



German History in Documents and Images

Volume 8. Occupation and the Emergence of Two States, 1945-1961
OMGUS Survey of German Opinions on the Organization of Europe (August 1947)

It became evident as early as August 1947 that Germany would only be able to attain greater economic and political sovereignty within the framework of new European structures. Thus, the organization of Europe met with wide support among Germans in the American occupation zone. The majority welcomed cooperation with all European states except the Soviet Union. And while most Germans did not yet know the details, they also had a positive view of the Marshall Plan, which held out the prospect of extensive American aid for the reconstruction of Europe's economies.

German Opinions Regarding the Organization of Europe

Sample: 3,400 people living in the American Zone and the American and British Sectors of Berlin.

Interviewing dates: August 1947. (5 pp.)

This report deals with German reactions to two issues involved in the possible organization of Europe: a "United States of Europe," and the Marshall Plan.

On many issues of the day, the German people were apathetic, resigned, or persistently deluded. On some issues, however, such as turning to the west for economic and world leadership, their opinions were crystallized in positive directions. Regarding intra-European matters, their orientation was also largely western.

Asked to select from a checklist of 23 countries those which they thought should become part of a European nation, majorities of varying degrees voted to include each of the countries named except the Soviet Union, for which 38 per cent of the AMZON respondents voted.

In this climate of opinion the Marshall Plan could not fail to elicit high approval. In August 1947, however, knowledge of the plan was neither extensive nor definite. Only 47 per cent claimed to have heard of it, and the amount of information held by about half of this group was extremely shaky. Not unexpectedly, educational background had a great deal to do with the level of information. After a brief description of the plan, all those interviewed were asked whether they thought it would solve Europe's economic difficulties; a large majority in AMZON (78%) and even more West Berliners (88%) thought it would. Separate population groups did not differ

significantly in their estimation of the possibilities of working out Secretary of State Marshall's proposal. There was nonetheless one telling factor that differentiated those expressing confidence in the plan from those who did not. Among the confident, 75 per cent were convinced that the United States would have the greatest influence on world affairs during the next decade and only 12 per cent thought that the Soviet Union would play this dominant role. Those expressing skepticism about the Marshall Plan were much more likely than the confident to believe that the Soviet role would be dominant (27%) and less often expected American leadership (58%).

Source: A. J. and R. L. Merritt, *Public Opinion in Occupied Germany. The OMGUS Surveys*. Urbana, IL, 1970, pp. 172-73.