

**Benjamin Ortmeyer**

# **OPEN LETTER**

**to the executive committee and the members of the  
German Union for Education and Science (GEW)**

**The GEW may not retain any property which has been  
“aryanized” by the Nazi teachers association “NS  
Lehrerbund” and was fraudulently acquired after 1945**

**Juni 2007**

## OPEN LETTER

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#### **The GEW may not retain any property which has been “aryanized” by the Nazi teachers association “NS Lehrerbund” and was fraudulently acquired after 1945**

What was unjust in the past, can not be just today

In Memoriam Dr. Karl Brozik

The GEW as a union which deals with science and education is now facing tremendous challenges to stem the constant deterioration of the situation at high schools, schools and other educational institutions. Aside from these current political discussions, it is the task of the GEW to participate in discussions about the Nazi era, to take a position without concealing the role of the teachers played before, during and directly after the Nazi era.

Many initiatives on a regional or higher level did and still do take over this task, although proof exists that the role of the GEW which founded after 1945 during the so-called “denazification” rather contributed to a “renazification” of schools and high schools. Especially in the 50s, the GEW was engaged in supporting discharged Nazi teachers in order to allow their re-employment and civil servant status.

In the first two decades after 1945 there was hardly an effort made to examine the role of officials of the Nazi “NS Lehrerbund” who succeeded to again hold important positions within the GEW (see Open Letter 1998, Annex 1)

During the last three decades the picture changed to some extent: Local investigations in cities, villages and in individual schools and colleges were initiated by GEW members and often by students and contributed considerably to the analysis of the role the teachers played during the Nazi era. These initiatives documented the every day occurrence of anti-Semitic, militaristic, German-nationalist and Nazi indoctrination. This also happened in big cities like Berlin, Frankfurt, Cologne etc. and also in Hamburg .

It is therefore with even more dismay that the public in Germany had to learn (see the article in “Frankfurt Rundschau”, April 28, 2007 ) that the highest body of the GEW Hamburg, the so-called “Landesvertreterversammlung” took a decision (albeit with close results, 57 to 50 by one abstention ) after

- the scandal revealed by members of GEW Hamburg about of an “aryanized” house which the Nazi “Lehrerbund” in an atmosphere of anti-Semitic was able to buy at a price which was obviously too low in 1935
- another scandal revealed that at the beginning of the 50s the GEW (with the help of high-level Nazi officials as “experts”) had acquired this house from the Allies through untrue statements and methods.

Now the “Landesvertreterversammlung” of GEW Hamburg decided that both scandals are no scandals at all and that the GEW wants to and will retain the house (current value approx. one million Euros, the yearly rent income approx. 150.000 Euros. )

At least, 50 delegates voted against this scandalous decision. However, 57 did approve it. This decision was accompanied by disgusting statements which are unscientific, anti-Semitic and falsify history.

### 1.

As early as 2006 a person who considered himself as an “expert” explained the motives of the Jewish community of heirs to sell the house:

**“Did they fear a forced aryanization or did they want to emigrate because of the NS politics? There are now pertinent references in this direction, to the contrary (sic): later one of the former owners bought real estate in other places, also in Hamburg. We know that another person decided only in 1937 to emigrate. After the sale, two eligible heirs moved to a new, comfortable apartment close to the Alster river which is an indication that an emigration apparently was not planned.”**

(„hlz“, magazine of GEW Hamburg .Nr. 5/06)

The cynicism behind this statement is unbearable: the impacted Jews were well off in Hamburg after 1933, they had a “comfortable apartment”, trade and change! The fundamental principle hidden in the above lines defies the framework of a reasonable reply. This is the language of people who minimize and play down the Nazi crimes. The truth is that 66.000 RM cost of the forced sale and renovation have to be compared to a net value of 106.000 RM and a profit of 58.000 RM respectively. This is precisely what aryanization means.

### 2.

In 2007 GEW Hamburg management explained that there is indication that the heirs allegedly **“did not feel that the sale took place in connection with National-Socialist persecution.”** (FR, April 28, 2007)

In the teachers’ magazine “hlz”, the management of GEW Hamburg complained about **“attacks against other opinions using concepts such as ‘aryanization profiteers’.”** (hlz Nr.10 -11/06, S. 40)

This is not at all the language of a democratic union member, since it is an unimpeachable fact that in 1935 aryanization took place and the “aryanizer” (in this case the Nazi “Lehrerbund”) were the profiteers.

### 3.

In 2007 the chair person of GEW Hamburg said in a broadcast of the Norddeutscher Rundfunk: **“The question always remains if the former owner was forced to sell the house at a much lower price. According to our research, this is doubtful since in this particular case a forced**

**sale, at least in our view, was obviously not the case.”** (Norddeutscher Rundfunk, April 5, 2007)

Taking a cynical view, the chairperson of GEW Hamburg continued: **“A former owner even bought more real estate, after he had sold this building, and remained in Hamburg. These are additional signs for us to assume that a concrete persecution has not necessarily existed in this particular case.”** (Norddeutscher Rundfunk, April 5, 2007)

Remained in Hamburg? To the contrary! The truth is that several former owners succeeded to flee in time (one of them was seriously ill and died in 1937 in Germany), because the “concrete persecution” was a daily reality for every Jew in an atmosphere of “Germany, wake up! Juda croak!” (“Deutschland erwache, Juda verrecke!”).

The fact that representatives of the union for education GEW request evidence and proof of aryanization from 1933 to 1945 for “particular cases”, reveals their weird view of history.

Daniel Killy of the Jewish Community Hamburg commented rightfully: **“These were exactly the arguments of the Nazis: ‘The Jews were not forced to sell. Their avarice made them sell.’ Who argues in such a way today, is either absolutely naive or a political criminal.”** (Norddeutscher Rundfunk, April 5, 2007)

\* \* \*

In my view the task is to support with full solidarity the activists of GEW Hamburg who for years with great detail researched and documented all these incidents (see Annex Documentation “The Jewish Inheritance of the GEW”) and to make clear inside and outside of the GEW that these scandalous incidents will not be tolerated.

This is not a question for the GEW only.

The credibility of the GEW as a whole is threatened when through formal and legal excuses a discussion of these questions is suppressed and the whole matter is swept under the rug.

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