

OMGUS Survey of Expectations for the Marshall Plan (March 1948)

Abstract

In a June 1947 speech at Harvard University, U.S. Secretary of State George C. Marshall outlined his plan for a far-reaching aid program for the European economy. In the spring of 1948, two-thirds of Germans in the American occupation zone were aware of the plan, and the overwhelming majority had positive expectations. Its chances of success, however, were viewed with skepticism, and about half of those polled did not believe that the aid would be sufficient. Moreover, only a minority assumed that Americans were genuinely interested in helping Europeans. Eighty percent believed that the purpose was to keep them from turning to Communism.

Source

The Marshall Plan in Prospect

Sample: 3,003 adults in the American Zone.

Interviewing dates: March 1948. (5 pp.)

In August 1947 nearly half (47%) of a representative cross-section of adults in the American Zone said that they had heard of the Marshall Plan. By March 1948, six months later, 69 per cent claimed to know about it. Among those who had heard of it, 75 per cent were in favor of it and 85 per cent thought that it would have a favorable effect upon living conditions. About twice as many people thought that the chances for success were poor (13%) or nonexistent (1%) as believed the chances were very high (6%); most people thought they were only high (36%) or just fair (32%).

Many people in AMZON (53%) felt that American aid would not be sufficient; in West Berlin the figure was even higher, at 59 per cent. Women (27%) were less confident of the sufficiency of American aid than men (35%), the young less so than the old. People whose education or status was low tended, also, to be slightly more pessimistic than those with more education or higher status.

Among those who had heard of the Marshall Plan, 80 per cent felt it had been set up to help keep western Europe from turning communist; the second most frequently chosen reason (44%) was America's sincere desire to help Europe; 29 per cent thought it was to ensure allies in case of war with the Soviet Union; and about the same number (25%) said it was a way for the United States to dump goods resulting from overproduction. The percentages of young people who accepted American intentions as sincere (37%) was smaller than it was among the middle-aged (45%) or among those over 50 (51%). Attitudes of confidence that the plan would be carried out were strongly related to the belief in the sincerity of American motives.

Source: A. J. and R. L. Merritt, *Public Opinion in Occupied Germany. The OMGUS Surveys*. Urbana, IL, 1970, pp. 216–17.

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