

## 'The future of Germany' from The Daily Telegraph (26 July 1948)

**Caption:** On 26 July 1948, the British daily newspaper The Daily Telegraph publishes an article by the British politician Anthony Eden in which, following his visit to Germany, he discusses the question of the country's economic and political future.

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## THE FUTURE OF GERMANY

### Challenge and Opportunity

**By the Right Hon. ANTHONY EDEN, M.P.**

I have just returned from a week's visit to Germany, during which I had an opportunity to meet not only the Allied Commanders and principal Allied authorities, but leading Germans in every walk of life. During my stay I visited Berlin and Hamburg as well as Frankfurt and the French zone.

It is upon Berlin that public attention is focused to-day. Yet there are wider German problems which deserve our attention and study. This concentration upon Berlin is understandable enough because the outcome of events in that city is of more than local significance. The whole of Germany, west of the iron curtain, is watching this issue too.

If the Western allies were to give way in Berlin they would strike a shattering blow at their hopes of building a free and democratic Germany. Such a Germany might, under proper safeguards, play a decisive part in restoring Europe's broken economy. It is to the examination of this question, the constructive contribution that Germany might make, that I now invite your attention.

The omens are not entirely unfavourable. It is true that the size and complexity of the problems that face the Western allies and Germans alike are without parallel. The extent of the material destruction impressed me even more forcibly this month than it had done three years ago.

None the less, there are definite signs of returning health and vigour. There is a sense of vitality abroad, which the climate of this deplorably damp summer has certainly done nothing to create. I noticed this particularly in Hamburg, where everyone to whom I spoke bore testimony to improving conditions.

This is due in part to the better scale of food rations. When every allowance has been made for the interpretation of figures, it is true to say that rations are this summer at least 50 per cent. better than they were a year ago. Moreover, the harvest prospects in Germany, as here, have been very encouraging.

Another factor which has undoubtedly encouraged confidence has been the success, so far, of the currency reform. This has been a harsh but necessary operation. To revalue the mark at only one-tenth of its previous nominal value was a drastic step, and one which has inflicted hardship on many. Yet it had to be done. The purchasing power of the old mark had collapsed so completely that it was worth no one's while to work to earn it.

The effect of this was seen in the output figures in many industries. So far, in Western Germany, the new mark has made a good start. I was told by leading Germans everywhere, in Hamburg, in Frankfurt and in the south, that the difficulties in the early stages had in practice proved much less formidable than had been anticipated. The allied authorities endorsed this judgment.

It is certainly true that goods have appeared like magic in the shop windows. I saw a thriving market in Hamburg where no such activity had existed a few days before, and the growing confidence in the ability of the mark to buy some of the goods that the people need has already resulted in a definite improvement in output.

There is something to work for. But we are, of course, in the early stages of this endeavour, and it will be the follow-through that will provide the crucial test. All one can say at present is that the reform has got off to the best possible start, and that is always something.

In the political sphere the problems that face us are also stubborn but not, I think, beyond the wit of man to resolve. The persistent refusal of the Soviets to give effect to the underlying purpose of Potsdam to treat Germany as an economic whole has, so far, blocked the way to any form of progress in the political sphere.

The Western allies, having now rightly decided that they can be kept waiting no longer, are seeking to make progress in both spheres.

Here they are up against certain conflicting difficulties. First of all, our French friends, ever mindful of the lessons of experience, are concerned with security for the future and are apprehensive of any plan which would at too early a date give Germany too free a hand.

It is of no use to dismiss these fears as unreasonable or unfounded. There is much history to justify them. But it is just to observe that the devastation of German economy during the recent war has been so much greater than that caused even by the conflict of 1914-1918 that the menace to Europe at the moment lies rather in Germany's economic collapse than in her future war potential.

Careful safeguards must be taken, and the Germans themselves cannot object to this. German reluctance to play a part to give effect to the proposals arising out of the London Conference is based on entirely different motives. These were revealed at the meeting of the Ministers President at Coblenz from July 8 to 10.

The Soviet Union's refusal to co-operate has meant that the first experiment in a limited measure of German government for Germany has had to be confined to the three Western zones. Now, no responsible German can readily be found who is willing to put his name to any agreement which might be thought to pledge him to an acceptance of the division of Germany. There is a firm and understandable reluctance to countenance such a division even as an interim measure.

It should be possible to allay this reasonable concern. It is not the fault of the Germans that Germany is today divided. That is due to the failure of the allies to agree and, more specifically, to Soviet intransigence, which has compelled the Western Powers to go ahead alone or to allow Western Germany to collapse into anarchy and ruin.

The Western allies should therefore be prepared to record this explicitly in any final arrangement which they conclude. They should make it plain, first, that they do not themselves desire to perpetuate a divided Germany and, secondly, that any German who accepts to work upon the basis of the London proposals does not commit himself to the acceptance of such a division for which he bears no responsibility.

On these lines a way can be found for joint political endeavour in the West, which could win results comparable with those which already begin to show in the economic sphere.

This at last is certain. However reluctant every German may be to accept any responsibility for the present division of Germany, he must be prepared, once he is reassured upon this count, to should his share of responsibility for recreating the political life of Western Germany. Our joint purpose must be to lay the foundations of a free democratic Germany which shall be an example and perhaps even a magnet for Germans in the East.

All authorities, German and British, agree that Communist influence and activity is on the ebb. Reports which trickle through from the Soviet zone show a growing antipathy towards Communism. Germans, to whom this trend is welcome, have themselves as much to gain as the Western allies in a joint endeavour to make a success of the agreements now being discussed as the outcome of the London Conference.

I was glad to learn that in all the zones the business of denazification was either concluded or nearly so. There remains the problem of education, particularly of the young Germans, which is being tackled by different methods in each of the three zones.

Good work is, without doubt, being done by these allied bodies which are devoting selfless toil to the task. But the most important aspect of this effort, in my judgment, is that which is being done for the young Germans.

I saw this in progress in the French zone, where some notable experiments are being carried out. I visited

one school at Germersheim-am-Rhein, which is called a school for interpreters. It is, in fact, however, much more than this. Here a two years' course is given to some 250 students. They learn French and English; not only the languages, but the history, the tradition, the practice of free government as it has developed and as it is now understood in these lands.

The results of this teaching have already been remarkable, and it is certainly popular. I listened myself to one class where the teacher was giving an admirable account of the history and influence of monarchy in the British Isles.

I spoke to many of these young people, and it was clear to me that when they leave this school they will be much more than interpreters in the ordinary linguistic sense. They will be young men and women who can explain to their fellow-country-men what are the ideals and conceptions of the free democracies of the West.

When it is realised that 50 per cent. of the population of the French zone of Germany to-day is under 20, and 33 per cent. under 14, it will readily be seen what scope there is among these young people. It is here among this younger generation that the chief hope for the future lies.

The French authorities have also re-established the University of Mainz, which had been closed since the French Revolution. It now has more than 5,000 students, and could take many more if the accommodation were available.

Training such as this cannot be expected to bear fruit in a year or two. But it is truly work for the soul of Germany. If, by the efforts of zealous and public-spirited instructors in all three zones, the young people of Germany can grow to understand what we mean by our free way of life, we shall have made the greatest contribution in our power to the future.

I left Germany deeply conscious of the widely devastated areas and of the mountainous character of the obstacles still to be surmounted. Yet I felt that we were at last beginning to make some progress along the foothills. We are at last beginning to climb. Those who are labouring there indefatigably, from the Commanders-in-Chief downwards, deserve our gratitude and every encouragement that it is in our power to give.