

Recent Recommended Changes of Content for Post-'89 Era of European History in American Schools

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A national drive for the improvement of education in the US began with a meeting of the governors of all states recommending what is now called "Goals 2000" to make American students "number one" academically in the world by the year 2000.

A set of "National Standards" was created for each subject. The first edition of the history standards, in three volumes, were published in 1994. It was attacked by conservatives as not mentioning the usual list of national heroes and famous people. From the viewpoint of classroom teachers, the standards were presented in a complicated manner. The only mention of the post 1989 period were two items on nationalist movements in Europe. The one volume revised edition was written in 1996, in it a section on world history, the last era had two items on the end of the cold war.

The California 1988 framework was revised in 1996 to include as the last section for grade ten a unit entitled "Nationalism, Free Markets, and Democracy" that suggested comparing Russia and Germany, or Ukraine and Yugoslavia. Another California publication also placed emphasis on nationalism in the post '89 period.

The American materials almost totally ignore the "European Dimension". The focus is nationalism, and no role is given to the growth of the European community or other pan-European organizations. If these recommendations are followed most American students will arrive in the 21st century with a viewpoint of Europe being a group of independent nations not a group of unifying nations. This will not make us "Number One" by 2000.