West Germany Votes

First Parliamentary Election

A SIGNIFICANT milestone in the revival of democratic self-government in Germany will be reached on Sunday, August 14, when the election for the first Bundestag (popular assembly) as the lower chamber of the parliament of the West German Federal Republic is called, will be held in the US, British and French Zones.

It will mark the first time that a fair and democratic election on anything approaching a national scale will have taken place in Germany since the Reichstag (national assembly) election of November 1932, a little more than two months before Adolf Hitler was appointed chancellor and proceeded to destroy the Weimar Republic. The refusal of the Soviet Government to implement the Potsdam Agreement and to give effect to the political unification of Germany has resulted unfortunately in the exclusion of the East Zone from this poll. But even with this drawback the parliamentary election of August 14 will be an important stage in the restoration of a democratic German Republic and will give the world for the first time since the war a picture of how the German people view the problem of their national reconstruction.

Nobody knows exactly today how many people will be eligible to vote in the Bundestag election. An estimate indicates that possibly more than 30,000,000 voters will be able to mark their ballots on August 14, if they so desire. This figure is an increase of between 11 and 12 percent over the total number of eligible voters in the State Parliament elections that were held in the western zones in 1946 and 1947. The great bulk of these new voters are refugees and expellees from the East who constitute the unknown and possibly decisive factor in this election. All German citizens who are 21 years old and who have been domiciled in their district three months prior to the date of the election will be qualified to vote.*

THE ESTIMATED distribution of eligible voters by zone is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Estimated Voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US Zone</td>
<td>11,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Zone</td>
<td>15,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Zone</td>
<td>3,500,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These voters will be called upon to elect at least 400 deputies to sit in the first Bundestag. Owing to the electoral system adopted, the exact number of deputies cannot be ascertained in advance, but at most the number is not likely to exceed 410. The deputies are apportioned among the 11 states on the basis of their population in this manner:

- Baden: 11 deputies
- Bavaria (including Lindau): 78 deputies
- Bremen: 4 deputies
- Hamburg: 13 deputies
- Hesse: 36 deputies
- Lower Saxony: 58 deputies
- North Rhine-Westphalia: 109 deputies
- Rhineland-Palatinate: 25 deputies
- Schleswig-Holstein: 23 deputies
- Wurttemberg-Baden: 33 deputies
- Wurttemberg-Hohenzollern: 10 deputies

A mixed electoral system, representing a compromise between the single-member-district and the system of proportional representation (PR), will be employed in electing these deputies. The single-member-district or direct election system is the one in use in the United States where the voters mark their ballot for one individual and the candidate who gets a plurality is returned. The proportional representation or list method which was in vogue in the Weimar Republic compels the voter to cast his ballot for the party ticket. The party obtains one mandate for every unit of a fixed number of votes (the figure was 60,000 in the Weimar Republic) that it receives.

ACCORDING to the compromise system adopted for the Bundestag election, 60 percent of the candidates will be chosen directly and the remaining 40 percent by PR. All the votes each party gets in a state are to be added together and the total number of mandates accruing to each party shall be calculated according to a complicated electoral procedure known as the de Hondt method after the name of its inventor, Victor de Hondt, a Belgian political scientist. The number of mandates each party has won in direct elections will be deducted from the total number of seats to which it is entitled, and the remainder will be taken from the party's state reserve list.

* See "Electoral Law", page 22, this issue, for law governing August 14 election.

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Dr. Konrad Adenauer, president of the Parliamentary Council at Bonn, heads the Christian Democratic Party.

(Stars and Stripes)

AUGUST 9, 1949.

INFORMATION BULLETIN.

Dr. Kurt Schumacher, for 10 years in a Nazi concentration camp, is the Social Democratic Party leader.

(Tagesspiegel-DPD photo)
The Christian Social Union, south German ally of the CDU, is headed by Dr. Hans Ehard (center) who is also minister president of Bavaria. The party is split between left-wing leader Dr. Josef Mueller (left) and clerical-faction leader Alois Hundhammer (right).

(Tagesspiegel-DEINA photos)

Any German who is 25 years of age and who has possessed German citizenship for one year on election day will be eligible to run for office, even if he is not a regular party candidate, provided that he can obtain 500 signatures supporting his candidacy in the district he proposes to represent. Theoretically this measure encourages independent candidates. The hitch, however, lies in the fact that if the non-partisan aspirant is beaten in the direct election, his votes are not transferred to a state reserve list, but are lost. This consideration accounted for the importance which political parties not licensed on a state level as well as refugee organizations, attached to getting recognition from Military Government prior to the election.

It appears as if some 15 parties will be putting up candidates in the election. But only four parties will be represented in every zone and in every state.

There are two parties which will run candidates only in Bavaria in the US Zone; one party that exists only in South Baden in the French Zone, and eight other parties that are recognized in the British Zone.

The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in this article is regarded as the Bavarian affiliate of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU). These two parties are linked by an interzonal Arbeitsgemeinschaft (working committee), have cooperated closely in the Economic Council at Frankfurt and in the Parliamentary Council at Bonn, and are generally designated jointly as the CDU/CSU block.

** Two of these parties—the German Party and the Radical Socialist Freedom Party—are also putting up candidates in Bremen, the US Enclave in the British Zone.

The "Big Four" that will contest seats all over Western Germany are, listing them according to their strength as revealed in previous elections, the Christian Democratic Union (Christian Social Union in Bavaria) generally referred to as the CDU/CSU, the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Communist Party (KPD), and the Free Democratic Party (FDP).

The Christian Democratic Party is essentially a churchmen's party composed of Protestants and Catholics, who seek the solution of modern political and economic problems in the application of Christian principles. This party favors a central government with strictly limited powers, a free economy, and the inclusion of religious instruction as an integral part of the curriculum of the public schools. Its leader is 73-year-old Dr. Konrad Adenauer, longtime mayor of Cologne and, more recently, president of the Parliamentary Council at Bonn that framed the Basic Law under which the present election is being held. The Christian Social Union, the South German ally of the CDU, differs from its big brother, chiefly in laying more emphasis on state rights, as one would expect of a Bavarian party. It is headed by Dr. Hans Ehard, 61, jurist and civil servant, who is also minister president of Bavaria.

The Social Democratic Party, the most formidable rival of the CDU/CSU stands, on the contrary, for a strong central government, the socialization of heavy industry, especially of the coal mines and the steel mills of the Ruhr, and for a directed economy. It is led by 54-year-old Dr. Kurt Schumacher, former Reichstag deputy, who despite the loss of an arm in World War I, the hardships of 10 years in a Nazi concentration camp, and the amputation last autumn of his left leg, is now actively campaigning for his party with all his famed forensic fire.

The Communist Party in line with the Cominform policy laid down in Warsaw in June 1948, calls for a "united Germany, a just peace, and the withdrawal of all occupation troops." Like the Socialist Unity Party in the Soviet Zone, it demands that the lower house of parliament should be supreme in the state by having in its hands the sole right of legislation, unrestricted by any veto power on the part either of the upper chamber, the federal president, or the Supreme Court. Alone among German parties, the KPD stands for the maintenance of Germany's frontiers on the Oder-Neisse line. Its chief is Max Reimann, 51, a one-time miner. He was released on July 20 by the British authorities from a Dusseldorf prison where he was serving a sentence for calling Germans who cooperate with Military Government "quislings." He was liberated in order that he might participate in the election campaign.

The Free Democratic Party upholds the banner of traditional liberalism. It wants a strong central government, the preservation of all basic civil liberties, the maintenance of the free enterprise system, and the separation of church and state.
Its leader is Dr. Theodor Heuss, 65, writer and orator, who helped to draft the Bonn Basic Law.

Besides the “big four,” there are four other fairly important parties that are putting up candidates in various parts of Western Germany. These parties are likely to elect deputies to the Bundestag and may well play a role in future coalition politics. These are the Bavaria Party (BP) and the Economic Reconstruction Party (WAV) in Bavaria and the Center Party (Zentrum) and the German Party (DP) in the British Zone.

The Bavaria Party is an offshoot from the CSU. Its guiding principle is “Bavaria for the Bavarians.” It wants to keep the administration of the state in the control of the native Bavarians and out of the hands of recent arrivals in the state and stresses Bavarian state rights so much as to border closely on separatism. Its chairman is Josef Baumgartner, 45, who was once Bavarian minister of agriculture and gave up his post because he resented Frankfurt’s attempt to control the distribution of Bavarian potatoes.

THE ECONOMIC Reconstruction Party is largely a one-man show. That man is Alfred Loritz, 47, who draws the biggest crowds to his meetings of any Bavarian politician by his eloquence as a platform speaker. His party demands that all important laws should be enacted by means of plebiscites instead of being put through by the legislature and that state offices should be given to skilled technicians rather than to people who happen to have “the party book.” Loritz, however, has quarreled in turn with almost all his lieutenants. On the eve of the Bundestag election the Bavarian courts were having to decide whether he or Erich Kuehne, a former WAV member of the Economic Council at Frankfurt whom Loritz had expelled from the party the previous winter, was the rightful head of the organization.

The Center Party is a Catholic party, standing to the right of the SPD and to the left of the CDU. It generally agrees with the socialists on governmental and economic matters and with the “Union” on religious and cultural matters. It is strongest in North Rhine-Westphalia. It is handicapped in the campaign by the loss of its leader, Dr. Fritz Stricker who died in a Recklinghausen hospital on July 9 as a result of injuries sustained in an automobile accident. Today the Center Party is led by 51-year-old Frau Helene Wessel, a woman who lived in German history to head a political party. She was a member of the Catholic Center Party in the Prussian Landtag in the Weimar Republic and for the past year was a delegate to the Parliamentary Council at Bonn.

The German Party was originally founded by Hanoverians who resented the swelling up of their kingdom in Prussia by Bismarck in 1864. It now exists all over the British Zone, but it is still strongest in its homeland of Lower Saxony. It is a strongly conservative party with nationalist tendencies and is a sort of North German and Protestant counterpart to the Bavaria Party of South Germany. Its chairman is Heinrich Hellwege, 41, a business man who was brought up by his father to hate Prussians.

HOWEVER DIVERGENT these last four parties may be in other respects, they are bound together at least by one tie—common opposition to the Bonn Basic Law.

The Western Allies did not succeed in agreeing upon a joint policy in regard to the licensing of new parties prior to the election. While the US Military Government flailed declined to recognize any parties which had not already been licensed on a state level, the British authorities went to the other extreme and extended licenses to all parties which were operating on a Kreis (county) level in their zone.

The French Military Government is permitting only one new party to run candidates for office in its zone. That organization bears the name of the “Union for Action” (Sammlung zur Tat). It is a Separatist party that exists only in South Baden.

ALTHOUGH THE British are allowing some half a dozen more parties to present themselves to the voters in the Bundestag election, none of them is apparently of any great importance. They include the German Right Party (GRP), an ultra-conservative party as its name indicates that functions in North Rhine-Westphalia and in Lower Saxony; the South Schleswig Electors Association (SSW), a Danish party operating in that border state; the Radical Socialist Freedom Party (RSSP), a social credit party like the Canadian party of that name, which intends to run candidates in Bremen and in every state in the British Zone save Hamburg; the Rhineland Westphalian People’s Party (RWPP) which wants to set up a separate Rhineland state and which is in business only in North Rhine-Westphalia; the so-called Socialist Party Flensburg (SPF) a secessionist group from the SPD in Schleswig-Holstein; and an utterly insignificant organization calling itself the Republican Party of Ger-

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many which leads a torpid existence in Hamburg.

This coming Western German election differs strikingly from an American Congressional election in at least two respects. In the United States if a party leader is beaten in his district, he is definitely out of Congress. But PR opens a way for German political leaders who go down to defeat in their constituencies to get into the Bundestag by way of the party reserve list.

Furthermore, in the United States two parties—Republicans and Democrats—strive to obtain the majority in the House of Representatives and the Senate in the expectation that one of them will achieve that goal. But in Western Germany with its numerous parties it is probable, barring an unforeseen miracle, that no party will obtain an absolute majority in the election on August 14. This is evident if one examines the table below which is based on returns from elections for the state parliaments held in the three zones of Germany in 1946 and 1947:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>US Zone</th>
<th>British Zone</th>
<th>French Zone</th>
<th>Total for west Germany</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CDU/CSU</td>
<td>2,623,892</td>
<td>2,948,704</td>
<td>584,113</td>
<td>6,556,719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPD</td>
<td>2,043,861</td>
<td>3,473,589</td>
<td>572,705</td>
<td>5,090,155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KPDP</td>
<td>515,738</td>
<td>971,346</td>
<td>159,714</td>
<td>1,646,803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDP</td>
<td>713,666</td>
<td>706,635</td>
<td>240,974</td>
<td>1,666,275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Parties</td>
<td>242,640</td>
<td>1,236,238</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1,480,878</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table indicates that the chief fight in the Bundestag campaign will be between the CDU/CSU and the SPD to decide which of them is to get the plurality. The stakes are considerable for the party that comes out at the head of the poll will be entitled by precedent to nominate the first chancellor of the West German state, to form the government and to take the lead in initiating policies. The other parties will endeavor to obtain as many votes as possible, not with any hope of "winning" the election, but for the purpose of putting themselves in as strong a bargaining position as possible when the negotiations take place for the creation of a coalition government, or, (as in the case of the Communists) to make themselves a formidable nuisance to the future rulers of the infant republic.

Four factors bid fair to play a decisive role in determining whether the CDU/CSU or the SPD will get the largest number of votes in the election. These are:

1) The turnout of voters at the election. In the Landtag elections, the participation of the voters in the US Zone amounted to 74.7 percent of the whole; in the British Zone to 67.4 percent; and in the French Zone to 70.9 percent. There is reason to believe that the percentage of voters in the

Bundestag election will approximately equal these figures. As the SPD voters are fairly stable, it would appear that the larger the poll, the better were the CDU/CSU chances of making a good showing.

2) The unknown quantity in the coming election is the refugee vote. What party is going to win the bulk of the refugee poll which is estimated to number some 3,000,000 voters? Here-tofore the refugees have looked coldly on the established parties, asserting that these organizations had ignored their claims to obtain jobs, land and decent homes. It was for this reason that the refugee organizations tried so desperately to obtain recognition as political parties, but their applications were turned down by the US and British authorities. So all parties are now bidding for the refugee vote by putting up refugee candidates on their tickets and by promising all sorts of favors to the new citizens.

In Bavaria the Neubuergerbund, the largest refugee organization in the US Zone, has announced through its leader, Guenther Goetzendorf, that it will back the WAV. The support of this organization may result in a big vote for the Loritz party. But it has yet to be demonstrated how well the refugee leaders can keep their followers in line. Egon Hermann, the well-known Dachau refugee spokes-

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