

Interview with

GENERAL GEORGE C. MARSHALL

30 October 1952

Present: Harry B. Price
Roy E. Foulke

1. The Marshall Plan was an outgrowth of the disillusionment over the Moscow Conference which proved conclusively that the Soviet Union was not negotiating in good faith and could not be induced to cooperate in achieving European recovery. Consideration was given to inaugurating the European Recovery Plan at the conclusion of the Moscow Conference but I vetoed this suggestion because I did not want it to appear that the western allies had come to Moscow Conference with a prior agreement to go ahead without Soviet cooperation. Further, differences with Britain over reparations, etc. and the necessity for working out details of the plan prevented disclosure at this time.
2. The cardinal consideration during the period from the end of the Moscow Conference until my Harvard speech was to time properly the offer of U.S. assistance so as to assure domestic acceptance of the proposal. Our intention at all times was to "spring the plan with explosive force" in order not to dissipate the chances of U.S. acceptance by premature political debate. Little consideration was given to the European to our proposal since it was believed that they were sufficiently desperate to accept any reasonable offer of U.S. aid.
3. The greatest fear was of an adverse reaction from the Mid-West -- from "Bert McCormick and the Chicago Tribune". Originally I had planned to accept a degree from the University of Michigan in order to spring the "plan" in the heartland of expected opposition, however this ceremony was cancelled because details of the plan could not be worked out in time. My second decision was to reveal the proposal during my acceptance of a degree from Amherst on June 16th. However, a worsening of conditions in Europe and a full "realization of the dreadful situation in Europe" forced a stepping up of this schedule and I reversed an earlier decision not to accept a degree from Harvard on June 5th, 1947, in order to announce the U.S. proposal to assist Europe if they would work together cooperatively in devising means for making U.S. aid effective.
4. I took only a few intimate advisors into my confidence during the preparation of the European Recovery Program plan. I asked Kennan and Bohlen to present separate memoranda concerning means of meeting the European crisis. Kennan's was the most succinct and useful -- this was during the embryo^{period} of State's policy planning staff. I also drafted a paper reflecting my own views on this subject. Other than Bohlen and Kennan I consulted only Acheson and Lovett (at least these are the only ones mentioned -- REF) for fear that my deliberations would be "leaked". The June 5th speech was not completed until after I had left Washington for Cambridge. Kennan and others took exception to certain parts of



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my speech, particularly my statement that the U.S. proposal was aimed at hunger, poverty, and chaos and not against any group and my inclusion of all Europe including the Soviet Union and her satellites. Despite their opposition I insisted on formulating the speech as it was finally delivered.

5. As implied in the speech, I insisted that "the European countries come clean" -- that is, that they come up with a workable plan for European recovery based on actual requirements, not what they thought the U.S. would give. For this reason I insisted that we not help Europe in the formulation of the European Recovery Program. I was subjected to heavy pressure from Clayton (then in Switzerland), Lew Douglas and others to let them consult with the Europeans and to let them advise the Europeans on the formulation of a plan for European recovery. However, I issued "an almost arbitrary, military-type command" that they were not to participate with the Europeans in the formulation of this plan. (It is my recollection that Clayton did go to Paris to assist the Europeans in the formulation of the recovery plan. If my recollection is correct Clayton urged the Europeans to scale down drastically their early estimate of dollar requirements to a figure which might be acceptable to the U.S. Congress -- REF).

6. The plan had not been discussed with Europe in advance and Europe's prompt response represented quick foot work. Bevan and Bidault vied for leadership in the formulation of the ERP with Bevan generally winning out. The ability and character of Oliver Franks played a large part in the quality of the result. Getting Europe to agree that Britain should receive "such a large plug" of the total U.S. aid was one of the major problems.

7. The selling of the ERP to the American people was an exacting task and I traveled so widely in this regard it "almost seemed as though I were running for office". I had good success in enlisting the cooperation of special interest groups although it was particularly tough to get the cooperation of those groups representing items in short supply (wheat, cotton, tobacco, etc.). Ironically, by the time the Marshall Plan was put in operation these items were in surplus supply and a reverse pressure to export these items through the Marshall Plan was exerted.

8. Senator Vandenberg was not consulted prior to the Harvard speech. He soon became a full partner in the adventure, however, and we consulted together twice weekly at the Blair House. These meetings were kept secret and this secrecy resulted in charges that I was not enlisting bipartisan support. I worked closely with Senator Vandenberg on the Vandenberg resolution -- in fact, the first draft of this resolution was prepared by Lovett at my request. Senator Vandenberg took the Lovett draft and "improved it 1000% on his own typewriter". I feel that Vandenberg has never received full credit for his monumental efforts on behalf of the European Recovery Program. "Vandenberg was my righthand man and at times I was his righthand man. "



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9. Hoffman was the only man seriously considered by Senator Vandenberg and myself (no mention was made of any Taft role in this selection -- REF). The position required a man of competence, particularly someone completely unselfish who sought no personal gain from the position (most people do). Hoffman filled the bill.

10. Unlike most earlier State Department programs the ERP required large sums of money which meant that the House had to be fully considered. This varied from the normal Senate-treaty procedure and created jealousy between House and Senate leaders -- a further problem for Vandenberg.

11. Acheson, Clayton, Cohen speeches and statements did not represent "trial balloons" or any sort of build-up for the ERP. In fact, "I gave Cohen hell" for his West Coast speech (about April or May?) for fear that it would reveal my plans and start the much feared "premature debate".

12. In my opinion the Soviet Union and her bloc came close to associating themselves with the ERP. They changed their minds only after the Paris consultations.

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