teaching. Firstly, the conviction should be imparted to the growing generation that a fundamental value system as laid down by the constitution and by law is indispensable for human coexistence in peace and justice. Secondly, young people must learn that this value system has frequently been exposed to extreme danger in the course of history and has been trampled underfoot. For: "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to relive it." (Santayana) Such an act of remembering, which seeks both to impart knowledge and positively shape the consciousness of pupils, must focus primarily on the relationship between Jews and non-Jews in the course of Occidental history, especially during the period of National Socialism. Clearly the following premises are worth considering in this connection:

1 The behaviour of non-Jews towards Jews in Europe was to an almost unparalleled extent overshadowed for centuries by intolerance and aggression. Every so often this behaviour erupted into acts of persecution and, in the recent past, mass murder and even genocide. Furthermore - and both phenomena are indivisibly linked - this behaviour was characterised by ignorance, bigotry, persistent distortion and prejudice.

2 The attitude of the non-Jews towards the Jews is a paradigm of the behaviour of a majority towards a minority, and not least in terms of the missed opportunities and failures entailed in such behaviour.

3 National socialism, with all the suffering and injustice perpetrated upon the Jews, created a schism in the relationship between Germans with their collaborators and Jews unlike any other historical period or event. Those twelve years of German and European history have indelibly stamped the consciousness of Jews and non-Jews. They are unique and unforgettable; a view ultimately shared by the majority of historians who spoke out in the great debate over Germany's National Socialist past known as the "Historikerstreit". Since 1945, it is no longer possible for anyone to speak uninhibitedly about the relationship between non-Jews, especially Germans, and Jews.

These premises lead to three conclusions:

1. Although the crimes and terror of the Holocaust were historically unique, the observer must not focus exclusively on it. A broader perspective should be maintained, not with the intention of playing down the Holocaust or of keeping silent about it, but rather as the only way to achieve a proper understanding both of the Holocaust in its singularity and of the specificity of the relationship between Jews and non-Jews.

Besides dealing in detail with events during the National Socialist period, teaching in Bavarian schools uses characteristic examples to consider, firstly, other periods when Jews were persecuted - in ancient times, the Middle Ages and the modern period. Secondly, periods of apparent normality and mundane everyday life are examined to show that Jewish life was usually subject to extensive restraints and burdens from their social environment even when there were no pogroms; the brief phases of genuinely relaxed co-existence between Jews and non-Jews (such as those following upon the Enlightenment and the Emancipation of Jews) failed to exert a lasting positive influence.

In this way, the intention is to make clear that Jewish and German, or rather Occidental-European, history has been closely interwoven in every period. This also becomes evident to pupils when they realise the major role Judaism has

played and still plays in the evolution of European culture in the realms of science, literature, visual arts, music and philosophy etc.

1 In particular Religious Instruction (both Roman Catholic and Protestant), Ethics, History and Social Studies are subjects that naturally make an important contribution in this respect. These are subjects that convey knowledge about religions, or value systems, as well as about historical events and relationships. On the other hand, it becomes clear from the above that every school subject can contribute valuable insights from its own particular perspective. Moreover, communicating a sense of values and teaching international understanding and tolerance cannot be left to depend exclusively on these few - albeit important subjects. If the final aim of educational efforts is not to pay mere lip-service, but to achieve insights from which a stable sense of values, then all subjects and all teachers are called upon to play a role.

2 Only the above-mentioned approaches can prepare the way for the growth of a lively, many-faceted and multidimensional image of Jewish destinies, Jewish life and Jewish culture in the pupil's mind. This purpose is also served by studying Jewish ways of life, Jewish festivals and customs; in short, the broad sphere of everyday culture. The pupil should learn to recognise the characteristics and high standing of Jewish culture, for this realisation is for its part the real precondition for understanding, respect and tolerance.

At Bavarian schools, pupils are taught about the history of the Jews and the relationship between Jews and non-Jews in accordance with these premises and conclusions, in line with the teaching profiles of the respective school types and subjects taught and with due regard to the stage of psychological development of the children and young people. Subject to syllabus requirements, focal points for treatment of the subject are:

-Judaism in the framework of the ancient civilisations and those of the

Mediterranean world of antiquity; -Jews in medieval society, esp. in the medieval city; -emancipation and assimilation since the Enlightenment; -modern antisemitism/racism and persecution (late 19th century, 20th century); -the Jewish faith as a world religion, Jewish philosophy and ethics.



Reflecting the intentions of a series of resolutions by the Standing Conference (Treatment of National Socialism in teaching, April 20, 1978; Recommendation on the treatment of the resistance during the National Socialist period in teaching, Dec. 4, 1980), it has certainly been ensured that commensurate attention is paid to the period of National Socialism in particular: The antisemitism and ideology of National Socialism, removal of rights, persecution and murder of the Jews are specifically identified in all valid syllabuses as learning matter.

Bavarian secondary schools (Gymnasium) are all the more certain to treat this period more profoundly in future because, starting with the 1991/92 school year, history teaching will commence as early as the 6th school year and the additional time gained for teaching will be used to study 20th century history even more intensively.

Another particularly noteworthy aspect is the overall concept for political education in school which has been published in 1991. This exceeds previous achievements in ensuring that pupils in all types of schools will receive a basic political education in line with the constitutional principles and legal requirements quoted at the outset - i.e. by the end of secondary level I (Mittelstufe, grade 10) or on completion of general secondary school (Hauptschule) at grade 9.

Just as important as requirements laid down in laws or curricula are the teaching materials and aids that provide support for teachers in their efforts to achieve the educational and teaching aims, and the goals and contents of learning.

Such support material is provided primarily by the State Institute for School Education and Educational Research (Staatsinstitut für Schulpädagogik und Bildungsforschung) in Munich and the Academy for In-Service Teacher Training (Akademie für Lehrerfortbildung) in Dillingen, both institutes working on behalf of the Bavarian State Ministry for Education, Cultural Affairs, Science and Art.

Entitled "Aspects of Jewish History," a 1988 publication by the State Institute provides fundamental didactic and methodological guidance for teaching History in the lower and intermediate levels. This manual was complemented in summer 1991 by a comprehensive volume, designed for teachers at all types of schools, on the treatment of Jewish history and culture ("The parchment burns, but the letters rise up"). Its contributors include renowned Jewish authors. The following list of contents for the first-mentioned publication may illustrate the approach, outlined above, towards treating the relationship between Jews and non-Jews in Bavarian school teaching:

#### Part I: Introduction

- Overview of Jewish history (chronological table)
- Overview of the annual Jewish festive cycle
- Register of Jewish terms

#### Part II: Teaching outlines

On the history of Judaism in ancient times The Jewish Chosen People: a small nation outlasts the mighty empires The Jewish faith helps them to survive Jews and Christians in the Roman Empire

On the history of Judaism in the Middle Ages Before the first Crusade: a crusade against the Jews in their own country Jewish religion - Christianity - Islam Jews in the Middle Ages: from citizens with equal rights to imperial bondsmen

On the history of Judaism in the 19th century A new era dawns for Jews too: outsiders on sufferance become citizens Jews in the German Empire: minority in the nation-state

On the history of Judaism in the 20th century Political engagement: destiny and significance of Jewish-descended political personalities in the early

Weimar Republic Persecution and genocide (chronology) Jewish self-help in the "Third Reich" The emergence of the state of Israel Part III: Annex

Encounters with Judaism: Jewish cultural monuments in Bavaria (compendium and references) A visit to the synagogue - with pupils in the Museum of Jewish Culture in Augsburg List of literature (with brief comments)

The Academy for In-Service Teacher Training offers regular in-service training events for teachers from all types of schools, where knowledge about the Holocaust in particular and questions about Jewish culture and history in general are discussed according to syllabus aims and contents. These events include, for example, symposia devoted to the history and culture of Judaism. The results of some of these in-service training events (lectures, materials, teaching models etc.) have been published in a number of Academy reports. Especially worthy of note here are Volumes 62 (Dachau concentration camp memorial), 133 (Resistance against National Socialism), 139/141/163 (The Germans and their eastern neighbours: Germans and Czechs, Germans and Poles, Germans and the peoples of the Soviet Union) and 279 (Danzig/Gdansk). Information and in-service training offered by the state are complemented by regional in-service teacher training events at the administrative district (Regierungsbezirk) level.

Free offers of media information (audio-accompanied slide series, videotapes, films etc.) by the most varied local and regional picture and film services on this subject, embracing well over a hundred different titles, should also be mentioned here.

In connection with the 50th anniversary of the November pogroms of 1938, launched by the Nazis under the name "Reichskristallnacht", the State Ministry devoted an entire issue of its 1988 journal "Schulreport" (School Report) to the topic of Jews in Germany, offering numerous aids to teachers on subject matter and methodology.

Extensive didactical and methodological material was supplied gratis to all schools to accompany the exhibition on the history and culture of the Jews in Bavaria ("Behold, the stone cries out from the wall") that was staged in 1988 by the House of Bavarian History, Munich and the Germanic National Museum, Nuremberg.

In a letter directed to all school principals on September 21, 1988, the State Ministry itself drew attention to all the teaching aids and manuals published until then and proposed special remembrances on the 50th anniversary of November 9, 1938.

Similarly, in 1994 as part of the commemoration of the contribution made by men and women to the German resistance against Hitler, and in 1995 during the events to mark the anniversary of the end of the War, the fate of the Jews was also taken into account. The State Ministry sent out announcements to all schools accordingly.

Special significance is attached to "on-site learning", i.e. the investigation of regional or local testimonies to the Jewish past and visits to concentration camp memorial sites. Here, characteristic and vivid examples are used to communicate lasting impressions of the singularity of Jewish life in Germany and the relationship between Germans and Jews.

In this connection, Bavarian school classes showed lively interest in an exhibition entitled "Jews in the rural community: the example of Ichenhausen", which was staged in summer 1991 by the House of Bavarian History in the former synagogue of Ichenhausen (Grünzburg District). The exhibition catalogue was very informative and particularly useful for pupils. This exhibition was not only an exemplary contribution to regional historiography but also a valuable and enlightening contribution to the turbulent history of the Jews in Bavaria reaching back many centuries.

Important stimuli to take up the topic of Jewish life in Bavaria are contained in the documentation compiled by Israel Schwierz on "Testimonies in Stone to Jewish life in Bavaria," which exhaustively catalogues and briefly explains all Jewish cemeteries,

synagogues and prayerhouses besides other buildings that bear witness to Jewish life and its relics. The profusely illustrated documentation was entered into the registry of publications at the Bavarian State Centre for Political Education and may be obtained gratis from there by every teacher.

Another important work is the guide to the "Jüdisches Kulturmuseum" in Augsburg, compiled by seminar teachers for History who were charged with this work at the Bavarian National Museum by the State Ministry. The guide not only describes the synagogue and the exhibits displayed in it for some years now, but also - thanks to the profound advice of Jewish experts - offers an informative overview of Jewish Torah teachings, the Jewish calendar and Jewish festivals. A valuable addition to this guide is available from the Bavarian State Centre for Political Education entitled "Jewish culture and history. An overview" written by Peter Ortag and published in Munich in 1995.

In this connection great importance is attached to visits by pupils to the Dachau and Flossenbürg concentration camp memorial sites. In response to a Bavarian Landtag (state assembly) resolution of May 31, 1960, teaching excursions by school classes to these memorial sites - they have lately been expanded to include Kaufering, a former external camp of the Dachau complex - are financially supported by the Bavarian State Centre for Political Education. Encouraged to no small extent by a 1984 proclamation of the State Ministry, exhorting schools to arrange visits to such memorial sites, a great many school classes make use of this opportunity every year. Qualified teaching personnel specially seconded by the State Ministry are available at these sites to provide detailed information to pupils and teachers. A guide written specially for school classes is distributed gratis. In order to prepare for such visits and to plan follow-up work, the Museum-Pedagogical Centre in Munich has produced additional hand-outs for all teachers (including "Comprehending the incomprehensible. A tour of the Dachau concentration camp memorial site", Munich, 1995; "Remembering instead of forgetting. A tour of the Flossenbürg graves and memorial site", Munich, 1995).

It should be added that the Dachau concentration camp memorial site has been placed under the aegis of the State Ministry for Education, Cultural Affairs, Science and Art since January 1, 1991. Traditionally close contacts continue to be maintained from here with the Comité International de Dachau in Brussels, also with the aim of promoting the education of pupils about the Dachau concentration camp.

## **Passing on knowledge of the Holocaust in the schools of the Land of North Rhine-Westphalia**

### **1. General targets**

The parties represented in the State Assembly (Landtag) of North Rhine-Westphalia and all relevant groups of society agree that schools have an irrevocable responsibility to enlighten their pupils about the nature of National Socialism, to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive, and to develop in pupils the ability and willingness to deal in a thoughtful and sensitive way with the significance of this historical experience for German society today and for their own identity.

In the July 6, 1978 decree issued by the Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Land of North Rhine-Westphalia on "The Treatment of National Socialism in Teaching", which must be seen as complementing existing guidelines and syllabuses and as setting targets for subsequent curricular developments, the Minister stated amongst other things that:

"Even many decades after Auschwitz, recalling the causes and consequences of National Socialism is one of the most pressing tasks facing schools. Nobody has the right to forget, and no achievement of the German post-war generation, regardless of how impressive it may be, can deceive us

as to our responsibility to face up to contemporary German history. Not least, the successes of radical right-wing groups among juveniles and young voters are a reason to devote particular attention to the treatment of National Socialism in the classroom. ...

A constructive treatment and discussion of the recent German past should strengthen an understanding of the connection between National Socialist megalomania and its unscrupulous policy of violence, between racist discrimination and genocide, between intolerance towards minorities and 'eradication'...

It seems to me that, for us, developing sensitivity towards every form of oppression, segregation and intolerance is a commensurate form of "Vergangenheitsbewältigung" (coming to terms with the past). We should set a living example of behaving towards minorities in our society in a manner differing radically from the way that the National Socialist "Volksgemeinschaft" (community of the "Volk" or people) treated those whom they expelled as alien to the community."

The Holocaust is also singled out in other basic decrees on Political Education as a topic of particular historical and political-moral importance:

-The decree on "Education for international understanding - with consideration of the relationship of the Federal Republic of Germany with eastern European states", issued on November 15, 1977, is directed against any attempt to play down the singularity of the genocide against European Jews (e.g. by referring to wrongs perpetrated upon Germans in connection with flight, expulsion and forcible resettlement after 1945). This decree also calls for consideration to be made of the history of the state of Israel, too. Among other things, it states:

"In the context of contemporary history, special importance must be attached to grappling with the causes, course and consequences of World War II. Like the history of National Socialist rule it is essential that this

topic is also treated. Judgements shall be based on an analysis of the causes, while the different European manifestations of fascism should be included along with their consequences, some of which reach into the present. In connection with the course and consequences of World War II, the problem of expulsion, flight and displacement, as well as that of a meaningful integration of expellees, refugees and displaced persons, must be treated in terms of their Central European as well as their worldwide significance. This topic is indivisibly linked with the deliberate annihilation of peoples and sections of the population. In this regard, the fate of the Jewish people and its ties with the state of Israel must be singled out for exemplary treatment on its own, without passing over the suffering of other peoples and ethnic groups."

-The decree on "Peace education in the classroom" of March 1, 1985 defines peace education as an attempt "to cover the various forms of violence and lack of peace in the international arena and within societies, analyse their causes, recognise their mutual interdependencies and contribute towards a reduction of violence." The decree describes the following factual historical state of affairs as a focus of historicopolitical peace education:

"The legacy of German history, especially since 1933: the revisionist and expansionist policies pursued by the National Socialist state, the launching of World War II by the Third Reich; invasion and occupation of European countries by the Third Reich, exploitation, genocide and Holocaust by the Third Reich as a fundamental cause of the perception of threat and security needs of west and east European countries."

## **2. Integration of this theme in guidelines and syllabuses for the subject of History - an overview**

Firstly, two preliminary remarks:



- a) The genocide committed against European Jews is mainly a matter for guidelines/syllabuses in the subject of History. But other subjects too, e.g. Politics/Social Sciences, Roman Catholic and Protestant Religious Instruction or German, include this thematic complex in the questions to be posed in courses. However, to simplify matters this overview is limited to the case of History teaching.
- b) The currently valid guidelines/syllabuses for History in the different levels and types of school do not share a common conception and structure. The intentions and subject matter laid down in these are not all equally concrete and binding. This is because the guidelines/syllabuses originated at different times (between 1979 and 1994) and therefore followed different curricular conceptions. However, it can be stated generally that
- they are subject to the principle of orientation towards study goals, and thus do not constitute subject-matter syllabuses;
  - they largely place the onus for decisions about didactics and teaching methods on the teacher. This also applies to decisions within the framework of certain binding targets - on the choice of contents and the accentuation of themes;
  - they make the treatment of National Socialism compulsory in all school levels and types.

## 2.1 Types of Secondary schools - lower level

- 2.1.1 Hauptschule The History/Politics syllabus provides for treatment of National Socialism in the thematic unit entitled " 'Only' 12 years". An integral element of this thematic unit is the pupil's confrontation with the persecution of Jews and the Holocaust. The following study goals should be achieved:

"...looking into the causes of Holocaust and world war and recognising that even societies with a great cultural tradition and the highest level of civilisation can regress into the most extreme state of barbarism and inhumanity; and being prepared, even as a member of a later generation, to bear the historical responsibility and oppose neofascist strivings in a politically competent manner."

2.1.2 Realschule The syllabus for history provides for "Fascism - National Socialism - Racism" to be taught as one subject unit. By way of guidance for the investigation of history and the developing of opinions, the following topics are expressly mentioned as areas that should be dealt with:

- the extermination of the European Jews and other minority groups in society,
- dealing with the death, suffering and destruction caused by the perpetrators,
- inactivity and passivity,
- the impotence of the victims.

2.1.3 Gymnasium Under the syllabus for the lower level of Gymnasium the murder of European Jews must be covered in connection with the examination of National Socialist rule at grade 10. The syllabus expressly points out that "recalling National Socialism, its causes and consequences" remains an "... indispensable element in raising the historical awareness of and in politically educating the up-andcoming generation". Pupils should be made aware that the National Socialist past creates a particular duty to take responsible, political action in the present.

2.1.4 Gesamtschule Guidelines are currently being developed for the Social Studies field, which also includes the subject of History. Teaching is oriented towards the targets of the basic decrees on Political Education and towards History syllabuses for other school types at secondary level I. There is no doubt National Socialism

and the Holocaust are dealt with by pupils just as intensively in comprehensive teaching as in other types of school.

## 2.2 Secondary education - upper level

2.2.1 Gymnasiale Oberstufe The guidelines state that the complex "Fascism and National Socialism" is compulsory. The guideline's concept expects teachers to develop themes and lines of questioning independently within the framework of syllabus targets (learning goals, areas of learning). The guidelines therefore do not, in principle, identify concrete themes and teaching contents. The basic decrees on Political Education - among which is the decree on "The treatment of National Socialism in teaching" - set compulsory requirements for teaching History in the gymnasiale Oberstufe, too. Experience of teaching practice also confirms that as a rule the work unit "genocide committed against European Jews" is part of the history programme in the gymnasiale Oberstufe.

2.2.2 Höhere Berufsfachschule mit gymnasialer Oberstufe The Politics/History guidelines require treatment of the following themes in the 12th grade: a) "National Socialism - conformism and resistance and the problem of historical responsibility".

This lists the following contents and problems in detail:

- "The National Socialist system of rule: ideology, total regimentation (Gleichschaltung), inward and outward-directed violence, conformism and resistance in everyday life."

- "Coming to terms with the past (Vergangenheitsbewältigung) in the Federal Republic of Germany; anti-fascism and neorevisionism as orientations for political action."

- b) "Them and Us: racism, antisemitism and xenophobia" In the framework of this teaching unit, the intention is to deal with "the relationship of a minority with society as a whole, using the example of the Jews in European history".

2.2.3 Kollegschule Provisional guidelines and syllabuses exist for the subject of "Social Studies with History", which belongs to the compulsory field of studies in all Kollegschule courses. They stipulate that "National Socialism is among the mandatory contents of teaching". Treatment of the Holocaust is foreseen in connection with the thematic units "The racial theory of the National Socialists" and "The National Socialist system of rule".

1 Berufliche Schulen At vocational schools, historical themes are treated in the framework of Politics education. The subject areas and problems contained in the syllabus include the following: "Antisemitism - Jewish emancipation, Zionism; social, economic, political, racial, religious forms of discrimination; conflicts of identity: segregation assimilation, history of the persecution of Jews, annihilation of Jews in the Third Reich; discussing and confronting (Aufarbeitung) the past, National Socialist trials, financial gestures of compensation, Jews as a minority after 1945, anti-Zionism, neo-Nazism; the relation between the Federal Republic of Germany and Israel."

## **2 Didactic remarks about the treatment of National Socialism and the Holocaust in the subject of History/Politics at the Hauptschule**

Having provided an overview of how the theme complex is anchored in guidelines/syllabuses, the didactic conception of the appropriate teaching unit in the History/Politics syllabus of Hauptschule schools will be explained here in more detail. The syllabus for the History/Politics represents curricular development work carried out in North Rhine-Westphalia and makes clear the basic pedagogic and didactic decisions which are to govern teaching on National Socialism and the Holocaust. The State Institute for Schools and Further Education (Landesinstitut für Schule and Weiterbildung, Soest) has produced a manual on the History/Politics syllabus for teachers, explaining targets set by the syllabus and

providing ideas and suggestions for teaching practice. Explanations on the thematic unit " 'Only' twelve years" put the central emphasis on four key approaches towards teaching this unit:

- a) Teaching must seek to counter obliviousness to the past and critically examine tendencies towards a "normalisation" of German historical awareness. The examination of the causes of the success of National Socialism in Germany must therefore be a focal point in teaching. In this connection, certain traditions in German society should also be considered, such as "anti-Judaism and antisemitism, Prussianism and militarism, authoritarianism and obedience to authority, nationalism".
- b) Teaching is meant to be devised so that pupils realise the present and future significance of remembering National Socialism. Teaching on these themes must therefore treat questions associated with the responsibility of later generations, and the present manifestations of neofascism and neo-antisemitism.
- c) Teaching must in particular convey the perspective of the victims and give pupils the chance to learn about everyday life under National Socialism in a vivid and tangible way. Thus, in the teachers' manual projects are suggested which relate to local history (e.g. "Let's examine where Jewish life once took place in our community, where Jews once lived and what became of them, and where synagogues stood!"). The manual proposes a visit to a memorial site or a former concentration camp. It also recommends fictional titles written for this age group as reading matter and draws attention to publications that are particularly suitable because they reflect everyday experience and relate to pupils.

- d) Teaching in History/Politics is meant to draw on the learning value of other subjects in the treatment of these themes. As examples, the manual points to the teaching unit "Church and National Socialism" in Protestant Religious Instruction and the unit "Jews and Christians" in Roman Catholic Religious Instruction.

#### **4. The history of the Jews and German-Jewish relations as a topic in teaching**

The guidelines/syllabuses for History in the respective school types explicitly provide for the treatment of themes and problems taken from the history of the Jews and German-Jewish history. The aim is not for pupils to acquire a coherent overview of these historic processes, but to produce exemplary analyses of particularly important historical phenomena. The requirements and references in the guidelines/syllabuses essentially focus on three periods:

- a) In the context of medieval and early modern history the status of Jews in the society of those times (e.g. ghettos, professions, cultural achievements, relationships with Christians and the Church, anti-Judaism, pogroms) are, as a rule, identified as teaching topics.
- b) In the treatment of 19th century German history, teaching should include the emancipation of Jews, as well as the ideological and socio-economic causes for the emergence of antisemitism and its establishment as a political movement.
- c) The antecedents and foundation of the state of Israel, its development up to the present and its position in Middle-East conflicts are possible focal points for teaching post-1945 contemporary history.

The history of the Jews and of German-Jewish relations is also dealt with in other subjects. We refer here to the example of the syllabus for Protestant Religious Instruction at Gymnasium, which speaks of the guiding principle of "taking paths to Jerusalem" and expressly supports the imperative "that Auschwitz never be repeated" (Theodor W. Adorno). The syllabus requires that the history of relations between Jews and Christians, marked by antisemitism, anti-Judaism and, more recently, by anti-Zionism, be treated as the story of Jewish suffering and, at the same time, of Christian guilt by looking at specific historical examples. Work on this theme is to be complemented by "examples and beginnings of a new, responsible relationship between Christians and Jews".

## **5. Learning and teaching material**

The development of learning and teaching material is the task of private textbook publishers who develop their products in line with the contents and intentions of the guidelines/syllabuses of the respective Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany. Official authorisation for learning material for political education subjects - like the material for other subjects - is mandatory in North Rhine-Westphalia. The Ministry for Education and Cultural Affairs decides which books are to be approved on the basis of the evaluations of a Land Textbook Commission working on behalf of the Ministry. Serious shortcomings in the portrayal of National Socialism and the Holocaust regularly lead to the rejection of textbooks. This practice has led to a situation in which the currently approved learning material provides a comprehensive and discerning treatment of this period of German history. Generally positive findings were also made by the German-Israeli Textbook Conference, which in 1985 noted amongst other things that:

"The most detailed portrayal in the textbooks is that of the history of the Jews in the modern world. However, the density of information in the survey period is extremely uneven. The ideological defamation and even more so -the persecution

and murder of the Jews under National Socialist rule stand quite unmistakably in the foreground. The fate of Jews during this period is neither hushed up nor trivialised. The intensity of reporting in general has increased considerably in comparison with earlier textbooks. This manifests itself not only in the scope of the portrayal and in a consistently very broad documentation of text and picture sources, but also in the way that - especially in the more recent works - the persecution is no longer dealt with as part of Hitler's biography but is placed more strongly in its social context. The crucial question of responsibility and co-responsibility for the persecution of Jews is posed more sharply than in earlier textbooks, even if it does not always receive a clear enough answer." (Deutsch-israelische Schulbuchempfehlungen (German-Israeli Textbook Recommendations), Braunschweig 1985, p. 18).

The history textbooks on offer are supplemented by a variety of thematically centred source booklets and working material from private publishers. These enable teachers to establish special emphases when treating the history of the Jews and German-Jewish history.

## **Passing on knowledge of the Holocaust in the schools of the Free State of Saxony**

### **1. General objectives**

In processing the "broken antifascism" and the "unholy alliance between Stalinism and real socialist antisemitism" (Konrad Weiß) of the past in the GDR, as well as the revived trend towards racism amongst young people with extremist views, the State Ministry for Education and Cultural Affairs in the Free State of Saxony regards it as its duty to provide a diverse range of opportunities for dealing with the past and bringing history alive in schools.



Article 101 of the constitution of the Free State of Saxony, for example, states the following: "Young people shall be brought up to have respect for everything living, to love their neighbour, to work for peace and conserve the environment, to love their native country, to be aware of ethical and political responsibility, to strive for justice and to respect the convictions of others, to act socially and to adhere to the principles of freedom and democracy".

It is on this article of the constitution that the current version of the Law on School Education of July 3, 1991 bases its definition of the role of education and socialisation:

"School education shall contribute to the development of the personality of the pupil in the community. The school shall fulfil this task by teaching the knowledge, skills and values required to achieve educational goals and to awaken a pleasure in learning".

As far as dealing with the history of the Jewish people and the Jews' religious and ethnic traditions and cultural achievements is concerned, sound methods are being sought for increasing the transparency of historical processes and the role of Jews in art and science both in the context of classroom teaching and informal educational activities.

The teaching provided at the Mittelschule and the Gymnasium, where the accent is on the lives and suffering of the Jewish people in Germany and Europe, emphasises the centuries-old process of mutual enrichment between diverse cultures as well as the grave interference in this process in the form of antisemitism and the persecution of the Jews.

As far as socialisation and education work in Saxony is required, it is particularly important that, after the collapse of two totalitarian regimes, young people gain an

insight into the value of a liberal and democratic basic order. By dealing with the Holocaust, it can be illustrated what unimaginable crimes humankind is capable of both committing and tolerating whenever the principles of the basic order and the respect of human dignity, the most important principle, are abused by the state.

## **2. The treatment of the Holocaust in various school subjects**

### **History**

At Mittelschule and Gymnasium the subject of History tackles significant stages and events from the history of the Jewish people:

- the people and the state of Israel (migrations of Israelite tribes, rise and fall of an empire; Jewish ways of life past and present)
- Jews in the medieval town
- enlightenment, emancipation
- modern antisemitism, racism
- persecution and extermination of political opponents, Jewish citizens and other minorities during the National Socialist period.

Consideration of these themes should teach pupils how cross-fertilisation to the benefit of different cultures can occur. At the same time, it should highlight the brutality and inhumanity with which antisemitism brought an end to these opportunities and the danger still posed by antisemitism.

### **Civics and Law**

In formulating the subject's general tasks and aims, the syllabus for Mittelschule and Gymnasium emphasises that:

"The tensions between the majority and a minority, and between freedom and equality are to be illustrated with the case of basic rights. Through activity-oriented tuition the pupil shall be empowered to enter the democratic process as a responsible and informed citizen. Moreover, he or she shall come to understand that tolerance and fairness are important prerequisites for this process."

With regard to dealing with models of liberal democracy the formulation of the learning targets includes the following statement:

"Using the example of the Federal Republic of Germany the pupils should examine the realisation of human rights in the form of a social state based on the rule of law, comparing this with the structure of other state forms that have existed in Germany. The pupil should recognise that every political system has to be judged by the way it works in reality and that it is not sufficient merely to examine its basic principles".

The general tasks and goals of the subject civics/law are made more specific in the syllabuses. Examples of this include:

- fundamental values and basic rights as constitutional principles
    - the rule of law and guarantee of basic rights
    - the values adopted by the National Socialists and their view of humankind
- and the impact of these on the process of creating political will

## **Ethics**

For the subject of Ethics at Mittelschule and Gymnasium, the general educational mission is defined as follows:

"The aim of Ethics tuition is to make pupils capable of finding their way in the modern world and giving meaning to their own lives, ensuring that they do this

with an awareness of others and a sense of responsibility for them".

In the context of the plurality of faiths and world views, the essential foundation for achieving this aim is respect for human dignity as embodied in the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Constitution of the Free State of Saxony. The main cornerstones are:

- respect -for the personal integrity and the dignity of human beings -for the work and achievements of fellow citizens
- for ethical forms of conduct shown in history and in the present
- tolerance - towards other world views and ethical attitudes on the basis of respect for human dignity
- responsibility --- for oneself for our immediate and distant fellow human beings for nature and the environment."

The above aims present this subject with the special task of making a contribution to combating the emergence of xenophobia, antisemitism and extremism.

Reference is explicitly made to this in the learning targets and contents of all learning areas for all grades at every type of school. At grade 9 of the Mittelschule and Gymnasium, the learning content for the area of "Conscience and responsibility" states that responsibility be understood a check against the abuse of conscience and can be exemplified in terms of "Germans and Jews - then and now". As part of the treatment of religions/world views there is detailed age group-targeted discussion of Jewish ways of life and of ethical questions and responses from a Jewish

perspective.

## **German**

The syllabus for Mittelschule and Gymnasium is designed to meet the following requirement:

"German tuition provides pupils with a broad and solid literary education. It familiarises them with important literary works of national and universal culture and thereby helps them develop an open-minded attitude to the world combining love for their national culture and respect for foreign cultures."

To this end, the syllabus recommendations on the selection of literary texts available to pupils offer a wide variety of options from past and present authors for every level and type of school. Thanks to the authors selected and the nature of the works themselves pupils learn about Jewish life and the persecution to which Jews were subjected. This is seen most clearly in the case of the Diaries of Anne Frank.

### **Social Studies**

This subject offered at vocational schools is also aimed at consolidating a basic democratic attitude.

The following subject areas play a major role here:

- The basic rights of mankind, their significance for the individual and their specification in the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany;
- The need for a rational approach to society's marginal groups and the importance of their integration in society, the removal of prejudices towards marginal groups;
- Resistance shown by individual personalities and groups as an expression of political

and moral responsibility and as an ethical foundation for the reconstruction of Germany.

### **3. In-service teacher training**

In-service training programmes for teachers are of central importance in developing the methodologies and teaching techniques needed for presenting the Holocaust. The benefits of special courses on the topics of Jews and the State of Israel are further enhanced by others offering an introduction to the world of the Bible from a literary or ethical-religious perspective. The Holocaust is a central point of reference in courses on subjects such as xenophobia, extremism, flight, expulsion and emigration.

Treatment of the Holocaust is a special focus both in the programme of the Land's in-service training academy, the Sächsische Akademie für Lehrerfortbildung, and in the regionally-based further training courses for teachers. In planning and implementing its one-day or several-day courses, the academy has, since its foundation, been working closely with the Israeli Consulate General and the Hatikva Centre in Dresden.

The only way to secure the future of a democratic society is to deal in an intensive manner in the classroom with National Socialism, the conditions that permitted its emergence and its consequences. In order to teach tolerance, liberal-mindedness, peaceableness and solidarity, teachers must maintain a sensitivity and vigilance towards any threat being posed to democracy.

These are the objectives of a number of further training seminars, which can be grouped together in the following clusters:

A first cluster centres around further training needs for specific subjects. For instance, the topic of "The Third Reich in History teaching at Mittelschule and Gymnasium" deals directly with

National Socialism and the annihilation of the Jews.

A second complex consciously deals with aspects of regional history and current politics such as, for example, "The history of the Jews in Saxony antisemitism today" or "Jews in Leipzig".

"Antisemitism, xenophobia and right-wing extremism" - "Foreigners amongst us" - by analysing these subjects, grouped together in a third complex, questions relating to the opportunities and difficulties involved in social interaction are examined and psychological and social causes of new forms of xenophobia investigated. The above three complexes are primarily offered to teachers of history, religious education and ethics.

Courses on the subject "Judaism and the State of Israel", which help give an insight into Jewish self-perception, to understand the nature and principal features of Zionism against the background of Jewish history, as well as to place specific geographic facts and political events in their overall context, are offered on a multi-disciplinary basis to teachers from all types of school and from all levels of education.

Courses for teachers of German on the theme of "Jewry - an intellectual-literary encounter" are specifically designed to allow them to get to know and appreciate Jewish art and culture. Central to this is a discussion of works by Lasker-Schüler, Celan, Singer, Roth and Kafka.

An especially intensive form of further education is a teachers' study visit to Israel. An agreement to this effect has been concluded between the Israeli Education Ministry and the State Ministry for Education and Cultural Affairs of Saxony and forms the basis for project continuity. In addition, two Israeli educationalists are currently working in Saxony - initially for a period of one school year.

#### **4. Extracurricular activities and activities outside the classroom**

Important impetus for children and teenagers to tackle the Holocaust and deal with the lives of Jewish people also comes from activities offered in the sphere of informal and extracurricular education. Of special importance here is "learning on the spot". On the one hand this involves acquiring direct personal experience of contact with Jewish people. In this respect the development of school twinning arrangements with Israeli educational institutions is given special priority. Thanks to cooperation between Saxony's State Ministry for Education and Cultural Affairs and the Israeli Ministry of Education it was possible, for example, to establish personal contacts between children from Saxony and Israel during a school exchange programme.

Following the initiative launched by Saxony's State Institute for Education and School Development in cooperation with Saxony's State Ministry for Education and Cultural Affairs, 98 school pupils from Saxony have contributed essays, pieces of artwork and videos to an international competition entitled "Against antisemitism, racism and xenophobia", staged by the Israeli Ministry of Education. The awards ceremony at Land level took place on May 5, 1995 in Saxony's state parliament building. A total of 15 prizes were awarded during a ceremony held against the backdrop of an exhibition produced by school pupils from Eilenburg following a visit to Auschwitz. The jury, which also included one Israeli member, selected five entries to go on to the next round of the competition in Israel.

On the other hand, learning "on the spot" also means exploring regional or local evidence of the Jewish past and present. This is the purpose of the "tracing the Jewish heritage in Saxony": names, street names, cemeteries, exhibitions, visits to a Jewish community and Synagogue.

Moreover, books designed for young readers on the Jewish people and a plentiful selection of media help to make the topic accessible and interesting.

Worth mentioning in this respect are articles by the State Centre for Political Education. Entitled



"Mission for the future", a work on Jews in Görlitz and their synagogue was published in 1995. The brochure "Jews in Saxony. Their life and suffering" also received support from subordinate bodies at Saxony's State Ministry for Education and Cultural Affairs.

Such publications can receive government funding, as in the case of a series published by the Ephraim Carlebach Foundation entitled "The History of the Jews in Leipzig". This series is designed to demonstrate the special place of Jews in Leipzig's history in the course of that city's development into one of Germany's major cultural and economic centres. It also draws attention to the enormous loss suffered by Leipzig as a result of Nazi tyranny and the Holocaust. Edited by scholars, the series is suitable for use both in the classroom and in extracurricular and informal education.

## **Documentation**

### **Resolutions of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs**

- "Treatment of National Socialism in teaching" (Resolution of the Standing Conference of 20.4.1978)
- "Recommendation on the treatment of the resistance during the National Socialist period in teaching" (Resolution of the Standing Conference of 4.12.1980)
- "Saarbrücken declaration of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs on tolerance and solidarity" (Declaration of the Standing Conference of 9.10.1992)

## **Treatment of National Socialism in teaching**

(Resolution of the KMK of 20.4.1978)

1. The Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs have repeatedly declared in preceding years that an important task for schools is to help pupils acquire a proper capacity for political judgement, and to foster this with a solid foundation of knowledge, in particular of the history of our more recent past. This is a necessary foundation to protect juveniles against the danger of euphemistic conceptions of the National Socialist reign of violence. This task has been defined by the Standing Conference, amongst other things in the resolutions on

- "Treatment of the recent past in History and Social Studies teaching"

and the

- "Guidelines for treatment of totalitarianism in teaching",

and has since been converted into syllabuses by the Länder. This task continues to exist. Nowadays too, schools must actively work against uncritical acceptance of portrayals that trivialise or even glorify the Third Reich and its representatives, characterised as it was by dictatorship, genocide and inhumanity.

1 The Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs will draw the attention of schools to the problems as portrayed above, and to the resolutions adopted by the Standing Conference in this regard. They will direct the schools to take up this matter with particular intensity in accordance with the guidelines and syllabuses.

2 The Standing Conference shall request the Federal Centre for Political Education (Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung), to prepare suitable material for handling this topic in teaching.

**Recommendation on the treatment of the resistance during the National Socialist period in teaching**

(Resolution of the KMK of 4.12.1980)

The Ministers and Senators responsible for education and cultural affairs of the Länder reaffirm the need to communicate a fundamental knowledge and insights on the National Socialist reign of violence in the teaching of History as well as in Political Education.

Contemporary historical research has created new and improved foundations for confronting the subject of National Socialism, its causes and the effects of its reign. This also applies to the resistance to the National Socialist reign of violence, whose various manifestations can be identified and evaluated more discerningly and comprehensively today than only a few years ago. Today we do not only know about the existence of systematic, programmatic resistance by political groups (e.g. the Goerdeler circle, the Kreisau circle, Neubeginnen etc.), but also about widespread resistance among the population. This expressed itself in forms of non-conformism, individual refusal, and frequent instances of passive resistance. It is also evident that resistance arose from various ideological and political motives. This resistance cannot be reduced to a single common denominator; it should therefore not be regarded from only one angle and no single group should be portrayed as having a claim to represent the resistance. All forms of resistance however share a common point of departure: objection to the total National Socialist political invasion of everyday life; moral repugnance over violations of law; solidarity with the persecuted; the attempt to preserve a minimum of moral responsibility in a totally controlled state, even if only within the closest circle of family, community, Church; and, with the increasing duration of war, growing awareness of the senselessness and the murderous character of that war.

For schools, this means that they must attempt to place resistance in the overall context of National Socialist system of rule and politics. Resistance movements outside Germany and the activities of emigrants in exile must also be evaluated here. Besides looking at principled opposition, teaching must also consider partial resistance offered in specific situations. Everyday life in the Third Reich must be depicted along with the portrayal of leading resistance figures. The local and regional historical environment is a particularly suitable medium for treating the resistance. It must be shown that capitulation to dictatorship frequently began not with spectacular defeats but with small, everyday acts

of cowardice. By the same token, it must be shown that everyday life was also the special province of silent resistance without which no image of life in the Third Reich would be complete. However, it must also be demonstrated how fear and conformism were able to arise, robbing many of the courage to even recognise injustice, let alone to oppose it.

In schools and in political education, the treatment of resistance against the National Socialist reign of violence pursues the goal of keeping the memories alive, communicating basic historic knowledge and heightening powers of political judgement. The examination of the resistance should strengthen respect for human rights, political and moral responsibility and active support for a system in which various political and ideological directions can coexist and interact. The forces of resistance, as varied as they were, manifest a common will to express one's moral identity even in a hopeless political situation. Therefore, in bringing the resistance alive in teaching and political education we are providing a key to the future of our democratic system.

**260th Plenary Assembly Session on October 8/9, 1992**

**Saarbrücken declaration of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs on tolerance and solidarity**

In view of the recent escalation of violence in Germany the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany declares:

The dignity of all people is inviolable. Nothing can justify violence. The recent acts of violence in Germany is directed against foreigners, minorities and the vulnerable in our society; thus they strike at the very core of our state based on democracy and the rule of law. Anyone who sets fire to asylum seekers' hostels, who secretly or openly applauds thugs and arsonists, ceases to be part of the democratic community. No unsolved problem, no grievance, can justify the use of brutal force.

The recent violent excesses represent a challenge for the police and the judiciary, but also for those involved in education and bringing up our children. The ministers and senators of education and cultural affairs are consequently determined to stimulate and strengthen initiatives in schools and in society which promote behaviour based on consideration for

our fellow human beings. This involves above all:

- pursuing a credible policy of respect for other cultures and of responsibility for our One World,
- preserving and creating an environment which gives children and young people security and prospects for the future,
- consolidating the values of tolerance and solidarity among young people.

The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs already made recommendations on cultural understanding with foreign fellow citizens on November 29, 1985. In its plenary assembly on October 10/11, 1991 in Dresden, the Standing Conference condemned xenophobic tendencies and related violence in the strongest terms. The Standing Conference once again calls on all teachers in Germany to intensify their efforts to encourage understanding and cooperation between foreign and German children and young people, in order to counter nascent xenophobia and violence. Measures which will encourage children to meet and deepen their understanding of each other are at the fore.

Examples of suitable measures include:

- class and school fetes with particular emphasis on the cultures of foreign pupils, -twinning and pen pal schemes with schools and pupils abroad, -community-help projects organised by the school to assist foreign members of the community,
- awards for pupils and classes which have made particular efforts to promote tolerance and solidarity.

Such measures can even help to combat existing low-level violence in schools.

The Länder will mutually exchange their experience and any relevant materials in this sphere.

It is certainly too much to expect schools to fight xenophobia and violence on their own. The ethical principles of our state, as formulated in the Basic Law, must also be practised in the home and must be taken as the yardstick for political action. The media have a particular responsibility: radio and television have countless opportunities to promote tolerance and solidarity, especially

among young people. The Standing Conference will support all initiatives which endeavour to counter xenophobia and violence by means of targeted information and education campaigns.