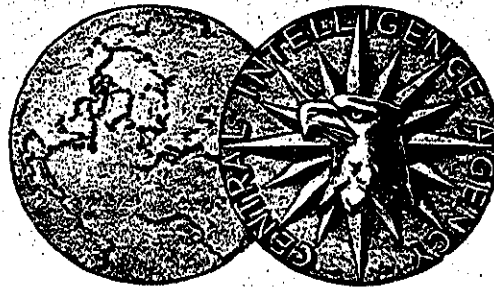


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# POLITICAL TRENDS IN WESTERN GERMANY

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## POLITICAL TRENDS IN WESTERN GERMANY

## SUMMARY

The East-West tensions in Germany, resulting from the incompatibility of US and Soviet policies in conjunction with certain basic internal factors, threaten to destroy Western German adherence to moderate political groups and to stiffen resistance to Western Allied policy. The US stand against Communism is being interpreted as tacit permission for a revival of German nationalism, and the Germans are taking advantage of the current US need for cooperation to demand greater privileges in the economic and political spheres. The present polarization of Western German thought toward political extremes is influenced by the following three basic indigenous factors: (1) growing dissatisfaction with the occupation and with the weak German governmental administrations identified with it; (2) the probability of the future disintegration of the moderate Social Democratic Party, the only strong non-Communist labor force in Germany; and (3) the rightist trend of general German political desires which has increased as a result of the large enfranchisement of ex-Nazis. In the course of this polarization, the Social Democrats may lose political strength to both the Right and the Left, while the alignment of the rightist parties will be affected by the strong current of resurgent German nationalism. At present, there are several rightist parties in Western Germany; of these, the National Democratic Party, although under certain restrictions in the US Zone, appears the most important vehicle for an expansion of German nationalism. The trend as a whole may result in the diminution of the moderate parties, the development of a small but aggressive Left, and the expansion of the Right with increasing Western German independence of Allied controls.

Note: The information in this report is as of 10 June 1948.

The intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Army, and the Navy have concurred in this report; the Air Intelligence Division, Air Intelligence Directorate, Department of the Air Force, had no comment.

## POLITICAL TRENDS IN WESTERN GERMANY

Western German adherence to relatively moderate political groups, such as the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), apart from certain basic internal factors, has been weakened by the East-West tensions in Germany resulting from the policy conflicts of the US and the USSR. Many Germans are interpreting the US stand against Communism as tacit permission for Germany to exchange its present moderate political ideology for one of extreme nationalism involving the rehabilitation of elements in Germany formerly identified with the Nazi regime. Results of recent elections have indicated at least the beginnings of a renascent German political nationalism.

Should this trend from Left to Right develop to an appreciable degree, current political alignments in Western Germany will undergo considerable modification in relative strength and influence. In order to retain control over their followers, German political leaders will be compelled to adopt a more extreme stand on questions of occupation policy and Germany's international position. German politicians of all parties, reacting to the current US need for German cooperation in the European recovery program and for German resistance to Soviet overtures toward a unification of Germany upon Communist terms, have already increased their demands for as much freedom of action as is consistent with continued US protection against the USSR. Unless satisfactory concessions are obtained, the Germans may feel that nothing further is to be gained from democracy and may become more receptive to Soviet plans.

German dissatisfaction with the occupation and the weak German governmental administrations is long-standing and has become increasingly vocal. In view of current conditions in Germany, German political and industrial leaders have shown considerable doubt as to the possibility of a successful implementation of the European recovery program. These leaders are not eager for the establishment of a Western German government by the Allies unless it be endowed with almost plenary powers, and they would prefer an occupation statute clearly restricting and delineating the extent of Allied jurisdiction over German civil affairs. German leaders are hostile to the continuance of the Joint Export-Import Agency, which they allege is stifling German foreign trade by its bureaucratic methods. They are severely critical of the plans of the Western Powers to internationalize the Ruhr, without corresponding internationalization of adjacent industrial areas and are opposed to further dismantlings of heavy industry and the imposition of a fixed production level for German industry. In general, Germans are apathetic toward political programs favored by the Western Powers, and are resentful of Allied denazification policies and Western Power efforts to democratize the populace and liberalize the old educational system.

The discrediting of occupational policies, as they are executed through either the Bipartite Board or the *Land* and Bizonal administrations, is now an important means by which German politicians appeal to the electorate. The effectiveness of such political appeals today is likely to be in direct ratio to the extent to which the Western

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Allies or the German administrations identified with them are censured. The slowness of economic recovery, the bad food situation, and the failure to raise production levels—all these are advanced as political arguments, contributing to a popular belief that Germany is being eliminated systematically as a potential economic competitor of the Western Powers. Extremists on both the Left and Right are able to capitalize on the resultant industrial unrest. Not even the moderate political parties believe that Allied interference in Germany is compatible with German economic recovery. Because of this German emphasis upon Allied interference as a political issue, the degree of Allied control in Germany may determine the future alignment of political forces in that country.

The value of the Occupation in German eyes will be measured only by its ability to rehabilitate the Western German economy while preventing Soviet expansion into Western Germany. German interest in economic aid, however, is no stronger than German resentment against present foreign control. As long as any form of Occupation exists, German efforts to curtail or circumvent the jurisdiction of the Allied Military Governments will continue. German governmental agencies will continue to evade their responsibilities and attribute their ineptitude to an insufficient delegation of authority by the Occupation Powers, upon which will be visited all the resentment of the German population against the prolongation of their miseries.

The political development of most immediate importance is the retirement of Kurt Schumacher, first chairman of the Social Democratic Party. His disappearance from the scene may modify the present policy of the party and possibly its organization as well.

With Schumacher in retirement, many South German party leaders, who in the past were unable to revolt against his leadership, will probably attempt to reduce the strict control exercised by party headquarters. The first step may be a demand that a dual chairmanship be created, which would equalize the position of the *Land* interests, represented largely by the South German Federalists and the central party bureaucracy, represented largely by the North German Centralists, who have dominated the party since 1945. Failing in this effort, *Land* party leaders may assume a more independent role in their respective areas. In addition, there is a potential source of antagonism between the trade union wing of the party and the political leadership of the party.

Following Schumacher's retirement, the various pro-Communist splinter groups within the Social Democratic Party will probably remain in the party. Should the party's policy remain firmly opposed either to the USSR or to Communism, these groups may eventually break off and join the Communists.

If present US opposition to the socialization of German industry continues and the Western German economy nevertheless attains some measure of prosperity, the long-term result of Schumacher's retirement will be a loss of party strength to both the Right and the Left. Elements of the right wing of the Social Democratic Party, particularly the younger members who joined the party under Schumacher, may break off and join rightist or more nationalistic political groupings. The Social Democratic

center, from which Schumacher drew his support, may swing toward the Left to retain its hold on the workers, particularly in the Ruhr. This will be reflected in increased party emphasis on Socialist dogma, including demands for socialization and participation in management and opposition to Allied economic policies in Western Germany, but is unlikely to result in a working alliance between the Social Democrats and the Communists in the near future. A working alliance between the SPD and the Communist Party for common objectives might develop, however, if the USSR ceases to menace Western Germany, and the SPD is prevented from fulfilling any of the major points of its party program because of US opposition to socialization.

In general, however, the present political trend in Germany is to the Right, and may develop into a strong current of resurgent nationalism. Recent local elections in the US Zone indicate increasing rightist appeal to irredentist and dissatisfied elements as well as to German nationalists.

A partial cause of this rightist trend has been the increased voting strength of ex-Nazis, who have been re-enfranchised and are beginning to make their strength felt. In addition, Germans expelled from foreign countries, such as the Volksdeutsche and Sudeten Germans from the East, are supporting nationalist and irredentist movements. The main cause of this trend, however, is the general attitude of the German people, who tend to be extremists with only a slight understanding of the theory of government by the center. Distrusting the Left for its connection with the USSR, the average German will gravitate toward the extreme Right and a policy of direct action, rather than adopt a parliamentary centrist attitude toward Communism and the USSR.

At present, there are several rightist parties in Western Germany; of these the National Democratic Party in the US Zone appears the most likely vehicle for an expansion of German nationalism. Although still relatively weak, these parties may be expected to grow rapidly, unless US Military Government intervenes. Several ostensibly nonpolitical organizations also have the personnel and the capability of actively supporting a resurgence of nationalism. At present, the largest of these associations is the *Hilfswerk der Evangelischen Kirchen*, an ecclesiastical welfare organization with an organizational structure covering all Germany, facilities for international connections, and a very questionable executive personnel. In the future, this and similar groups, supported by elements of the governmental and economic administrations, can be expected to play an active role in promoting German nationalism.

The ultimate results of the widening split between the Right and the Left in Germany will be: (1) the diminution of the Center; (2) the development of a minute but aggressive Left; and (3) the expansion of the Right. Under present conditions, however, the fourth and most powerful element will be a dissatisfied but politically inert mass, which will be unable to oppose actively present Allied policies and unwilling to participate in the anti-Communist campaign. This political mass, however, will be a source of latent strength for the Right, and should the Germans receive political freedom, this element would actively support a rightist program for a centralized and unified German state, opposition to foreign intervention, and exploitation of the US-USSR struggle for the benefit of German nationalism.