

U.S. Report on the Agreement to Unite the British and American Occupation Zones (1948)

Abstract

This clip is taken from the newsreel series “March of Time,” which was produced in the United States by Time, Inc. These newsreels were shown in movie theaters before a feature film and combined documentary footage with interviews and dramatizations. Produced in 1948, this newsreel clip discusses the agreement between Great Britain and the United States to unify their respective occupation zones in order to stimulate their economies. The agreement, which came into effect on January 1, 1947, formulated conditions for the potential inclusion of the Soviet zone in a way that was guaranteed to fail, contrary to what the narration here suggests. Thus, the agreement which created the “Bizonie” can be said to have paved the way for Germany’s eventual division.

Source

/By late 1946, it had become clear to Washington that Germany's tardy recovery was jeopardizing the whole economic future of Europe. And to Secretary Byrnes, it was clear that some start must be made toward unifying Germany with or without the agreement of France and Russia. Representatives of Great Britain and the U.S. laid down a unification plan for their two zones as advocated by General Clay.

/Clay: "The United States is spending \$200 million a year in supporting the German economy. Britain is spending twice as much. By unifying the two zones and investing a billion dollars jointly to get the German economy functioning again, we can have the whole area self-supporting within three years. That may seem like a lot of money, but I can assure you, it will pay us in the end."

/The British and Americans were confident that this agreement could induce Russia to alter its attitude of opposition to unification. For necessary as were the agricultural resources of the Russian zone to the British and Americans, even more desirable to Russia were the industrial resources of the Ruhr. On sharing these depends Russia's only hope of collecting the huge annual reparations which he has claimed.

/That unifying Germany and restoring its industrial capacity may restore its war potential, the Allies are aware. But at least America is resolved to continue the occupation until the Germans give conclusive evidence of regeneration, if necessary for 40 years.

Source: “March of Time,” Vol. 13 No. 6, 1948. National Archives and Records Administration. NAID: 23820

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