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The Immediate Tasks of Universities and Institutions of Higher Education: Resolution by the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party (February 1951)

At the beginning of the 1950s, East German higher education policy was shaped, on the one hand, by an urgent need for scientific-technical experts to advance the goals of the Five-Year Plan, and, on the other hand, by the desire to reinforce a Marxist-Leninist approach to the social sciences.

.... The Current Situation

While West Germany is abusing science and its institutions in the interests of Anglo-American war preparations, our universities, institutions of higher education, and research facilities must serve as effective instruments in the struggle to secure peace and restore the democratic unity of Germany.

As a first step, our institutions of higher education must overcome their ideological backwardness. To this end, it is necessary to:

1. Wage a relentless battle against all reactionary ideologies, bourgeois objectivism, cosmopolitanism, and social democracy at universities and institutions of higher education so as to prevent any attempt to disseminate imperialistic ideologies.
2. Provide comradely support for progressive forces, leading them down the path to Marxism-Leninism through public scientific debate and private talks on all ideological issues.
3. Win over all highly trained experts who are loyal to our anti-fascist democratic order, convincing them of the need for the progressive development of science and the progressive education of the younger generation.

In order to fulfill the Five-Year Plan, we need highly trained experts who understand the developmental laws of human society. [. . .]

Accordingly, the next objective in developing a progressive German science that promotes peace is to:

1. Effectively implement a basic two-year study period in the social sciences at all the faculties of universities and institutions of higher education;
2. Promote the study of both the natural sciences and the exact sciences;
3. Impart to teaching staff and students the findings of both Soviet science and the scientific disciplines in the people's democracies around the world.

To this end, a sufficient number of new positions must be created for professors, lecturers, assistants, and tutors in the social sciences, and suitable persons must be educated rapidly in new and improved educational programs. Social science institutes must be set up at all universities and institutions of higher education, and the natural and exact sciences must be promoted by the expansion of relevant institutes, laboratories, experimental stations, and so on.

The literature used at Soviet universities must be translated and published at a quicker pace, and the task of authoring new German university textbooks must be tackled forthwith. The divisions of the Socialist Unity Party (SED) and the Free German Youth (FDJ) that are active at universities must ensure that the work in FDJ study groups is more strongly geared toward the social sciences, and they must also fight the tendency of SED and FDJ functionaries to underestimate the importance of the natural and exact sciences.

The development of a progressive German form of science that promotes peace means that learning, teaching, and research must become a guiding force in the interest of progressive development. [. . .]

The divisions of our party that are active at universities will operate under the direct political-ideological control of the Central Committee. They must be assigned party organizers from the Central Committee. We must put an end to the pragmatism that is expressed at universities and institutions of higher education primarily through the performance of administrative tasks. The party units at universities and institutions of higher education must ensure the disciplined implementation of party resolutions and governmental orders by all university bodies and members, and they must monitor administrative measures in practice.

[. . .]

Source: H. Weber, *Von der SBZ zur DDR 1945-1968 [From the Soviet Occupation Zone to the GDR 1945-1968]*. Hannover, 1968, pp. 286-87.

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