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Benoordenhoutseweg 6
The Hague

October 21, 1949

Drs. E. H. van der Beugel
Ministry of Economic Affairs
Smidswater 2
The Hague

Dear Ernst:

Enclosed is a summary report of the public opinion poll on the Marshall Plan in the Netherlands. This is not the complete report. I have omitted much of the material about informational media which is of interest mainly to Max Weiglas and myself. However, should you be interested in seeing the complete report, I will be most happy to lend it to you on my return from Paris next Thursday.

Kindest regards.

Sincerely,

Eugene Kachlis
Information Officer

ER:rd

Encl.

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FROM: Eugene Rachlis
Information Officer
ECA Mission to the Netherlands

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Findings of a survey on the
Marshall Plan in the
Netherlands

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These are the results of a public opinion survey in Holland planned and directed by Dr. Eric STERN, Foreign Opinion and Market Research, New York and Zurich, on behalf of the Zurich office. Sampling operations, field work and tabulations were carried out by its Dutch affiliate Nederlandse Stichting voor Statistiek in the Hague. A cross-section of the adult population 18 years and over, represented by 1600 personal interviews was used. Interviewing took place during the last third of June. All tables presenting the total population are based on the total of 1600 cases, while those dealing with the informed public are on a smaller base, since questions of this type could only be asked from those who had previously qualified for intelligently answering. Correspondingly the probable statistical error varies between ± 4 and $\pm 6\%$ for the totals, depending on their size.

Most of the breakdowns are still of sufficient size to be of a high validity. Some of the groups, however, became so small, due to the composition of the population, that results reported about them should be considered only as indicative and not as reliable numerical information. This is particularly true for those with an academic education (35), farmers (59) and farm workers (51). Among those two last named groups particularly the number of those sufficiently informed has become very small.

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The Marshall Plan ranks high among the topics people are interested in. Out of 1600 questioned only 215 (14%) had so little knowledge about the Marshall Plan that we could not go on questioning them. This totally uninformed group contains 77% women, 30% of the oldest age-group. Fourteen percent of these 215 people read no newspapers at all. Twenty percent read only local newspapers. The largest single group (27%) are readers of Roman Catholic papers, 18% read neutral newspapers. The remainder are readers of Rightist or Socialist papers. The total readership of communist and liberal papers is very small; correspondingly their participation in this uninformed group is also insignificant.

In general the hard core of resistance to the Marshall Plan is dwindlingly small. Out of a cross-section of 1600 we find 30 or not quite 2% readers of Communist newspapers. Nevertheless, we find 6% or three times as many as admit reading communist papers who think the Marshall Plan is a bad thing for Holland, 12% who feel it has its good and its bad sides.

The level of information in general is quite high. As we said, 87% have some information. Among these the amount of knowledge is higher than this writer, at least, would have expected. Among those questioned 97% say correctly that Holland is a participating nation, Belgium: 93%, England: 79%. Ninety six percent know that Russia does not participate and 69% know that a small and remote country like Rumania does not. More than half of these know that to these countries Marshall Plan help was not refused but that they decided to stay out.

Even on technical matters we find a rather high percentage of informed people. Seventy percent know that a person or a firm getting something under the Marshall Plan has to pay for it. The least informed on this matter are women and the economically weak. One strange fact is that among those not in favor of the Plan we find an extremely high percentage (92%) who know the right answer to this question. Among the total answering this question correctly 43% even know about the existence of "counterpart funds", 27% believe that payments for such goods go back to the U.S. and 30% don't know what is done with the money. (On this subquestion opponents of the plan are not so different from friends - 45% of the friends know that such money stays in Holland, while 34% of the opponents of the plan know that). Thus, to the most involved technical question we asked (use of counterpart funds) still 26% of the total population are fully informed.

What is the reason for likes and dislikes of the Marshall Plan? One quarter of the reasons for liking the plan are in the form "without it we'd be lost", about one half formulate it in the more egotistic way "better food and no rationing" and "we can have jobs". About one fifth gives some "expert" economic reasoning. One percent only mentions spontaneously that the plan will lead to greater economic unity in Europe or the World.

The reasons for opposing it are to one quarter "losing our independence", one quarter "American competition" or "depression", one fifth is afraid of "debts we have to pay somehow sometime" and 9% of those opposed say "we are sold out to the capitalistic system". Thus 1.3% of the total population repeats the outright communist slogans of either looming depression or a sell-out to capitalism. The 2.7 other percent opposing the plan talk either of lost independence or American competition.

The wavering ones who see good and bad sides to it are much more instructive. Two-thirds of them are bothered by the thought that there are strings attached to this too beautiful thing! "Some way we'll have to pay for it and I don't know what and how." This seems to be the number one point for future information (and signs for this can be seen all the way through the tables). It is necessary to get across clearly and make completely plausible Americans reasons for doing it.

If we analyse the contents of the attitude questions it becomes quite clear that there is a considerable amount of insecurity about America's motives. A full 36% think we are sending money and material in order to dominate and influence politics and business of the country, and the less people know about the plan the more they believe this. Strangely enough this conception is quite rampant in the big cities and among the wealthiest. No doubt, the Communists are singing this tune, but also the readers of the Rightist and the Labour Press.

When we give respondents an opportunity to choose two out of 7 motives we had named as possible American reasons to help Europe, the one outstanding vote goes towards "preventing communism". Fifty eight percent of all respondents who don't evade the question hold this belief. It is followed by the belief that America does it to get rid of surpluses caused by its overproduction (37%) and to acquire allies in case of a future war (32%). Twenty-three percent of the answers indicate that America is honestly anxious to help and does so for unselfish reasons. Four percent of the answers indicate America wants to export its own system of capitalism and 9% of the answers chosen say it wants to dominate Europe. Since to this question people are allowed two choices we are with these last two answers back at about 100 people using the current communistic slogans, or about three times the number of people who consider the Marshall Plan as not being a blessing for Holland. It seems easier to adopt slogans than a complete party doctrine. Some contradiction with this attitude seems to be shown by the high percentage answering "America does it to get rid of its overproduction". However the group answering thus is by no means composed of leftists only. Our Dutch analysts think that in the Dutch Calvinistic tradition this is considered a perfectly legitimate reason for the Marshall Plan and is not meant in the sense of disapproval.

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In the question of what America is wanting to do, the pattern is quite similar. Roughly two out of ten think the U.S. will let them do with the money and materials whatever Holland thinks best, two out of ten think America will in some way keep control of the use, four out of ten think America will thus control Dutch business and politics. In this question we gave an opportunity to mention as a goal of the Marshall Plan Inter-European Cooperation. Slightly more than one out of ten (exactly 14.6% of those asked) takes advantage of this opportunity. Women and the economically weak are least inclined to do so. But the pattern of information on OEEC is on a much lower level -- obviously similar to that on the Marshall Plan. Of those well informed 26% take the opportunity of mentioning European unity, of the medium informed 19%, of the little informed 13% do so. The totally uninformed could not be asked the question. However, among the "undetermined" who in general comparison are quite similar to the uninformed, this percentage drops to 4%. There is definitely quite little awareness of the role the Marshall Plan plays in fostering European cooperation.

In order to get a transition to the media part of our questionnaire, we included one question, asking for respondent's own appraisal of his interest in Marshall Plan information. Obviously these answers are quite subjective, contain a lot of prestige influence and readiness to give the sponsor the answer he likes to hear. In table 26 we give the results. They should be read with some caution, but -- their breakdown being about what could be expected -- they seem to be at least a good indication. Thirty-eight percent classify themselves as highly interested, 44% as mildly interested, while 12% state outright that they are not interested. This represents 149 people of whom 60 are women, 126 are people with less than 8 years of education. These probably mean to say that they are afraid they won't understand what it was all about. This interpretation is to a certain degree confirmed by the answers we received from those who are interested. Over 10% of these when asked to name things they want to know, flatly said "make it simpler and comprehensible to a normal person." On the other end of the scale over one quarter of the respondents ask for more details, and one quarter of them want to know "what are the strings attached to it?" This question was put to those only who wanted more information. However, nearly one-half of all respondents (46%) are satisfied and think they get enough information. Only 3% think there is already too much talk about it. (Ten percent of all those who say this are readers of communist papers, 25% are readers of the local press only. Of this same group only 10% are well informed on Marshall Plan matters while over 50% are nearly or completely uninformed.)

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The one thing that this survey shows as being most needed to obtain more cooperative spirit is to convince the Dutch people of the Marshall Plan's honest intentions and how it works, and to free them of the fear of secret clauses and hidden later obligations.