9. The provinces of Limburg and the establishment of the state of North Rhine – Westphalia after 1945

When the Nazi-government collapsed in May 1945, all of the Lower Rhine was already occupied by British troops. The total defeat of the German military and the establishment of allied control in June 1945 meant a complete new beginning for the Lower Rhine and the whole of the Rhineland. In contrast to 1918, the allied occupiers had acquired complete control over what was the German Empire and thus any constitutional change lay in their hands and they soon set about to use their powers to shape new states and bodies out of the former German Empire in such a way that it would prevent or at least obstruct any re-emergence of extreme German nationalism and aggression. In order to not repeat errors which have been made after WWI they concluded that a post war Germany must be organized as decentralized as possible, nationalist extremism to be wiped out and a liberal-democratic system be established which could not be as easily bypassed as was the case with the Weimar constitution. But it also became soon clear that the ambitions of the three Western powers (USA, United Kingdom and France) where different than the ones of the Soviet Union which soon paved the way of an effective split of the former German Empire into East and West and this also laid the foundation of what would become the “Cold War”. One of the first steps the allies took after establishing the Allied Control Council on the 5th June 1945 was to establish local administrations constituted out of local citizens who appeared not to be involved into the Nazi-Party or its organizations. This often proved to be difficult but the general tone was set. The next step the Allies decided upon was the creation of constitutional states which either were re-established and promoted from the German Empire federal system such as Bavaria or the City State of Hamburg or shaped out Prussia, which in its dominance appeared as one of the proponents for militarism, aggression and nationalism. In order to be able to do this, the Prussian state was declared dissolved by decree in August 1946 and instead new states were formed, among others North Rhine-Westphalia, constituted out of the former Prussian province of Westphalia, the Northern part of the Rhine province (the parts allocated to the British occupational zone) and the small state of Lippe (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, Land Nordrhein-Westfalen, 1. Historischer Hintergrund, http://www.bpb.de/nachschlagen/lexika/handwoerterbuch-politisches-system/40319/land-nordrhein-westfalen?p=all).

The plan of this state was presented in July 1946 to the leader of the new Christian Democratic Union and former Rhenish Centre Party politician Konrad Adenauer and the social democratic leader Kurt Schumacher, who survived 9 years of harsh imprisoning under the Nazi regime. Adenauer, according to his memoires, was taken by surprise to see his old proposals effectively resurrected by the British authorities and immediately agreed while Schumacher rejected the idea as he believed such a large state would be to powerful for a post-war Germany (Konrad Adenauer: Erinnerungen 1945-1953, Stuttgart 1965, ISBN 3 421 01140 0., http://www.konrad- adenauer.de/files/7613/8746/5768/Adenauer_Erinnerungen.pdf, page 35). According to Adenauer he had absolutely no ambitions or ideas for the future of Germany after the collapse of the Nazi regime and effectively awaited the things to come but once he realized that the three Western powers intended to integrate at least their three western occupational zones into a new democratically and liberal Western Europe he enthusiastically agreed to take a leading role in this (see also chapter 9.1.). This was the birth of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia in 1946, which received a constitution of its own and a parliament and thus became a part-sovereign state and joined as such the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949. This sovereignty of this “new” state was beyond anything any Rhenish politician ever imagined; including the separatists, but it soon appeared to work. In 1950, the new state constitution was confirmed by popular plebiscite and North Rhine-Westphalia became a derivative subject of international law, confirmed by Articles 24 and 32 of the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany which guarantees a federal state the right to act on their own behalf at the international level (Die Landesregierung Nordrhein-Westfalen:...
Verfassung für das Land Nordrhein-Westfalen, [http://www.nrw.de/nordrhein-westfalen/landesverfassung/](http://www.nrw.de/nordrhein-westfalen/landesverfassung/). As a matter of fact, North Rhine-Westphalia is nowadays a truly integrated part of the Federal Republic of Germany as its territories have been ever since the German Federation was founded in 1815 but the autonomy many activists demanded and dreamed about has been achieved nevertheless and even surpassed.

Despite the fact that a strong sense of regional awareness always existed, at least in the Rhineland, many claim North Rhine-Westphalia of being an artificial state created by the British occupiers. Historically this is true since such a state or body never existed before the British occupiers took the initiative and declared it in 1946 through decree. But the ideas and demands for it in various forms are much older and go back to the times of the French revolution, thus even long before a German national state in the form of the German Empire came into being. This is also demonstrated by the state flag, the green-white-red tricolour, which is the same used by the Cisrhenanian movement by the end of the 18th century and the Rhenish separatists after WWII and since the German tricolour black-red-golden only appeared during the Napoleonic wars in 1814, it is even older (Yvonne Kafka: Das „Wendejahr“ 1797/8: Cisrhenanische Republik oder Annektion? GRIN Verlag GmbH; 1 edition July 27, 2011, ISBN: 3640968263).

After ratification of the the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949, Northrhine-Westphalia with its extensive heavy industry became a major contributor to the German economic miracle and continued to attract migrants from inside an outside Germany until a climax was reached in 2003 when 18,079,686 inhabitants where resident in Northrhine-Westphalia, making it the most populous state of the Federal Republic of Germany. However, the heavy industry in the Ruhr valley was first set under allied control after WWII until, on initiative of the French prime-minister Schuman, a plan was put forward to merge the heavy industry of both Germany and France in 1951. This effectively ended the allied control over the Ruhr industry and also laid the foundation for the European Economic Community developing into the European Union (Die Landesregierung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Unsere Geschichte seit 1946, [http://www.nrw.de/nordrhein-westfalen/geschichte/](http://www.nrw.de/nordrhein-westfalen/geschichte/)). However, the closure of many heavy industry plants since the 1970s brought increasing unemployment and re-structuring about, in particular for the cities in the Ruhr valley where the core of the heavy industry laid and the main axis for development is now along the river Rhine. It was governed by either christian-democratic-liberal, socialdemocratic-liberal or socialdemocratic-green governments and, apart from the general obligation of administration, one emphasis has been to create a stronger identity for the state. Nevertheless, the three constituent parts of the state, the Rhineland, Lippe and Westphalia have retained their own identity which is also reflect by the continous existence of the so called “Landschaftsverbände” (Regional Councils) for the Rhineland and Westphalia-Lippe. Although the state has, as is the case in Sleswick-Holsten, the cultural sovereignty only little has been achieved so far in recognizing minority and regional languages. Only Low Saxon in the form of Westphalian has received recognition as part II of the ECRML (European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages) in 1999, this, in contrast to e.g. Sleswick-Holsten, were part III has been granted for Low Saxon, Frisian and Danish (Bundesrat für Nedderdüütsch: Europäische Charta der Regional- oder Minderheitensprachen, [http://www.bundesrat-nord.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=87%3Achartaallgemein&catid=58%3Asprachen chartaallgemein&Itemid=70&lang=de](http://www.bundesrat-nord.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=87%3Achartaallgemein&catid=58%3Asprachen chartaallgemein&Itemid=70&lang=de)). Lower Franconian and/or Dutch and Ripuarian (Middle Franconian) have not been recognized so far by the state government (see also chapter 10.3.).

In Limburg the Allied troops were greeted enthusiastically as liberators from Nazi-occupation in 1945 and quickly the status quo from before the war was re-established. Once the Netherlandic state was re-established, soon voices appeared which demanded compensation in the form of annexation of territory from Germany for the hardship under the occupation. Plans were developed which would annex the Lower Rhine North-West of a line Aachen-Neuss and that all former members of the Nazi-Party or its
organizations population and those unable to speak Lower Franconian were to be expelled. But reluctance by the Netherlandic government and the British occupational authorities and the immediate initiative by West German and Allied politicians to integrate a new (West-) Germany into a Western European framework quickly extinguished such demands (Dr. P.J.H. Ubachs: Handboek voor de geschiedenes van Limburg, Hilversum, 2000, ISBN 90-6550-097-9, page 380). Limburg developed respectively as a province of Belgium and a province of the Netherlands and through the Benelux agreement from 1958 the border between the two Limburgs became ever more insignificant (Benelux Parlament: Korte geschiedenis van de Benelux, http://www.benelux-parlement.eu/nl/benelux/geschiedenis.asp ). Nevertheless, the Netherlandic province of Limburg has retained a somewhat separate status inside the Netherlands expressed through the recognition of Limburgish as a regional language (Dutch: streektaal) under chapter II of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages since 1997 (see also chapter 10.3).

The Netherlandic demands for territorial compensation in response to Nazi-Germany’s occupation nevertheless resulted into a little post war episode linking the Lower Rhine with the Netherlands. The Selfkant area (the Western part of the present day district of Heinsberg) and the municipality of Elten (today part of the city of Emmerick) were temporary transferred to the Netherlands in 1949 but both territories were returned to Northrhine-Westphalia and as such to the Federal Republic of Germany in 1963 after the Netherlandic government decided that the local population obviously preferred that. A recent investigation by the German cultural researcher Rüdiger Haude showed that despite earlier claims from the German and Netherlandic authorities, the local population in the Selfkant was not unanimously in their preference for a return to Germany, large parts of the population in a variety of villages such as Hoengen was at least indifferent in their preference for becoming a part of the Netherlands or Germany if not even preferred remaining a part of the Netherlands in 1963 (Jean Dohmen: “Selfkanters wilden bij Nederland blijven”, article in the Dutch magazine Elsevier from 9th July 2013, http://www.elsevier.nl/Economie/nieuws/2013/7/Selfkanters-wilden-bij-Nederland-blijven-1306296W/ ).

Haude’s study and findings also correspond to the effects and results of the Belgian annexation of Eupen-Malmedy where the local Rhenish population also appeared to be relatively indifferent towards reunification with Germany or remaining a part of Belgium (see chapter 8.4.). In this context the question could be raised what the consequences had been if the Netherlands had annexed the Lower Rhine north-west of a line Aachen-Neuss, thus roughly following the Benrath Line (see chapter 10.3). Looking at the annexations of Eupen-Malmedy and the temporary one of the Selfkant, much of it obviously had depended on how the local population had been treated by the Netherlandic authorities. As is shown by the example of Eupen-Malmedy ( see chapter 8.4.) and the Selfkant, a lenient and tolerant approach could have lead to acceptance and loyalty towards the Netherlandic state. Considering that by 1945 most of the local inhabitants still spoke Lower Franconian, introduction of Dutch as official language with some transitional facilitations also could have worked and had effectively restored and preserved the Lower Franconian character of the Lower Rhine. An important factor would have been to let the local catholic traditions and customs be maintained and support could have been lent by the province Limburg. The Netherlandic Roman Catholic State Party (RKSP) could have approached its Rhenish sister party, the Centre Party, for a common case in the Netherlands, as did the Catholic People’s Party (CVP) in Belgium in the case of Eupen-Malmedy. It had been likely that it would have been easier to integrate the rural areas of the Lower Rhine than the larger industrial cities such as Mönchengladbach, Krefeld and Neuss since they were already more Germanized and also contained considerable population originating from other parts of Germany. If the same could hold true for other areas claimed in the immediate post-war period such as the Emsland, the Western Munsterland and East Friesland cannot be judged from here and would exceed the limits of this review.
But another consequence could have been a different attitude of the remaining (West-) Germany towards its Western European neighbours if territory had been annexed by its western neighbours. Such a move would have raised suspicions about Western ambitions and could have strengthened nationalistic views again, leading to long lasting animosities between a post-war German state and its Western neighbours. In the shadow of the emerging Cold War, the British and US had a strong interest to integrate their occupational parts of Germany, the later Federal Republic, into a Western Alliance as tight as possible and annexations of German territory by the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark or France could have seriously jeopardized this plans. A fully Western integrated and intact West Germany was much more valuable to them than a crippled unsatisfied West Germany with a prospect for an extreme nationalist revival. Just as was the case in Denmark (see chapter 6.1.), the government of the Netherlands also felt uneasy on embarking on an experiment to annex German territory and “Netherlandize” it, even if the local population in that area still spoke Lower Franconian dialects. Drastic actions such as a complete eviction of the local population, as suggested by some (Herdenking.nl: Nederland in de oorlog - Na de oorlog: Annexatie als schadevergoeding - Het Nederlandse verlangen naar meer „Lebensraum”, http://www.herdenking.nl/nieuw/index.php/nederland/ned-annexatie ) had certainly lead to immense bitterness among the Lower Rhine population and may have jeopardized a peaceful post-war rebuilding of Europe to such a degree that Western European integration of the remaining (West-) German state and lasting peace would have become impossible. It also had been unjust since the left bank Lower Rhine was the area in the German Empire which supported the Nazi Party the least (see chapter 8.6.).

While the border between Limburg and the Lower Rhine as a part of the Federal Republic of Germany remained a dividing factor after WWII, the border between the two provinces of Limburg was effectively reduced to an administrative division after the Benelux Economic Union came into force in 1960 (Benelux Parlament: Korte geschiedenis van de Benelux, http://www.benelux-parlement.eu/nl/benelux/geschiedenis.asp ). However, with increasing European integration and the establishment of the Schengen agreement the significance of this border has also greatly decreased. Free movement across the border is now possible as was before between the Benelux member states and the growing European awareness has lead to a de-facto re-unification of the Lower Rhine with Limburg as part of the European integration process. The “Eurogio Rhein-Waal” has been set up in 1995 as a body to coordinate “employment offices, trade unions, Chambers of Industry and Trade, employers’ associations and Chambers of Craft Trades” along the Dutch-German border and includes the German districts of Wesel, Cleves, Viersen, Neuss, the cities of Duisburg, Krefeld and Mönchengladbach and the Netherlands districts of West-Veluwe, Achterhoek, Arnhem-Nijmegen, Revierengebied, North-East Brabant, North Limburg, Central Limburg, thus bringing together the Lower Rhine as a whole with Limburg, parts of Gelderland and North-Brabant after centuries of increasing alienation (EURES - The European Job Mobility Portal: EUREGIO Rhein-Waal (DE-NL) https://ec.europa.eu/eures/main.jsp?lang=en&acro=eures&catId=56&parentCategory=&orgId=14 ). Another sub-group is the “euregio rhein-maas-nord” which includes Northern Limburg and the districts of Viersen, Neuss, parts of the district Cleves and Heinsberg and the cities of Krefeld and Mönchengladbach and this body has also a cultural and educational agenda (euregio rhein-maas-nord, Mitglieder, http://www.euregio-rmn.de/euregio-rhein-maas-nord/mitglieder.html ). Further to the south, the Euregio Maas-Rijn has been set up in a similar manner and includes the district of Aachen, the southern part of Dutch Limburg and the Belgian provinces of Limburg and Liege incl. the German speaking community in Belgium (Euregio Maas-Rijn, Inleiding, http://www.euregio-nr.com/nl/euregiomr/set_language=nl ).

From a linguistic Lower Franconian point of view, the post war annexation plans almost appears as having been the last chance of preserving the Lower Franconian dialects spoken in the Lower Rhine area and restoring the historical Netherlandic character of the area because a contemporary walk through any Lower Rhine town such as Cleves makes it clear that “Germanization” has thoroughly established itself; no Lower Franconian-Kleverlands is heard anymore on the streets of Cleves, Gelderen or Kevelaer;
Kleverlandish, if maintained, has obviously retreated to be a domestic language of the older generation and the remaining speakers might even avoid speaking it publicly in order to not appear rural, uneducated or backward (The authors observation during a journey through the Lower Rhine in summer 2012). On the other hand, the subsequent state of Northrhine-Westphalia and the Federal Republic of Germany are democratic and liberal states. If the local population of the Lower Rhine had demanded rights and recognition of Lower Franconian and/or Dutch, it is likely that it had been granted by the Northrhine-Westphalia government and the Federal Republic, just as has been the case for the Danish and Frisian minority in Sleswick-Holsten (see chapter 6.1.). But no such demands or movements ever arose so it appears that the vast majority of the local population is content with the status quo even if that means that the native Lower Franconian dialects and with it the awareness of the distinctive character of the region is disappearing.

Looking at the framework of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) from 1992, the Lower Rhine area, in particular the district of Cleves would certainly qualify for assigning part III of the Charter with respect to Dutch but the question remains, is there really demand and popularity for that in the region itself and if yes, how can the demands by such a declaration be implemented? A similar approach as is the case for Danish in South Sleswick seem obvious but appears unrealistic because no organization, schools or other institutions exist to organize Dutch schools or kindergartens as is the case for Danish in South Sleswick. Moreover, since there has not been any Dutch education since the 1840s in the area and knowledge of the local Lower Franconian dialects are effectively limited to the older generation, Dutch has to be learned as a foreign language by the younger generation these days. So setting up a Dutch education system similar to the Danish one in South Sleswick appears rather unrealistic and inappropriate, thus announcing Part III of ECRML for Dutch in the Lower Rhine would more have a symbolic than a real character. But that does not necessarily mean that nothing can be done, Dutch as an optional subject in secondary education, effectively as a foreign language, could and should certainly be introduced to all schools in the Lower Rhine beside French and other languages. Projects to introduce it even at primary level could be considered. Bilingual place-name boards or street name signs could help making the historical heritage more obvious and may also give the younger generation more awareness of the distinctive character of the region. This distinctive character of the region and its heritage should also be part of the education, incl. a basic introduction into “Kleverlands” as part of local history lessons. Finally, all this would also lead to improved border relations with the Netherlands and thus help European integration and last, but not least could also add a special flavour to the area for touristic promotion.

Looking at the development of Flensborg and South Sleswick it appears that in conjunction with the Schengen agreement the introduction of bilingual place-name boards, Danish signs in Flensborg and the availability of local Danish speaking personal did not harm the economy, rather to the contrary when it comes to trade (Lothar Raasch, IHK Flensburg: Bedeutung der Käuferströme - Besonderheiten der Grenzhandelsgeschäfte, 24. Mai 2012, 14.15 Uhr, RBZ-Fachtagung, Flensburg, Wirtschaftsschule, http://www.hla.flensburg.de/projekte/schule/fachtagung-euroll-2012/01-Kaeuferstroeme-IHK-Flensburg-Raasch.pdf ). The city of Cleves would be in a very similar position as Flensborg is and could profit from such initiatives as having taken place in Flensborg and therefore applying for a minority status of Dutch-Kleverlands would probably rather enhance the local economy than harm it.

9.1. Konrad Adenauer’s role

Konrad Adenauer was born on January 5, 1876, in Cologne. His father, Konrad sr., was a clerical civil servant, and his mother, née Helene Scharfenberg, had also been brought up in a civil servant's family. He
was best known for becoming the first chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949, a post he retained until 1963 when he stepped down, aged 87. He became a member of the catholic Centre Party in 1906 and was a founding member of the Christian-Democratic Union (CDU) in 1946. Having studied law before, he quickly made a career through party and family contacts which made him the mayor of Cologne in 1917, thus during WWI (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Biography of Konrad Adenauer, http://www.kas.de/wf/en/71.3717/). After the German surrender in 1918 Adenauer became aware of French ambitions, to annex the left bank of the Rhineland, and believed that creation of a separate Rhenish or West German federal state could serve as a buffer to satisfy French ambitions and security demands while retaining the links to the German Empire (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Biography of Konrad Adenauer, http://www.kas.de/wf/en/71.3717/, see also chapter 8.4.). He nevertheless had contact to separatist groups (see chapter 8.4) at the beginning of the 1920s which some interpreted as him being a separatist, a view he denied. In how far Adenauer cooperated with separatists and shared some of their views is difficult to determine, he initiated the Centre Party declaration from December 1918 which demanded the creation of a Rhenish-Westphalian state separate from Prussia but inside the German Empire (see chapter 8.5.) but later played this down as means to keep the Rhineland for Germany against French ambitions (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Biography of Konrad Adenauer, http://www.kas.de/wf/en/71.3717/, see also chapter 8.4.).

But in this context it has to be taken in account that demands for Rhenish self determination have existed ever since the French revolution (Cisrhenanians, see chapter 8.1.). While this movement was initially a liberal and democratically minded one, a component defending Catholicism was added after the Rhineland was annexed by protestant dominated Prussia in accordance to the Vienna congress in 1815. This conjunction became somewhat comparable to the movement which rebelled against the absolutist rule of the protestant Netherlandic King in the southern and catholic dominated parts of the Netherlandic Kingdom which became subsequently Belgium in 1830. Although many saw this as a model in the Rhineland (see chapter 8.1.), the Prussian grip on the Rhineland never allowed for such uprisings but tolerated, nevertheless, the establishment of the Centre Party after some modest constitutional reforms in Prussia and the German Empire in 1870 (see chapter 8.2.). Besides Catholicism, the Centre Party became also regarded as a voice for the interests of the Rhineland (where it had its strongest backing) in Prussia and the German Empire. How far Adenauer was influenced or supported ideas for Rhenish self-determination is not clear but it may have made him open for alternative considerations once French annexation loomed over the Rhineland after WWI. In his own words he saw himself definitely as a German (Konrad Adenauer: Erinnerungen 1945-1953, Stuttgart 1965, ISBN 3 421 01140 0., http://www.konrad-adenauer.de/files/7613/8746/5768/Adenauer_Erinnerungen.pdf, page 41). and thus did not foster Rhenish separatism but he was neither a patriotic Prussian citizen nor a German nationalist, he set the right and freedom of the individual at the highest value. He also felt as a European from early on and suggested the creation of the United States of Europe immediately after WWII as a means to secure lasting peace in Western Europe (Konrad Adenauer: Erinnerungen 1945-1953, Stuttgart 1965, ISBN 3 421 01140 0., http://www.konrad-adenauer.de/files/7613/8746/5768/Adenauer_Erinnerungen.pdf, page 41). Adenauer acted often as a pragmatist who could consider a separate Rhenish Republic if this would prove to be the most realistic and constructive option for a peaceful post-WWI European order. But once it proved not to be viable he simply chose to work together with the Prussian authorities instead.

During the height of the economic crisis at the beginning of the 1930, Adenauer tried to convince the German chancellor Heinrich Brüning, a fellow Centre Party member, to set up a huge employment program in order to save democracy but was dismissed by Brüning who declared the idea as “very overambitious and unrealistic” (Golo Mann: Deutsche Geschichte des 19. Und 20. Jahrhunderts, Frankfurt, 1966, ISBN 3 10 34 7901 8, page 993). After the Nazi-take over in 1933 Adenauer was dismissed as mayor of Cologne and effectively retired from politics during the Nazi period. In 1944 he was arrested for a few months after the failed attempt on Hitler’s life by Graf von Stauffenberg for his

Although Adenauer’s support towards Rhenish separatism was certainly limited and he would refrain from Rhenish patriotism openly, he often enough appeared as a Rhenish patriot nevertheless. He claimed that the Nazis found the strongest resistance in those areas in Germany “which were least impacted by the teachings of Karl Marx”. Whether this is true can certainly be disputed *1) but considering the fact that the NSdAP had always the lowest share of votes in the Rhineland in compare to the rest of Germany this statement is exposing some patriotism towards the Rhineland (Konrad Adenauer: Erinnerungen 1945-1953, Stuttgart 1965, ISBN 3 421 01140 0., http://www.konrad-adenauer.de/files/7613/8746/5768/Adenauer_Erinnerungen.pdf, page 45). He, again, betrayed a kind of Rhenish patriotism when he proclaimed that the new state of Northrhine-Westphalia will act as guarantee that war will never be provoked from German territory again due to the “views of its inhabitants” (>Rhinelanders) and the economic ties to its western neighbours which will lead to a close economic collaboration with France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and England (Konrad Adenauer: Erinnerungen 1945-1953, Stuttgart 1965, ISBN 3 421 01140 0., http://www.konrad-adenauer.de/files/7613/8746/5768/Adenauer_Erinnerungen.pdf, page 100). On the same page he also betrays his preference for catholic conservative views when he believed that the, in his eyes, conservative population of the Rhineland will act as a counterpart to socialist-communist ambitions from the population in the Ruhr valley in the new state of Northrhine-Westphalia. Through his conservatism he also became acceptable to those who were leaning further to the right, including the old Nazis, but this also created strong criticism (by e.g. his Cologne compatriot and later Nobel-literatur price winner Heinrich Böll) and his bourgeois-conservative positions appeared also to have impacted the West German society in the immediate post war period.

According to Adenauer, he himself did not have any plans of a new state in the Western part of Germany and the idea of the state of Northrhine-Westphalia was a complete British construction which he, nevertheless, approved of in contrast to K. Schumacher when both were confronted with the plan by the British authorities on 15th July 1946 in Berlin. Whether he really did not have any plans for a new state in the Western part of Germany may be disputable, in October 1945 he rejected the formation of a Rhine-Ruhr state when being questioned by a British newspaper about his opinion, but he also suggested that such a state should then be economically merged with France and Belgium, contradicting somewhat his initial statement (Konrad Adenauer: Erinnerungen 1945-1953, Stuttgart 1965, ISBN 3 421 01140 0., http://www.konrad-adenauer.de/files/7613/8746/5768/Adenauer_Erinnerungen.pdf, page 35). One also has to take into account that Adenauer as mayor of Cologne had to work closely with the British authorities during the Rhineland occupation after WW1 since the city of Cologne’s occupation was a British responsibility (see also chapter 8.4.) so he and his post WWI ideas of a Rhenish-Westphalian or West German Republic may not have been unknown to the British authorities.

He claimed the Rhenish city of Bonn was chosen of the seat of government for the Federal Republic of Germany purely for practical reasons (Konrad Adenauer: Erinnerungen 1945-1953, Stuttgart 1965, ISBN 3 421 01140 0., http://www.konrad-adenauer.de/files/7613/8746/5768/Adenauer_Erinnerungen.pdf, page 173) but it is difficult to escape the suspicion that he vigorously promoted it not only because it was close to his residence in Rhöndorf but also because he was convinced that the further West the power of a new Germany was based (thus the Rhineland) the more likely this new Germany will develop into a western orientated democracy.
As mentioned above, Adenauer opposed socialism and saw in the Soviet Union the biggest threat to peace and freedom after WWII but he, nevertheless, did not reject the welfare state as long as it respected the right and freedom of the individual. His main criticism and concern towards Socialism was its tendency to limit the freedom of the individual, not its welfare ambitions (Konrad Adenauer: Erinnerungen 1945-1953, Stuttgart 1965. ISBN 3 421 01140 0., http://www.konrad-adenauer.de/files/7613/8746/5768/Adenauer_Erinnerungen.pdf, page 45).

Ironically, it was Adenauer’s welfare state which, in line with similar welfare states in Western Europe, cracked those conservative values open. The new opportunities given to the lower classes in the postwar welfare states created a new dynamic which resulted in cultural turnarounds by the end of the 1960s and brought new and global ideas to Western Europe including a critical view of European and German history.

In general, it is difficult to anticipate Adenauer’s ambitions, while he denied having taken initiative in many historic events it also appears that he did not consider them from happening and may have even secretly hoped for them to happen. A good example is a decisive meeting of CDU/CSU leaders in Rhöndorf in August 1949 where Adenauer raised the question who may become the first West German chancellor. Adenauer did not put himself forward and claimed he was surprised when one participant interrupted him and suggested him as chancellor. But once the other participants appeared to agree he readily accepted and announced that he had already consulted his doctor whether he, at his age, could still take on such a role. (Konrad Adenauer: Erinnerungen 1945-1953, Stuttgart 1965. ISBN 3 421 01140 0., http://www.konrad-adenauer.de/files/7613/8746/5768/Adenauer_Erinnerungen.pdf, page 228). So obviously he was not so surprised about the suggestion and it was likely he secretly expected to and wanted to take over this role himself.

Golo Mann describes Adenauer as somebody who “felt no sympathy for Germany’s feudal, royal, Prussian and militaristic past”. In his speeches he never mentioned the past and if he had a tendency to “forgive Hitler’s servants and use the bureaucratic skillful ones again he did not do this out of sympathies for their past but only because the present situation and practicality interested him” (Golo Mann: Deutsche Geschichte des 19. Und 20. Jahrhunderts, Frankfurt, 1966, ISBN 3 10 34 7901 8, page 992).

Adenauer’s initial main political rival, the social-democratic leader Kurt Schumacher, described Adenauer as having “a very reserved relation to the truth and honesty” (Golo Mann: Deutsche Geschichte des 19. Und 20. Jahrhunderts, Frankfurt, 1966, ISBN 3 10 34 7901 8, page 992). His controversial characteristics and conservative views are also highlighted by Cologne born author and Nobel Prize in Literature winner Heinrich Böll (who many saw as Adenauer’s Rhenish counterpart) in his highly critical evaluation of Adenauer’s “Erinnerungen” (Der Spiegel: Article from 01.12.1965: Keine so schlechte Quelle, Heinrich Böll über Konrad Adenauers "Erinnerungen 1945-1953”). Böll always contested Adenauer but it was not for his Rhenish patriotism, Böll himself greatly sympathized with the Rhenish separatist and republican ideas as is documented in his 1971 novel “Group Portrait with Lady” (Page 193/194), it was for Adenauer’s conservatism, his lenience towards former Nazis, for labelling socialism generally as about as dangerous and inhumane as national-socialism and his dry pragmatism to allow a (West-) German army to be formed again only 10 years after the end of the Nazi-German provoked WWII. But in 1975, eight years after Adenauer’s death, Böll also attested that "Adenauer may have achieved more (...) than I am able to acknowledge and possibly, he had only done one major political error: That he had governed for too long and with senile maliciousness reduced his own greatness into pettiness“ (Süddeutsche Zeitung, Article by Heribert Prantl from 17th May 2010: „60 Jahre BRD“, chapter „Traurigkeit und Zorn“, http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/jahre-brd-das-deutsche-wunder-1.386680-2).
Major issues of criticism in general formed his lenient treatment of former Nazi-members or government officials, some of them he even included into his closest circle of advisors as e.g., secretary of state Hans Globke, who participated in formulating a comment to the anti-semitic Nuremberg laws in 1935 and also coded the Jewish legislation for Slowakia in 1939 which effectively stripped the Jews of their civil rights (Stiftung Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Lebendige Museum Online, Biographien: Hans Globke, http://www.wbg.de/lemo/html/biographien/GlobkeHans/). Adenauer was also heavily criticized for his determined initiative to re-arm the Federal Republic of Germany only 10 years after the end of WWII (Deutschlandradio Kultur: Kalenderblatt / Archiv / Beitrag vom 12.11.2005, Wiederbewaffnung der Bundesrepublik, http://www.deutschlandradiokultur.de/wiederbewaffnung-der-bundesrepublik.932.de.html?dram:article_id=129160) and his authoritarian style which conflicted with his claim to promote freedom and democracy (Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR): Stichtag: 5. Januar 1876 - Adenauer wird geboren: Autoritärer Demokrat, http://www1.wdr.de/themen/archiv/stichtag/stichtag5352.html).

Adenauer’s mémoires “Erinnerungen” appear mainly as serving a personal confirmation of doing the right thing as West German chancellor and lending his decisive influence to the Basic Law. But considering his character as described above it is not even clear whether the transitional character of the Basic Law was not in his mind so transitional. The Basic Law has even survived the integration of East Germany into the Federal Republic and is still in force while a proper German constitution has yet to be drawn up and may never appear because of the success of the Basic Law.

Despite all of Adenauer’s contradictions, shortcomings and reluctance towards progressive ideas, looking at the development of Northrhine–Westphalia and the Federal Republic of Germany in retrospect it appears nevertheless that “his” Federal Republic of Germany definitely departed from the nationalistic excesses of the past and became a liberal democracy fully integrated in the “Western World” (Northern America and Western Europe) after WWII. According to Golo Mann, there was a strong sense for “having lost a home” in the German population after WWII and a desire to replace the lost national home through a broader, European one and Adenauer responded to this by having each successful initiative to enhance the autonomy of the Federal Republic be followed by an even tighter incorporation into Western Europe or bond to the US (Golo Mann: Deutsche Geschichte des 19. Und 20. Jahrhunderts, Frankfurt, 1966, ISBN 3 10 34 7901 8, pages 996/997). The incorporation into the Western world was neither in doubt at anytime during the collapse of the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) and the subsequent re-unification in form of the re-established East German states joining the Federal Republic. In fact, the process of Western integration was extended towards Eastern Europe after the Warsaw Pact collapsed and the Eastern European states were free to associate themselves in accordance to their newly established democratic decision process. In addition, although the establishment of Northrhine-Westphalia was on British initiative, he immediately agreed to the plan and thus enabled and promoted Rhenish (and Westphalian) self-determination for the first time in history after all previous attempts failed since 1797. It is somewhat ironic that Adenauer, who rejected unilateral Rhenish activism after WWI, achieved later what the Rhenish separatist leader Dorten aimed at already in 1919 and 1923: The establishment of a Rhenish Republic as an autonomous federal German state (as a Northrhine-Westphalia) but it fell to him once the British authorities, in contrast to 1918, concluded in the wake of the a-rising cold war, that Rhenish autonomy and a West-German orientation could not only safeguard a peaceful post-war order in Western Europe but also integrate the Western parts of the defunct German Empire into the Western alliance.

*1) Looking at the election results of the late Weimar republic it does not necessarily prove Adenauer’s point, it shows however that support for the NSdAP was less in catholic dominated areas than in protestant-Lutheran ones but in some predominantly protestants areas such as the working class quarters of Hamburg which traditionally supported the socialist parties, the NSdAP did neither succeed as well as
they did in rural areas which were by default rather conservative and anti-socialist. In socialist-dominated Hamburg and Berlin the share of votes for the NSdAP in Nov. 1932 was respectively “only” 27.2% and 22.5%, in centre-party dominated Catholic-Rhenanian district Koblenz-Trier it was 26.1% and in Upper Bavaria 24.6% so they hardly differed which disproves Adenauer’s claim. Thus, the socialist areas of Hamburg and Berlin were indeed strongholds of anti-nazi sentiment (Source: http://www.wahlen-in-deutschland.de/awrtw.htm) as well.

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