

Appeal by the Christian Democratic Union (Berlin, 26 June 1945)

Caption: On 26 June 1945, in Berlin, the Christian-Democratic Union (CDU) is formed to accommodate the various movements seeking to achieve a union of democratic and Christian forces.

Source: TREUE, Wolfgang. Deutsche Parteiprogramme seit 1861. 4. éd. Zürich, Berlin, Frankfurt: Musterschmidt-Verlag - Göttingen, 1968. 506 S. (Quellensammlung zur Kulturgeschichte; Bd. 3). p. 188-191.

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‘People of Germany! In the worst disaster ever to befall any country, the Party of the Christian Democratic Union of Germany, out of its fervent love for the German nation, calls on all Christian, democratic and social forces to work together to build a new homeland. A free democratic order can only emerge from the chaos of guilt and disgrace into which the worship of a criminal adventurer has plunged us if we return to the moral and spiritual powers of Christianity on which our culture is based, and if we bring our nation ever closer to this source of strength.

The enormity of our task cannot be put into words. After 1918, the political leadership rescued the organs of government, cultural and economic life from the military collapse. Towns and villages, factories, workshops, fields and woods survived the devastation to form the basis for the gradual recovery of the nation.

Today, however, we have inherited a terrible legacy, with moral and material values lying about us in ruins. This time, an unscrupulous dictator and his supporters waged a reckless war which bled our nation dry. Hitler has reduced the country to rubble and desolation. With his bogus patriotism and empty protestations of peace he deceived his own people and other nations and shamefully abused the idealism of our young people, who fell victim to the leadership of a madman. Large numbers of our population who were all too willing to abase themselves by helping Hitler to power and serving as his henchmen bear a huge burden of guilt, and all guilt demands atonement. The vast majority of Germans who took no part in this are now suffering alongside the guilty. They could not prevail against violence and terror. Fighters for genuine democracy, Protestant and Catholic Christians, countless numbers of our Jewish fellow citizens, men and women from all sections of the population suffered and died under this terror. In the spirit of their legacy, united by the same love for our nation, we acknowledge our duty to accompany this nation along the path of atonement and rebirth.

The terrible scale of the wrong perpetrated during the Hitler era makes it our duty to be relentless and rigorous, but not vengeful, in bringing the guilty and their accomplices to justice. Instead of the caricature of a national community created during the Hitler era we must now have a truly democratic State based on the people’s duty to be loyal, to make sacrifices and to serve the common good, and on respect for the right of the individual and its honour, freedom and human dignity.

The law must once again become the foundation for all public life. The lie that “Whatever benefits the nation is right” must give way to the eternal truth that “Only what is right benefits the nation”. The independence of the judiciary and the orderly administration of justice must be restored. The entire German nation is calling as with one voice for impartial judges. There must be no despotism. There must never again be a Gestapo with the terror that it brought. Public life must be constructed with strict economy on the basis of self-administration and assistance provided voluntarily and by those working in an honorary capacity. The people’s elected representatives must develop fraternal and trusting cooperation between all pro-democracy parties and all forces bent on reconstruction.

We demand a public life free of lies, mass hysteria and mass incitement, and a responsible press whose guiding principle is the determination to tell the truth. We demand spiritual and religious freedom of conscience, the independence of all church communities and a clear division between Church and State.

The right of parents to bring up their children must be safeguarded, and young people must be raised to respect God, age and experience. Religious education led by the church is part of a child’s upbringing. Hitler poisoned large sections of our youth with the corruption of his racial hatred and demagoguery. They must be brought back to true moral values. Science and the arts must develop freely, and the doctrine of true humanity, whose German prophets belong to the whole of mankind, must form the foundation for the moral resurgence of our nation.

The immense destitution of our nation means that we must apply strict planning to build up our economy and to provide work, food, clothing and housing, regardless of personal interests and economic theories.

The emergency food, shelter and work programme is our top priority. In order to secure the authority of the State forever against the unlawful influence wielded by concentrations of economic power, it is essential that mineral resources become the property of the State. Mines and other quasi-monopoly key undertakings in our economy must be clearly subject to State authority.

We support private ownership which ensures the development of the individual person but remains bound by a sense of responsibility for the community as a whole.

Industry, trade and craft occupations will be called upon to play a decisive role in the reconstruction and must therefore be systematically promoted. We demand full protection and scope for expansion for independent craftsmen, who are facing a new and enormous task after the destruction of many industrial undertakings.

Large-scale rural and horticultural settlement, extensively incorporating large estates, must give as many Germans as possible access to their native soil and to independent work. Economic security for independent farmers and the settlement of farm workers form an essential part of any sustainable reconstruction policy and call for the broadest possible development of the rural cooperative system.

The free association of all workers is consistent with Christian and democratic precepts in State and society. We therefore welcome the fact that manual and clerical workers have formed a unified trade union movement in order to protect their economic and social rights. We acknowledge the strength flowing from the labour force into the nation as a whole.

We are conscious of our responsibility to the destitute and the weak, the victims of war, the victims of the Nazi regime and those whom it is our duty to support.

Charitable work must be allowed to develop without hindrance. Our message to mothers and working women is that everything will be done to quickly ease the burden of their increasingly difficult daily lives, which they face with such quiet heroism.

In our relations with other nations, we want the same principles of freedom and justice to apply as in our personal lives and in Germany nationally. The faithful fulfilment of the obligations we face as a result of losing the war and our efforts to do everything we can to achieve national recovery must form the basis for the start of trusting cooperation with other nations. We hope that the occupying powers will understand the immeasurable destitution of the German people, and that they will provide practical help to restart Germany's economy.

In deepest sorrow, we visit the graves of those who have died. We do not forget those who are now prisoners of war. As we stand among the ruins of our houses, our villages and towns, we remember with human and Christian fellow-feeling that the nations around us have given the same sacrifices. And we vow to root out every last thing that was to blame for this terrible slaughter and this unspeakable misery, and to do everything to protect mankind from such a disaster in the future.'