

Notes

RESTRICTED

HANDBOOK
FOR
KREIS RESIDENT OFFICERS

PART II
(Technical)

PAMPHLET No. 2

POLITICAL PARTIES

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PART I

GERMAN POLITICAL PARTIES

INTRODUCTION

1. This pamphlet summarises the main characteristics and aims of the recognised political parties in the British Zone.

POLITICAL PARTIES BEFORE 1933

2. The present political parties in the British Zone are the descendants of the parties of the Weimar Republic. During the Weimar Republic there were three main blocks: the left wing, comprising the Social Democrat and Communist Parties; the Centre, comprising the Zentrum a purely Catholic Party, and the German Democrat Party and the German People's Party (to which Stresemann belonged), and the right wing comprising the German Nationalists and the German National People's Party. The right wing parties were frankly anti-democratic and were, on the whole, willing to countenance the overthrow of the Republic. They drew their support from the Junkers, the big industrialists and the Conservative elements, including the farming community in the country. During the time when the Nazi Party was making its bid for power the leader of the German National People's Party, Hugenberg, who represented the big industrial interests, formed a group called the Harzburger Front, among the right wing parties which supported a coalition with the Nazi Party. There were, however, a number of men among the German National People's Party who refused to follow Hugenberg's policy owing to their dislike of the Nazi Party. Thus, while a few individuals who formerly belonged to the right wing parties can be said to have been anti-Nazi, the Weimar right wing parties were, as a whole, deeply implicated in Hitler's rise to power. Their members, therefore, are by and large suspect and can hardly be considered today to be men who, in the terms of the Potsdam Declaration, are "capable of developing democratic institutions in Germany".

3. During the years 1929 to 33 the Centre Block was greatly weakened and had lost much support. The Zentrum Party which held the balance between right and left alone retained its power, but unfortunately, it was usually content to sacrifice its principles in order to retain this commanding position. Its leader, Brüning, was the first chancellor to abandon democratic government and govern by decree. When Hitler, after he had gained power, announced the dissolution of all parties other

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than the Nazi Party, the Centre Party meekly voted itself out of existence instead of opposing dictatorship as a Catholic Party should have done.

4. The history of the left wing parties is one of an unhappy struggle between the Social Democrat and Communist Parties. The Communist Party quite frankly regarded the destruction of the Social Democrat Party as more important than opposition to Hitler and instead of uniting with the Social Democrats against the Nazi Party it broke the unity of the left wing. In fact, at one time its slogan was "After Hitler, Us". The Social Democrat Party was often weak and vacillating and both its leaders and the Trade Union leaders caved in when the Nazi pressure became too great. It did, however, fight Hitler to the end and in the famous last meeting of the Reichstag in 1933 when Hitler, who had already arrested the Communists, demanded complete power in the State and his StormTroopers surrounded the building shouting for blood, the Social Democrats alone voted against the motion. It was the left wing parties who suffered most severely at the hands of the Nazis in the concentration camps, and who lost many of their most able men, with the result that their ranks are today thinned.

5. SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (SPD)

The SPD stands in the tradition of Western Socialism and already has established international relations with the British Labour Party and the French Socialist Party. It is now fully established and, at the beginning of May 1946 held a Party Congress for the Western Zones and elected a Committee and the leader of the Party, Dr. Kurt Schumacher. In the British Zone its strong holds are in the large towns, with some exceptions in the Catholic Ruhr.

It is possible that, taking all four Zones together, the SPD might well have been the strongest German Party but for the events which took place at the beginning of 1946 in the Russian Zone. In that Zone the SPD though the strongest Party, was forced to amalgamate with the Communist Party and form the Socialist Unity Party (SED). The methods used to bring about this fusion did not accord with our conception of democracy and, in particular, the rank and file of party members were not given an opportunity to exercise a free choice. As a result of the fusion, the SPD no longer exists in the Russian Zone, but in Berlin, with the backing of the Western Allies, a considerable majority of the Party held out against fusion and maintains an independent existence.

From the first Schumacher adopted a marked anti-Communist line and the events in the Russian Zone have swung the party firmly behind him. He is, however, equally biting in his condemnation of the CDU (see below) which he accuses of harbouring many reactionary elements. The SPD have come out with a positive programme involving the socialisation of major industries, and extensive land reforms. The leading principle in their internal policy is that there should be "an equal share of burdens"; thus they hold the view that no compensation should be given to dispossessed landowners since millions of Germans have lost all their property during the war. They are fiercely opposed to the separation of the Ruhr and are critical of some phases of Military Government policy.

When talking to members of the SPD and listening to their criticism, it should be remembered that the attitude of the SPD to many measures of British Military Government is dictated by their general political outlook. Having been the leading anti-Nazi force they feel that they should inherit the kingdom. Moreover, they look to the British Labour Party for guidance and support. They stand for radical social measures of reform and are prone to suspect that the measures which the British Military Government institute often favour the right wing parties. As a Party they contain many of the best democratic elements in the country whom we favour and support, but they are gravely handicapped by lack of good leaders and by a tendency to theorise instead of getting down to the hard practical work in the factories and in local Government. Their weakness, in the eyes of their German opponents, is their alleged dependence on the support of a single British political party (Labour).

Apart from the Communists, the SPD probably has the best organisation and internal discipline of any party in the British Zone. It is possible, however, that differences of opinion may arise in the future over the question of Marxism. The traditional members of the party lay great emphasis on retaining the full Marxist doctrine. This includes Marx's anti-clericalism which is one of the main grounds on which the SPD is attacked by the Christian Democrats. The party does, however, contain elements, particularly among the younger members, who feel that the strict Marxist doctrine is too rigid and is to a large extent out of date. These elements would favour a more flexible policy, which would include a more liberal attitude towards the Church.

6. CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC UNION (CDU)

The Christian Democrat Union is the main descendant of the old Zentrum Party; but whereas the Zentrum was a purely Catholic Party, the CDU from the beginning has openly stood as a party for men of both Catholic and Protestant faiths. It is of about equal strength with the SPD over the whole of the British Zone, and it won a considerable victory in the municipal elections in the American Zone. It is strongest in the Catholic Rhineland and Westphalia, and to a lesser extent in Protestant Schleswig-Holstein. It draws its main support from the farming community and the middle classes.

Despite its strength there is a rift within the Party. The left wing group is headed by Jacob Kaiser, the leader of the CDU in the Russian Zone and Berlin who, before 1933, was the leading Christian Trade Unionist and who advocates a policy of moderate socialism. The right wing group is led by Dr. Konrad Adenauer the leader of the party in the British Zone; they stand for free enterprise and are opposed both to Communism and Social Democracy. At present the right wing group is the more powerful influence in the British Zone and receives strong support from the Catholic Church.

There are increasing signs that the younger members of the Party in the British Zone, under the leadership of ARNOLD and ALBERS in North Rhine, are beginning to favour the more progressive left wing theories of KAISER, and there is reason to believe that ADENAUER's influence in the British Zone is on the wane.

The CDU has been able to exert a powerful influence through the leading administrators in the British Zone, many of whom are numbered among its members. Owing to the differences within its ranks it has not yet emerged with a positive programme, but it stands resolute on the principle of the sanctity of the individual as opposed to the State, and some of its Conservative members are luke-warm in their support of such measures as denazification. While the left wing of the CDU comprises many admirable individuals and shows signs of growing in strength and influence within the party, the right wing attracts to itself a number of fundamentally antidemocratic elements who, realising the strength of the CDU, will hitch their wagon to that star and may, in future years, exert a baneful influence on the policy of the party.

7. COMMUNIST PARTY (KPD)

The Communist Party in the British Zone acknowledges without reserve the leadership of Wilhelm Pieck in Berlin

and receives its instructions from the headquarters of the party.

Nevertheless, a Zonal Party Committee has been formed under the leadership of MAX REIMANN, who is first Secretary, and KURT MÜELLER of Hannover.

The Communists have little support in the countryside but expect to gain most of their strength in industrial areas, such as Hamburg and the Ruhr. It is probably the best organised party in the British Zone and its members are tireless workers using every opportunity, legal and illegal, in Trade Unions, Works Councils and Local Councils to further the ends of that party.

Although up to date the Communists have never openly opposed Military Government and have indeed rendered many useful services by their drive and initiative, particularly in denazification, the party is fundamentally opposed to the British conception of democracy. Thus discipline is created by ruthless suppression of divergent opinions; policy is never discussed but laid down in directives from above, and those who oppose these edicts run the risk of expulsion from the party. The main political tactic of the Communists at the present time is to achieve, what was achieved in the Russian Zone by force, the fusion of the Social Democrat and Communist Parties. They appeal to the undeniable fact that the differences between the two parties before 1933 left the way open for Hitler. In fact, however, the Communists wish to gain for themselves the electoral support which the SPD is given by the working class vote. The fusion of the parties would undoubtedly lead to continual conflict within the new Party and hold it back from constructive work. Although practically no support for fusion exists among the ranks of the Social Democrats today, the Communists may well gain ground by their tireless activity and the general dissatisfaction of the German working class with economic conditions. Military Government will not oppose the fusion of any political parties; but it insists that fusion can only be carried out freely by the democratic vote of the parties concerned.

It is not part of our policy to ostracise the Communist Party. We wish it to take its fair share in shouldering the burdens of the times in proportion to the support which it receives in the elections. It would be most unwise to ostracise Communists and we welcome their inclusion in administrative posts. They are, however, becoming increasingly critical of Military Government and they are adopting the tactic of glorifying everything that is done in Eastern Germany and

comparing it with the lack of achievement in our Zone. Slandorous Communist statements should always be checked, but nothing is more likely to gain support for a party than a series of petty arrests, fines, and imprisonment of Communists by Military Government.

8. FREE DEMOCRATIC PARTY (FDP)

The Free Democratic Party is probably the smallest of the four main parties in the British Zone. Its main strength lies in Oldenburg and in the North German plain. It also has a sizeable following in Hamburg. No clear policy has yet emerged but it primarily stands for free enterprise and the *laissez faire* liberalism of the 19th century. It might be expected that such a party would gain little support today, but it gains its adherents from those members of the middle classes who dislike the religious and clerical influence in the CDU, and from those Germans who have reacted against the all embracing State control of the Nazi regime. The party contains some genuinely convinced democrats.

The former leader of the party in the British Zone, HEILE, has been ousted from his position by younger and more active elements within the Party and has joined the NLP. At the present time the leader of the party in the British Zone is BLUECHER, a bank director of Essen, who is reputed to have ambitions towards uniting the party in all four Zones of occupation.

Some of the speeches at recent conferences of the FDP have been markedly national in tone and it is evident that the party is still uncertain precisely how to couch its appeal to the German people.

9. CENTRE PARTY (ZENTRUM)

Although the CDU appeared likely to inherit the mantle of the old Centre Party, its claim has not gone unchallenged. At the end of 1945 a small group revived the Centre Party. They claimed to be dissatisfied with the CDU which, in their view, was too far to the right. The CDU replied by accusing this group of being comprised of men who were dissatisfied at having received no position in the CDU and determined only to indulge their own ambitions. The leaders of the party are Dr. Hamacher, and Dr. Spiecker an old adherent of Brüning's. The main strength of the party lies in Westphalia where some of the clergy have given it their support in preference to the CDU.

The Party professes to be neutral on religious matters and to refuse to submit to clerical dictation (which the Cardinal-Archbishop of Cologne attempted to exercise). Up to date it has little influence east of Westphalia.

10. LOWER GERMAN UNION (NDU) (LOWER SAXONY STATE PARTY (NLP))

This Party originally was called the Lower Saxony Party and stood for the amalgamation of Hannover, Brunswick and Oldenburg into one large Land which has, of course, now taken place. It is a descendant of the German Hannover Party which was a splinter Party before 1933 and which advocated a federal Hannover. It draws its support from the landed gentry and small farmer in Land NIEDERSACHSEN. At one time it nursed a bolder conception and advocated the inclusion of Hannover in the British Empire, and the establishment of the Duke of Brunswick as King.

The Party, which is mainly confined to Land NIEDERSACHSEN, made a fair showing at the Kreis and Gemeinde elections in this area, although in other Regions of the Zone it is practically non-existent, and consequently will probably continue to remain a splinter party like its predecessor. The present Chairman is HELLWEGE, who lives at Neuenkirchen, near Hannover.

11. GERMAN PARTY OF THE RIGHT (DRP)

The German Party of the Right is a dubious organisation. It was permitted to form in the spring of 1946 after the applications of several Kreis branches had been turned down in order to provide a resting place for the extreme right wing and reactionary elements who were tending to join the CDU for lack of a party more to their taste. Petty intrigues within the party itself furiously continue, and seem likely to destroy it.

It is likely to be strongest in Schleswig-Holstein and in the country districts. It should always be viewed with considerable suspicion since it contains many elements who were quite frankly anti-democratic before 1933. A high proportion of its members probably belonged to the Stahlhelm. Several would-be leaders whose records were particularly black, in fact, have been banned from taking part in any political activity in the British Zone.

Its present leader is Von Ostau.

12. RHINELAND PEOPLE'S PARTY (RVP)

This Party advocates the separation of the Rhineland from Germany and the creation of a separate State. Despite the conditions in Germany it has so far met with little support. Its leader is Dr. Opitz.

13. CONCLUSION

The Kreis and Gemeinde elections in the British Zone in the Autumn of 1946, conducted on the modified proportional system of voting, resulted in two main political parties coming to the fore, i.e. the CDU and the SPD. In Niedersachsen and Hansestadt Hamburg the SPD is the majority party. In Schleswig-Holstein, they are fairly evenly balanced, while in Westphalia the CDU has a considerable majority over the SPD.

As a further result of the Kreis and Gemeinde elections held in September and October, 1946, the KPD has been reduced to a minority party comparable to the FDP.

Shortly after these elections at the lower levels, the Assemblies of the Lander were changed according to the votes cast in the election, and were granted certain provisional powers of legislation with effect from 1st December, 1946.

These provisional Landtage continued to function until 20th April, 1947 which was the date of the Land elections. Each Landtag was responsible for conducting the elections within the Land.

PART II

POLITICAL DUTIES OF KREIS RESIDENT OFFICERS

14. The object of our occupation is to prevent Germany from ever again waging war on the world. This means that we must replace both Nazism and militarism by working democratic institutions. The whole National Socialist Organisation must be broken up and the leading members of it punished for their crime. The German armed forces and the General Staff must be disbanded; military installations must be destroyed and armaments production eliminated. This has been largely achieved. There is, however, an equally important constructive side to our work. We must re-educate the Germans and induce them to adopt democratic ways of thought and methods of government. This change has its economic as well as political sides. We must build up an economy in Germany which though not permitting the development of military strength will be sufficient to provide the German people with a reasonable standard of living, and enable the various classes of the population to feel secure and reasonably content with their lot. If we fail in this political and economic task our work in Germany will be wasted. We shall not be able to exercise physical control of the country forever, and if we have not succeeded in altering the German's mental attitude as well as their system of life and government by the time we withdraw, it will only be a matter of months or years before a new Hitler appears.

15. The Germans have had little or no experience of the democratic way of life. Democratic ideas had not taken firm root before Hitler came to power and during the Hitler regime the majority of the outstanding men in the democratic political parties and in the trade unions, who would have been the natural leaders of a moderate German Government, were put to death. Even those who survived have often suffered permanent mental or physical injury as a result of imprisonment or their experiences in concentration camps. Germany has therefore got to make the transition from Nazism to democracy without much natural aptitude for Western ideas or government and with few men who are qualified to take the lead in putting those into practice.

16. In these circumstances it cannot be expected that the population as a whole or the political parties will learn to create and maintain a democratic society unaided. They will

need constant guidance and it is the Kreis Resident Officer who, to a large extent, will have to give this guidance. He is the man on the spot who more than anyone in the Control Commission has continual contact with the Germans in their daily life. The way in which guidance is given will require careful judgement, for one of the main faults of the Germans is their reluctance to take responsibility, and they will be only too ready to leave to us every important or difficult decision. If we give way to the temptation of deciding things for them, we shall find ourselves trying to rule Germany as though it were a very backward colony—and this is the last thing we want to do.

17. In dealing with the German political parties the Kreis Resident Officer should try to act with impartiality. We do not wish to create the impression that the British Military Government has any special favourites. To do so would damage our reputation for fairness and would do no good to the party concerned since they would be regarded as mere puppets of the British. On the other hand complete impartiality is not possible for it is definitely part of our policy to encourage those parties or those elements within any particular party which appear genuinely to be following the same aims as ourselves. Here again careful judgement is needed and no hard and fast rules can be laid down. Much can be done by explanation and advice provided always that the decisions are left, as far as possible, to the Germans themselves. We cannot draw up for the Germans their party programmes but we can, for instance, suggest to them that they should take a positive rather than a negative line and should not spend all their energies on wild attacks on rival parties or on British Military Government.

18. One of the duties of the Kreis Resident Officer will be to keep higher formations of the Control Commission informed of the political situation and all political developments in his area. It is not intended that he should be over-burdened with paper work and he will not therefore be called upon to write frequent or detailed reports. He should, however, keep in touch with the local Area Intelligence Officer who will give him any necessary advice. The latter will forward any information on political developments supplied by the KRO to Regional Headquarters. Without the information supplied by the Kreis Resident Officer it will be difficult either for Regional Headquarters or for the Headquarters of the Control Commission in Berlin to form an accurate appreciation of what is happening in the British Zone.

19. Another important function of the Kreis Resident Officer is to explain British Policy to the Germans. In their present miserable condition the German people are only too anxious to find some scapegoat for the disasters which have overtaken them and they will blame anyone rather than themselves for the actions committed by Germany during the Hitler regime. Many of them are therefore very ready to criticise our policy and to misinterpret or distort our motives. This tendency is not always deliberate but is often due to sheer ignorance or uncertainty. The object of laws and ordinances issued by Military Government is not always apparent even to the educated section of the population. It is therefore most important that Kreis Resident Officers should explain our decisions and should try to prevent them from being misinterpreted. The Divisions of the Control Commission and Regional HQ's endeavour to supply Kreis Resident Officers with suitable material for such explanations including the weekly broadcast on BFN. Political Division hopes to issue regular letters which will supply Kreis Resident Officers with background information on topical subjects and enable them to present our policy to the Germans in the correct light.