

that it can not be taken for a philosophy of quietism, since it defines man in terms of action; nor for a pessimistic description of man—there is no doctrine more optimistic, since man's destiny is within himself; nor for an attempt to

discourage man from acting, since it tells him that the only hope is in his acting and that action is the only thing that enables a man to live. Consequently, we are dealing here with an ethics of action and involvement.

3 The New West Germany and the Nazi Past

May 1945 has long been referred to in Germany as *Stunde Null*, or "zero hour." This designation would suggest that everything prior to the end of the war had been eliminated by the defeat of the Third Reich—that the terrible destruction visited upon Germany as a result of the war launched by the Nazi government had wiped the slate clean, that Germans could only go forward, not backward. Most Germans had little inclination to reflect upon the meaning of Nazi aggression and crimes against humanity. Their priorities included clearing rubble, restoring economic life, and creating a sense of normalcy.

The consensus among the victorious Allied powers and most European leaders was that the potential for future German aggression had to be checked and that the best way to do this was to integrate Germany into broader Western European economic and security arrangements. As Cold War considerations began to determine the administration of the Allied occupation zones in Germany, however, competing visions for Germany's—and Europe's—future development manifested themselves. In the West, the reestablishment of democratic political parties, elimination of the black market, and the introduction of a market economy were central considerations. German leaders and their Anglo-American and French occupiers sought to guide Germany between the Scylla of resurgent fascism and the Charybdis of Communist expansion. In the East, preparations were quickly undertaken to create a Soviet-style regime, in which the Communists sought to ground their state organization upon the principles of antifascist solidarity. Regardless of zonal administration and ideological orientation, Germans were generally more interested in rebuilding than coming to terms with the past, despite the occasional admonitions of intellectuals and critical historians.

Konrad Adenauer DEMOCRATIC POLITICS AND CHRISTIAN IDEALS

Konrad Adenauer (1876–1967) is widely regarded as the founding father of the Federal Republic of Germany. After many years of service as the mayor of Cologne, Adenauer was forced into retirement by the Nazis. Once the Nazi

regime was toppled, his political experience and sober commitment to a Western-oriented German democracy made him one of the Western occupation zones' most prominent politicians. Because he had direct experience of the Imperial period, the Weimar Republic, and the Nazi era, his insights into what was necessary for the re-establishment of postwar German political and civil society—and the pitfalls to be avoided—allowed him to make a good claim to leadership of the Christian Democratic Union. Moreover, his firm Catholic convictions led him to conclude that moral force was necessary to guide and temper power politics. Adenauer served as federal chancellor from 1949 to 1963, and his policies played a leading role in West German reconstruction and integration into the Western European community of states.

... I had seen that the parties of the Weimar Republic were unable to withstand National Socialism. ... The failure lay in the behaviour of these parties in the period prior to the so-called seizure of power by the NSDAP. At that time parties with a democratic basis could have successfully opposed National Socialism by legal means. ... I mention the failure of the parties under the Weimar Republic only in order to explain the fact that a large number of people who thought as I did believed that only a new party based on the broadest Christian foundations, on firm ethical principles, and able to draw on all strata of the German electorate, would be in a position to re-animate Germany.

The National Socialists had opened our eyes to the power wielded by a dictatorial state. I had seen the atrocities of National Socialism, the consequences of dictatorship. I had lost the vocation to which I had devoted my life; my wife was hopelessly ill as a result of a stay in the Gestapo prison at Brauweiler. I had seen the consequences of the war. Three of my sons had served at the front and I had suffered constant anxiety for them; one of them had been severely wounded.

I had heard about the crimes committed against Jews and by Germans against their fellow-Germans. I had seen where an atheistic dictatorship could lead. I had seen Germany plunged into chaos.

From the East we were menaced by the atheist, communist dictatorship. The Soviet Union

showed us that a dictatorship of the Left is at least as dangerous as one of the Right. As a result of the war the Soviet Union had advanced deep into central Germany, up to the Elbe, and was a great danger to us.

We had seen in the National Socialist state, and we saw again in Communist Russia, the dangers inherent in a party that disregarded ethical principles. This convinced most of the adherents of the former Centre, and many members of the former parties of the Right, of the necessity for us to unite into a new party founded on an ethical basis.

The conviction began to spread that only a great party with its roots in Christian-Western thinking and ethics could educate the German people for their resurgence, and build a strong dyke against the atheist dictatorship of communism. We were not alone in this view. All over Germany, including the Soviet occupied zone, political groups and associations based on these principles sprang up quite spontaneously. They may have differed in some of their political and economic demands, but they were agreed in essentials. The most important feature of these groups was their common adherence to democratic political convictions and Christian loyalties developed over the centuries in our country. The proposition that the dignity of the individual must be the paramount consideration, even above the power of the state, is one that derives naturally from occidental Christianity. During the National Socialist period it seemed to be buried. National

Socialism, despite its suppression of individual liberty, had found so large a following because political awareness and responsibility were very poorly developed in a great many people. Moreover, owing to their history, the Germans were all too inclined to submit to the power of the state. To this must be added the pressure of deteriorating material conditions and, in particular, large-scale unemployment. The majority of Germans did not recognize the dangers of National Socialism in its first years. They did not see that it put the power of the state above the claims of the individual. When they did see, it was too late.

Western Christianity denies the dominance of the state, and insists on the dignity and liberty of the individual. Only this traditional Christian principle could now help us to show the German people a new political goal, to recall them to a new political life. This conviction would give our party the strength to raise Germany from the depths. Hence the new party had to be a Christian party, and one that would embrace all denominations. Protestant and Catholic Germans, indeed all who knew and valued the importance of Christianity in Europe, should be able to join—and it goes without saying that this also applied to our Jewish fellow-citizens.

Only a very great party that included all strata of society could rebuild prostrate, broken Germany. It must be a party which could appeal to employers and employed, the middle classes, farmers, civil servants, intellectuals, people from the North and the South, those driven from their homes and those who had simply fled. The ethical foundations adopted by the CDU must be strong and elastic enough to contain and ease the tensions that exist in a big party.

It was not easy to found a new party in the sombre situation of post-war Germany. Material misery was great and it was easy to be discouraged by the political indifference then prevalent. For us the present was oppressive and the future without hope. The German people were regarded as the heirs of the crimes of

National Socialism and were hated throughout the world. Party politics seemed quite pointless. It took a lot of courage to refound an old party; it took much more to found a new one.

When I look back to those dark days it seems to me almost a miracle that everywhere, all over Germany, groups were being formed to demand a new Christian party. They demanded it because of the experience of the National Socialist period. Such groups were formed in all four zones of Germany. Gradually they forged tenuous links amongst themselves. It took years before a tight organization could be developed.

These groups wanted their name to include the word 'Christian': they wanted to indicate their essential aims and their opposition to National Socialism. At the first so-called 'Reich Meeting' of the Christian Democratic party groups which took place at Bad Godesberg in December 1945, it was decided to adopt the name of 'Union'. This was to underline the fact that it was to be a rallying point for all who shared our political principles—whatever their denomination or occupation.

This was the origin of the Christian Democratic Union in the whole of Germany. In Bavaria the same Christian party developed under the name of 'Christian Social Union'.

We were well aware that the creation of a new party was a difficult task; the new edifice could not be built in a day. Inter-denominational tensions in Germany could be overcome only by deliberate and painstaking work. The Social Democrats, based on the trade unions, would strongly oppose the formation of a new great popular Christian party. We knew that very hard work lay ahead of us, work that would require much patience.

The CDU was a new party that drew on old traditions. But it had to begin by drawing up a detailed programme and by creating an organization. This put it at an initial disadvantage compared with the other political parties, which were content to continue where they had left off in 1933. In addition the CDU was at a special disadvantage in the British zone compared with the Social Democrats. In July 1945 the govern-

ment of Britain had passed to the Labour Party. It was often fairly obvious that the British occupation authorities favoured the Social Democrats. The KPD (Communist Party) and the Centre were also well treated by the British and American occupation forces. At first no one quite trusted the CDU, the new party.

The state of mind of the Germans was very precarious at that time. Not only were the people suffering great material hardships, but much psychological damage had also been done and the education of the younger generation had been neglected.

The framework of family life had cracked under the strain of the flight and expulsion of many millions of people, the evacuation of the big cities, and the large-scale destruction of

housing. Another disturbing factor was the uncertainty about the fate of hundreds of thousands of German prisoners of war. The nation was labouring under an enormous burden, and it was necessary to awaken the deepest intellectual and spiritual forces if any resurgence was to be made possible. Such forces were to come especially from the Christian foundation of our party.

There was, too, the danger of atheistic Soviet communism. The Soviets had penetrated deep into central Germany, up to the Elbe. A German party founded on Christian principles would be able to combat this new threat.

That was how we saw the great tasks before us and we went to work full of courage and idealism.
