

Language policy after 1945

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The experience of annexation shaped the linguistic attitudes of Alsace after 1945 more deeply than any earlier change of sovereignty. Because the National Socialist regime had used German as an instrument of oppression, speaking German or even the dialect became politically suspect. A post-war slogan, displayed in public places, asked Alsatians: "*C'est chic de parler français*". For several years German was removed from primary schools, which placed all their emphasis on French.¹ Many parents who had grown up with Alsatian as their first language decided to speak French with their children, partly because French promised social advancement and partly because the dialect carried the burden of the war years.

A limited return of German teaching followed from the early 1950s, when optional German lessons were reintroduced in the last years of primary school. From the 1970s and 1980s the regional education authority, the *Académie de Strasbourg*, developed programmes for the teaching of German as a regional language and, from the 1990s, bilingual streams in public schools in which half of the lessons are taught in standard German.² The rapprochement between France and Germany, sealed by the Élysée Treaty of 1963, removed much of the political stigma of German. It did not, however, reverse the decline of the dialect in families, which had already been set in motion.

1 Notes

1. On the language policy in Alsace after 1945, including the suppression of German teaching in primary schools and the campaign "*C'est chic de parler français*", see the literature on the sociolinguistics of Alsace. To be verified. ↩

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2. On the reintroduction of German teaching in Alsatian primary schools (the "Holderith reform" of 1972 and later programmes of the Académie de Strasbourg), see the literature on regional language education in Alsace. Details to be verified. ↩

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