

THE CONFEDERATION OF GERMAN STATES

In Bonn, in the United Kingdom zone of Germany, some sixty-five representatives of eleven German states (Laender) have been engaged in constitution-making, although they prefer the term "basic law" to "constitution". The new political organization for which they are drawing up a basic law is to be called the "Confederation of German States". The members of the parliamentary assembly at Bonn and the governments of the United Kingdom, the United States and France, which initiated these events, have been at great pains to insist that there is nothing exclusive about the confederation of German states and that the states of the Soviet zone of occupation may enter at any time.

SUBJECT TO REVIEW

This willingness, if not anxiety, to have a political organization for *all* of Germany is further emphasized by the declaration that the results of the Bonn meeting will be temporary and subject to review should a four-power agreement be reached. On the other hand the Bonn meeting is a clear indication that political organization in Germany will not wait upon Soviet approval. Until that approval is forthcoming a nucleus of a German state will take form and there are indications that it will exert considerable attractive force on those sections of the country which are not being permitted to take part.

The decision of the Western occupying powers to sponsor the development of political institutions in Western Germany could not have been made in any spirit of light heartedness. The amount of bitterness which their move has inspired would suggest that over-riding reasons must have compelled

the occupying powers to take a step which has subjected them to such violent attacks as they have recently had to undergo. To find these compelling reasons it is only necessary to realize some of the economic, political and moral issues with which the Western powers were confronted after the failure of the London meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers at the close of 1947.

POLITICAL RE-EDUCATION

An occupation government, by its very nature, can claim very little popular sympathy however well intentioned it may be. There has arisen in Germany a welter of grievances which even the most efficient and popular government would, to a great extent, be powerless to rectify. It is therefore understandable that the occupying powers should wish to share this uncomfortable burden with the Germans themselves. Furthermore, the political re-education of the German people was one of the principal war aims of the allies and, as a necessary step in the creation of a democratic German nation, it was of first importance that they should learn political self-reliance and be given an opportunity to exercise it. Perhaps the most important moral-political consideration was the necessity of removing the political chaos which has prevailed in Germany in the postwar years and which would serve to undermine the faith of the German people in democratic political parties to the advantage of the more highly organized and disciplined Communists.

The economic considerations which would drive the Western occupying powers to support German responsibility for the conduct of their own affairs are too numerous to mention in

detail. It suffices to say that the chaos in German industry and agriculture was so great that without the active and willing participation of the Germans themselves in working out their own salvation it would be difficult to see when German economy could be reconstructed. In the meanwhile the occupying powers were obliged to pour in large sums of money merely to maintain life. On the other hand, in spite of great wartime damage, the German industrial potential remained considerable and, if properly organized, would be of immense value in the rehabilitation of Europe, particularly after the E.R.P. had been set in motion.

BASIS FOR UNITY

Political organization was, however, only one of the necessary steps which the Western occupying powers felt they had to take in order to meet the situation in Germany which was worsening daily as a result of four-power deadlocks. A meeting of representatives of the United Kingdom, the United States and France was therefore called to meet in London in February to deal with a large number of questions relating to the settlement of Western Germany and among them was the problem of future political organization. Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, as interested neighbours, were invited to take part in discussions on this topic.

The recommendations of the London meeting were contained in a report submitted for the approval of the governments represented there. On June 6 these recommendations, including those for the future political organization of Germany, were outlined in a communique in which it was stated that it was not the intention of the