Freedom Also for the Soviet Zone

Text of Statement

By JAKOB KAISER
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on "Bundestag" Vote for All-German Assembly

BY AN OVERWHELMING majority vote, the Bundestag (Federal Parliament) passed on Feb. 6 the "Draft of a Law on the Principles of Free Elections for a Constitutional German National Assembly." Both the government coalition and opposition parties approved of the bill. This accord of opinions demonstrates that there is no dis- sension in the determination to reunite Germany, including the Soviet Zone, and also that the entire nation is resolved to do everything in its power to pave the way to free elections.

The Federal Government will now forward this bill to the Allied Powers. It is up to the Western Powers and the Soviet Union then, to enact it in all of Germany. The Federal Government is confident that the Western Powers will approve it. It is up to the Soviet Union to do the same.

The electoral law provides that the entire area of Germany constitutes one single electoral district, and each party may submit only one list of candidates. This is necessary, because we are well acquainted with the Communists and their tactics. We know that, despite all safeguards and international controls, they will try to the very last moment to intimidate the population. We have experienced these tactics. For this reason, the nomination of candidates must be kept as far as possible from their influence.

The Federal Government and Bundestag are agreed that the National Assembly should do more than draft a constitution. It should, at the same time, "bring about and secure a liberal, lawful, democratic and federal order in all of Germany." That means freedom will come to the Soviet Zone the moment the National Assembly convenes. We know that the period of transition will certainly be not easy. But all difficulties will be overcome by the nation's determination and confidence.

We know, too, that the Communists spare no trouble to undermine confidence in the Federal Republic. Day after day they try to make the people believe that we have left the Soviet Zone in the lurch. The population there, however, realizes that the facts prove the contrary.

IN THE BUNDESTAG on Feb. 6, I expressed the wish of the Soviet Zone population, which is also our own, most clearly: "All contractual obligations and agreements with the free world can be understood only to the extent that they bring all of Germany — that means our entire nation — closer to unity, freedom and peace. The reunification of the German people must not be impeded, it must be facilitated."

That is not only my personal opinion. It is shared by all the people of the Federal Republic, and the free world is in full sympathy with it. This was expressed lately by the establishment of an impartial United Nations commission. We wish that this commission could go to Berlin in the near future. From Berlin it has the best chance to survey the whole of Germany, and only on German soil can it gain the proper understanding of the German situation.

Undoubtedly Berlin will be prepared to grant extra-territorial rights to the commission for the fulfillment of its task. In that case the Communists will have even less reason to refuse the commission the right of entry into their zone. But the people of the Soviet Zone shall know that the representatives of the free world are right outside their door, waiting to be let in.

The people of the Soviet Zone may be assured: The Federal Republic's policy is specifically aimed at the reunification of Germany. But that requires that the Federal Republic be strong. There is no doubt that the basis of this strength must be economic and social security. However, in view of our postwar experiences we do not think highly of the confidence of the defenseless in the armed. And nobody can deny that Communism is armed to the teeth. We certainly do not want to do the same, but at least we want to be able to defend ourselves, if we were attacked.

During the past few days this has been the subject of a debate in the Bundestag. As becomes a democratic parliament, the house discussed the subject thoroughly and openly, and radio broadcasts made the entire nation witness. It is inconceivable that such a debate — about the people's police, for instance — could be held in the so-called Volkskammer ("People's Chamber"). A dictatorship simply cannot afford that.

THE PURPOSE OF the Bundestag debate was that the German people consider the prerequisites and methods of a future defense. In view of past experiences and of the present situation, opinions were bound to clash violently. But in one respect there is agreement among the overwhelming majority of the Bundestag: both government coalition and opposition know that Germany would have to contribute to its own defense, if it were ever attacked. The differences of opinion concern only the prerequisites of such defense.

Unfortunately no responsible politician could rise and say that there is no threat from the East. On the other hand, there is hardly a speaker who does not express hope for an understanding. This understanding, as we all know well, is the hope of the Soviet Zone. It is our hope, too. However, for six years we have been powerless and defenseless. The Soviet Union has misused this time to draw the Soviet Zone of Germany closer and closer into its sphere of power.

We have learned one thing since 1945: a nation like the German, living amid a heavily armed world, cannot exist totally defenseless. There is a tremendous difference, however, between the capacity to defend oneself and the capacity to attack. We want only defense. For this reason Germany's demand to defend itself cannot be an obstacle to the reunification of the German nation. It cannot be an obstacle if everyone who talks of unity honestly means a reunification in freedom.

Jakob Kaiser.