

Interview V

By Harry B. Price and Roy E. Foulke

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The original of this document is in the Harry B. Price Papers at the Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri. The interview notes were produced by Foulke (who also added certain comments in parentheses). in November 1952. Italic material in brackets was added by Larry I. Bland, who also made some spelling corrections without notice.

1. On returning from the Moscow Conference I felt we couldn't let the European problem "fester any longer--the time for launching the boil was not [now?] at hand". There were undoubtedly a number of solutions to the European problem but the big problem was how to put it across. This was my greatest concern on how to win the battle. Kennan's memorandum, as I recall it, was probably the nearest thing to the basis for the ERP proposals, particularly in regard to the important of "how to do it". Largely as a result of prompt Bevin initiative in Europe, the criticism which we feared here in the United States did not develop until a month or so after my speech. I maybe do Bevin an injustice but I had the impression at the time that part of his initiative stemmed from an ambition to be the European leader for the plan--I am certain this accounts for most of Bidault's contributions.
2. In 1947, many people in Europe were very timid about opposing the Soviet Union and I feared if we started our plan by throwing the Soviets out it would scare these people and perhaps keep some of the European countries out of the program.
3. The collaboration with Vandenberg started at the initial White House session with Congressional leaders. It was at this time that Vandenberg first suggested a committee which was the basis for the Harriman Committee. Lovett was of tremendous importance during this period. It was he who worked incessantly to get a coherent story from the Harriman, Nourse, Krug Committees and also from the staffs of the Congressional committees working on the ERP program. Vandenberg stated that we would have to fight this out on an anti-Communist line. I did not want to fight it on this basis, I preferred to keep it more constructive, but Vandenberg was our principal adviser on the basic U.S. political problems. Lovett had many meetings with Vandenberg, ad did I. I had to keep my meetings with Vandenberg rather quiet because some in the President's entourage were suspicious of Vandenberg--or perhaps jealous. I had to keep my relationship with Vandenberg quiet even though I was under heavy press attack for a failure to maintain bi-partisan policy. Actually we "couldn't have gotten much closer together unless I sat in Vandenberg's lap or he sat in mine".
4. As I took off to the Moscow Conference, the Greek dilemma broke and we were forced to improvise a direct anti-Communist program there. Acheson was the leader in

devising this policy and, together with Vandenberg, getting it through the Congress. Our initial draft of the Truman Doctrine was discussed at a White House meeting of Congressional leaders.

5. My collaboration with Vandenberg got closer and closer, reaching its zenith with the Vandenberg resolution leading to NATO. This resolution started out as a draft by Lovett and myself and was improved immensely by Vandenberg. Vandenberg's speech in support of ERP was a masterpiece and his role cannot be overplayed.

6. At the conclusion of the Moscow Conference, it was my feeling that the Soviets were doing everything possible to achieve a complete break-down in Europe. That is, they were doing anything they could think of to create greater turbulence. The major problem was how to counter this negative Soviet policy and to restore the European economy so that the Europeans "could live less like animals and more like people".

7. During the debate over the administration of the ERP, the State Department was under a great deal of attack for wanting to control the program. Actually we didn't want to administer the program. What we did want was an opportunity to review or supervise the public statements which might come out of the new agency. The ECA people could have issued public statements and policy pronouncements that would have greatly disturbed our foreign policy and negated the State Department's role. It was to Hoffman's personal credit and understanding of this problem that such was never the case. Because of the people around Truman and the Executive position we could never admit publicly that we did not want to administer ERP--therefore in all my public statements I plugged for State Department control. Because of the position of Truman's entourage, I could never defend myself publicly against the charge that we wanted to administer ECA. As a matter of fact Lovett and I thought it would be an error for the State Department to undertake this administration.

8. I think your study might want to reflect some of the agony that we went through from June '47 until April '48--the period of Congressional study. I struggled with the Agriculture Department, with the farm machinery people, etc. to get their support during this period of critical shortage of vital machinery and products in the U.S.