PUBLIC OPINION NEWS SERVICE

For Release Wednesday, Sept. 27

U. S. Public Skeptical of Foreign News Reports; Poll Finds Awareness of Propaganda

Majority Discount German Version of Athenia

Propaganda has grown to be one of the most powerful weapons of modern warfare—useful both in demoralizing enemy forces and in influencing the opinion of neutrals. How aware is the American public that propaganda is being used in the present war, and how effective has that propaganda been so far? The following survey throws light on these questions.

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PRINCETON, N. J., Sept. 26.—The overwhelming majority of American voters are aware that propaganda is being used by the belligerents in the present European war and say they are not ready to place complete confidence in the statements and explanations of either the Allied powers or Germany at the present time.

This critical attitude is revealed in a national survey just completed by the American Institute of Public Opinion. The results show, however, that while the majority do not have full confidence in the reports from either side, there is a greater tendency to believe the statements of England and France than the statements of Germany—despite Hitler's boasts of the power of German propaganda. This tendency may possibly be accounted for by the fact that most Americans have in many surveys been found sympathetic with the Allied cause in the present struggle.

The public's attitude is shown in the replies to three survey questions—two of a general nature and one a specific question dealing with the sinking of the Athenia.

The British have blamed the Athenia disaster on a torpedo from a U-boat. The German press, on the other hand, denied the torpedoing and even suggested that the passenger liner was sunk by the British in order to arouse anti-German sentiment. The attitude of American voters toward this controversy is as follows:

"The British say that the trans-Atlantic liner Athenia was sunk by a German submarine. The Germans say they did not sink it. Do you believe the Germans sank the Athenia?"

Germans Sank It	**60%**
Germans Didn't Sink It	**9**
No Opinion	**31**

The Battle of Propaganda



Survivors of the S.S. Athenia and contrasting British and German versions as to the cause of the disaster. A national survey shows that the American public, while discounting the German denials that the Athenia was torpedoed by a U-boat, is on the look-out for propaganda from both sides and is not willing to place complete faith in European war reports. Even the above photograph had to be passed by a British censor before it could be released.

Highly Skeptical of German Reports

BUT this does not mean that the public is completely hospitable to the statements and reports from the Allied side. The other two questions in the Institute survey show that only a small handful of voters say they have "complete confidence" in the news from England and France. As many as 30 per cent declare they have "no confidence" in Allied reports, while the rest say they have only "some confidence." As for German statements and reports, a large majority of American voters — approximately two-thirds—declare they have no faith in what the Reich says.

"Do you have confidence in the news from Germany at the present time?"

Yes, Complete Confidence	**1%**
Yes, Some Confidence	**33**
No Confidence	**66**

"Do you have confidence in the news from England and France at the present time?"

Yes, Complete Confidence	**8%**
Yes, Some Confidence	**62**
No Confidence	**30**

Only one voter in every 20 (5 per cent), on the average, said he had no opinion on these questions.

The survey found only minor differences in attitude among various groups of the population. The lower income voters, with presumably fewer educational advantages than the voters of wealthier homes, were no more disposed to believe the reports from abroad than the upper income voters. In fact, slightly more skepticism was found in the lowest economic levels.

As for age groups, voters over 50 were found to have a little less faith than other age groups in the reports from Germany — perhaps because of their recollections of the last war—but slightly more faith in the news from England and France.