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OMGUS Survey on German Attitudes toward Corporal Punishment (no date)

After the war, opinion surveys in the American zone not only sought to examine current political and economic questions but also tried to gather information on the German “national character.” Investigating views on corporal punishment in schools made it possible to draw conclusions about Germans’ authoritarian attitude. About two-thirds of the Germans in the American occupation zone favored corporal punishment, although it had already been abolished.

German Attitudes toward Corporal Punishment

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

Interviewing dates: not specified. (5 pp.)

Most German adults living in the American Zone (78%) and in the American and British Sectors of Berlin (66%) were either uninformed or misinformed on whether corporal punishment was permitted in German schools. (Although there was no directive against such punishment, in practice it did not exist in AMZON schools.)

Large majorities (65%) in AMZON and a smaller majority of 51 per cent in West Berlin approved granting teachers the right to whip or beat “very disobedient and very unruly children.” Significantly, however, those who opposed (30%) tended to hold their opinion more strongly than proponents: 54 per cent of the former group in AMZON said that their feeling was very strong whereas only 48 per cent of those favoring corporal punishment said that their opinion was very strong; comparable figures in West Berlin were 61 and 46 per cent, respectively.

Parents gave high approval to corporal punishment in the schools regardless of whether their children were in or out of school (between 62 and 69 per cent). Only three groups in the AMZON population failed to register majority approval of the proposal to permit corporal punishment: the highly educated, communist party affiliates, and those with no church affiliation. Among CDU/CSU followers, those with seven years or less of schooling, women, Catholics, those who were never affiliated with the NSDAP, and small town people there were more proponents of corporal punishment than among their counterpart groups.

Source: A. J. and R. L. Merritt, *Public Opinion in Occupied Germany. The OMGUS Surveys*. Urbana, IL, 1970, pp. 169-70.