Germany's Role in World Markets

Following are adapted excerpts of an address by Mr. N. H. Collisson, ECA Deputy Special Representative for Western Germany, at the opening of the ERP Export Show in Munich July 7:

The ERP export show in Munich where more than 100 Bavarian firms are represented, is an outstanding display of the type of export goods which roll from multifarious production lines. German goods are in demand throughout Europe and in other sections of the commercial world. But this fact should not lull one into believing that you have but to produce and the seller will appear automatically at your doorstep. The harsh economic facts of this highly competitive world would soon disillusion him who stands and waits. The world will not beat a path to the German door. Quite to the contrary, The German must get out and sell his goods in just the same manner as do the British, the French and the others who are seeking to increase their export trade.

One of the greater tasks facing German exporters and manufacturers is to bring their prices in line. It is easy to point out the problem. It is not easy to offer a solution. There are many here in Germany who blame their troubles upon the currency conversion rate of the D-Mark. But no amount of currency adjustment can overcome some of the more fundamental economic facts which cause high prices. Production costs must be tailored to a reasonable selling price rather than the selling price adjusted to production costs. New methods of production must be studied by the German manufacturer. Experts should go to other European lands and to America to study the newest, most up-to-date production methods. Conversely, European experts and American engineers should come to Germany to help. In this exchange of technical knowledge the Marshall Plan is ready to help under its technical assistance program, which envisions the exchange of industrial knowledge among the participating countries.

Closely allied to the problem of making goods at a price for which they can be sold is the problem of diversifying trade among the nations of the world. A ready flow of goods, not merely between two nations but among all countries must be achieved if the goals of the Marshall Plan are to be reached. Inherent in this multilateralization of commerce are the unencumbered exchange of currencies, the removal of customs barriers and traffic, elimination of disparities between domestic and export prices, and a termination of monopolistic practices, whether by nations or individuals.

None of these objectives can be attained by other than a common approach to these continental obstacles by the entire community of Marshall Plan nations. Narrow, selfish, nationalistic thinking cannot meet the problem of European recovery. There must be a wholehearted common cooperative effort by all the European nations to meet their mutual problems. In that cooperative approach German representatives will be asked to represent Germany in international councils, not merely as Germans but as Europeans. Just as the German people are assuming the responsibilities of governing themselves, so must they also face the responsibility of participating in an international and European movement.

It has been claimed, and no doubt with most justice, that it is much easier for the American to think in European terms than it is for the European. But the Munich export show gives ample indication that German tradesmen and manufacturers have in the past and still do think in European terms. Many of these goods will find their way to France, Italy, Belgium, Holland and the other countries whose common effort contributes to the European Recovery Program. It is time now for not only businessmen, but for German leaders, politicians and the people themselves to think as Europeans. If this is done, and if the people of the Marshall Plan countries continue to work and to plan on a common community basis, the vision which was George C. Marshall's will have been brilliantly fulfilled.