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Interview with

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Counselor of the State Department

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Present: Harry B. Price  
Roy E. Foulke

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17) 2, 4, 5-8

20) 1, 2, 4, 7

1. The origins of the Marshall Plan lie in the Clayton memorandum as to deteriorating European economic conditions, and the Acheson speech in Mississippi, on the Policy Planning Staff and other State Department considerations. I believe the idea of the Marshall Plan occurred to General Marshall in the Kremlin during his interview with Stalin (that would be about April 18 or 19 of 1947). I think Marshall was of the opinion that Stalin was stalling for time in the belief that time was running in his favor and that the deteriorating economic conditions in Europe would drop Europe into his lap without any overt acts on his part. About the time Marshall returned, Clayton also returned with his memorandum describing Europe's serious financial position, the terrible economic effects of the unusually cold winter, the crop failures, etc. Marshall's report to the people on the Moscow Conference gave a hint of what was to come, with his closing line to the effect, that the doctor's dispute while the patient is dying.

2. The essential components of the Marshall Plan and the Marshall speech were four. One, a description of Europe's economic plight -- this was drawn largely from Clayton's persuasive memorandum; two, giving the idea political favor -- that the Marshall approach was directed against no country or creed but against hunger, chaos, etc. This is in reality a good example of psychological warfare -- in that it identifies your opponent (Communism) with everything bad; that is, hunger, deteriorating economic conditions, etc. Three, the third essential was that the initiative must come from Europe -- that there must be a European Plan and not an American program for curing European economic ills. Four, the fourth essential was that the Marshall Plan was no mere palative, that it must achieve the purpose of making Europe economically independent.

3. I would like to say that contrary to some of the news accounts that Marshall did not expect the reaction he got, that he knew exactly what he was doing. The quickness and effectiveness of Europe's response may have surprised him somewhat but it was essentially what he had hoped for. Marshall was insistent that his plan be given no advance publicity -- he did not want the impression given that here was Santa Claus ready to dole out the billions and that European nations should "come and get it". He also wanted to keep the spotlight on the European reaction -- on Europe's efforts to help themselves -- thus helping us with our political problems here. There was no consultation with Europeans in advance of the speech. Bevin's response was upon his own initiative -- not because of prior consultations with the U.S.

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4. The big question in the Marshall speech was the inclusion of the Soviet Union and their satellites -- it was "a hell of a big gamble". Europeans -- and U.S. officials -- were worried because they knew if the Soviets came in that there was no chance of getting U.S. Congressional action. We gambled that the Soviets could not come in and therefore we could gain prestige by including all Europeans and let the Soviet Union bear the ~~honors~~<sup>onus</sup> for withdrawing. Our gamble was based on our analysis that the Soviet Union could not tolerate the type of economic inspection and cooperation that would be required by the Marshall Plan and that they therefore would withdraw. We knew they were trying to extend control over their satellites and we felt it unlikely that they would permit their satellites to engage in a joint European enterprise. Our analysis was correct: Molotov suggested that each country submit their requirements and that the U.S. put up the dollars without any active participation or supervision. The Western Europeans told him that it wasn't going to be that way and he withdrew with threats and a propaganda barrage against U.S. "imperialism". Molotov's brutal treatment of the satellites in general and of Czechoslovakia in particular was very educational for the rest of the Europeans. At this point no European -- not even the most wishful thinker -- could doubt the nature of Soviet intentions.

5. It was only after Molotov's withdrawal and only after the CEEC was organized that the U.S. officials began informal consultations with the European nations. Clayton, who was at that time in Europe, and later George Kennan, joined these consultations. We insisted that the Europeans engage in closer coordination and cooperation -- that they must not merely submit shopping lists. By the 15th of November the Executive Branch had done all that it was possible for the Executive Branch to do: the Harriman Report, the Krug Report, the Nourse Report, consultation with CEEC officials, drafting of legislation, etc. The rest was up to Congress. The long drawn-out Congressional considerations necessitated interim aid which resulted in the decision to call Congress back and submit the interim aid program. The ERP legislation had a serious challenge in the House which, I understand, was led most effectively by Congressman Dirksen. I also understand that the log jam over appropriations was broken after Governor Dewey intervened with Congressman Taber -- also from New York State -- by telling<sup>him</sup> that he was personally interested in the legislation and wanted it passed (that is, the appropriation) substantially as planned.

6. The form in which U.S. aid was to be given was discussed a great deal in State Department and elsewhere. Many of us put heavy emphasis on the idea of European unity and wanted, therefore, to give the aid through some central European organization -- OEEC. We came to the conclusion, however, that this<sup>was</sup> "too dispersed a form" of U.S. aid for the U.S. Congress to swallow and was not, therefore, politically feasible.

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7. It is interesting, in retrospect, to note that the ERP was a form of psychological warfare. That the Soviets accepted it in this vein was evidenced by the formation of the Cominform and Zhandov's frank statements that the Soviet Union was to be directly opposed to the U.S. aid. What we succeeded in doing was to identify Communism and the Soviet Union with the evils of misery, hunger, chaos, etc. In short, what we did was to make Soviet opposition to ERP appear also to be opposition to the welfare of individual West European citizens. On the other hand, our insistence on a European plan and European cooperation partially took the curse of "charity" off the U.S. aid. As stated in Truman's message at the time of the signing -- which we prepared here in State -- we sought to give some solid assurance that this program was to be in the nature of a positive cure and not just another hand-out. When the Soviets and their satellites, for considerations which they could not disclose, took an opposition stand, the initiative began to pass to the U.S. and to Western Europe. This constructive aspect was our greatest selling point. The ERP -- that is, its essential aims -- were unassailable. One cannot be against recovery, as the Soviets were made to appear, without an unfavorable reaction. Without Korea and the rearmament burden I am convinced that the Marshall Plan would have succeeded in its stated aims ahead of schedule.

8. At the London Foreign Ministers Conference in the fall of 1947, Marshall suggested a similar approach -- that is, initial European coordination and self-help followed by U.S. assistance -- for the military aspects of European revival. Vandenburg insisted that NATO would have to have a political foundation if it were to be salable here -- that is, that it not be a one-way street, but that it be apparent that Europe was contributing to our welfare also. Since economic betterment has almost universal appeal, ERP had a greater popular base than rearmament can ever have. Threats to cut off military aid lack the sting that similar threats re ERP had. Military assistance, therefore, does not have the same lever of pressure that was available to ERP.

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