

EUROPEAN RECOVERY PROGRAM

Interview With

DR. CONSTANTINOS A. DOXIADIS

Athens, Greece

May 5, 1964

By Philip C. Brooks, Director

Harry S. Truman Library

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EUROPEAN RECOVERY PROGRAM TRANSCRIPTS

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DR. BROOKS: Doctor Doxiadis, may I ask first, to get it correct on the record, your position at the time of the initiation of the "Truman Doctrine," you were Minister of Housing and Reconstruction. Is that correct?

DR. DOXIADIS: At that time, I was not a minister. Actually, earlier, before the elections, I was the first Minister of Housing and Reconstruction. Then, after the elections, I resigned, and the government which came into power asked me to remain as head of the services of the Ministry,

[2]

so I had the title of the Director General of Housing and Reconstruction.

BROOKS: In that position, you were obviously interested in the economic recovery of the country. At the time that Mr. Truman made his speech of March 12, 1947, what was your immediate reaction? Do you remember?

DOXIADIS: Oh, yes. At that time, apart from my role as Director General of Housing and Reconstruction, I was mainly concerned with the overall program of economic development for Greece. I was a member of the board which was studying officially the plans for Greece's recovery; and I was also the chairman of a small private group, which was working out a plan, which we called *For the Survival of the Greek People*. It was published in two volumes and it has helped in many efforts which have

[3]

been made since for the recovery of Greece. I mention this to show that I was greatly concerned with the very bad situation which Greece was in, and with several other people I was trying to work out plans for our recovery.

The declaration of the new doctrine by President Truman was, for all of us, a very important declaration. It was a surprise, I should say, although we think now that it was something very natural. At that moment, it was a surprise. It changed right from that moment, the attitude of every Greek towards the possibilities of recovery of the country. I should mention that when we were working on the plans of the survival of the Greek people, we were considered by many "just crazy" to believe that recovery was possible. The declaration of the Truman Doctrine made all the change. From then on, everybody thought

[4]

recovery was possible.

BROOKS: Do you think that most of the Greek people were surprised at the vigor of President Truman's statement?

DOXIADIS: I should say so. Although they all thought that the American people would back Greece, and that the American administration would look at Greece favorably. We did not have any specific declaration or even a sign, up to that moment, that the USA would be especially concerned with Greece's tragic situation.

BROOKS: I talked last night with Mr. Tsaldaris. It was extremely interesting. He said that he was confident, because he had been to the United States two or three months before, that this aid would be forthcoming. But I suppose that he knew more than most of the people about this.

[5]

DOXIADIS: This is quite probable. I would say that we were confident that Greece would not be left alone after having been through all these difficulties. It was quite clear to us that Greece could not survive as a free nation without the Truman Doctrine. Anarchy would be the first problem which we would have to face, and then anyone could exploit.

BROOKS: Were you concerned particularly in your activity with the British support? Had you expected the British withdrawal?

DOXIADIS: We were not expecting any withdrawal, I must confess. If this had been known, Greece would have entered into another major crisis. But we were worried that British support was not stronger. I don't say that it should be. I know that Britain had its own major difficulties, but I just say that if it had been known that Britain

[6]

would withdraw, without the Truman Doctrine, this would have meant a disaster -- maybe this would have meant that for two or three weeks only would Greece be a free, well administered nation.

Panic would have followed. The first sign would be seen in the stability of the Greek drachma. I think we could have faced within two weeks a real economic disaster, which would have been followed by anarchy. No government would stand in power and so you understand the results.

BROOKS: Did the Greek people feel that the British had let them down, or as you said a minute ago, that Britain had its own problems?

DOXIADIS: No, I don't believe that we felt this way, especially because no sign of their desire to withdraw had been felt. If it had been

[7]

felt, then we would have thought we were let down. But as it was handled very carefully, and their desire to withdraw followed the declaration of the Truman Doctrine, I don't believe anyone would be entitled to say that.

BROOKS: Doctor Doxiadis, in what I have read about the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, in which I am much interested, I get the impression that in the United States, some groups, say in Congress, were willing to support an economic recovery of European nations, but they were tired of defense aid. For this reason, I am wondering, was the Truman Doctrine in your view primarily a program of military aid to settle the civil war, or primarily a matter of economic reconstruction, or can they be separated?

DOXIADIS: I don't believe they could in those days. It was impossible. I think that Greece needed some aid in order to survive. For Greece, and

[8]

I can only speak for Greece, it was a matter of survival or not. As I told you, I would have expected a real disaster without the Doctrine, even with British support, but at the low level, the disaster would have come later. If the British would withdraw, then the disaster would have come earlier, so it was a matter to help Greece survive, and the only way was to help economic recovery and the rehabilitation of the Armed Forces. The two had to go together in Greece.

BROOKS: Did you look on this as something different from the program of UNRRA -- United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration?

DOXIADIS: Oh, it was completely different, because UNRRA was mainly interested in giving food and some supplies. But the rate at which aid was given by UNRRA, the speed at which it was given, was so low, that it would have been impossible

[9]

for Greece to recover with the continuation of the UNRRA program. I could only see it as a first aid program, and nothing else.

BROOKS: President Truman, in his speech, mentioned a number of different needs of the Greeks, including funds for importation of goods, rebuilding of industry, direct military assistance, food, the provision of administrators, technicians, economists, and others. Which of these would you regard as the greatest need or needs?

DOXIADIS: I would not make any difference. There again, Greece had only 40 percent of its prewar income. All our bridges were blown up. I am afraid we had contributed to many of them being blown up during the years of the resistance. Three thousand villages were destroyed. One-fourth of the Greek population was homeless, most of our peasants did not have cattle or implements to cultivate their fields. There

[10]

was a real anarchy in most of the rural areas of Greece, and even in some small cities. Our people did not have any radio sets in order to hear the broadcasts. It was quite interesting that in 1947 -- I mention just one example -- out of twenty Greeks asked in Northern Greece, on the highway between two cities, "Who was the Prime Minister of Greece?", only four could give the proper answer. Sixteen of them did not know who was Prime Minister. They were cut off completely from any news sources. They were not receiving newspapers. In one mountainous village, they told us "Why are you all worried that we read only the Communist newspaper? There is no other one published." Because of the condition of this region it was really in the hands of people who were not interested to send old newspapers up to the mountainous villages. So in every aspect of Greek life, there was complete

[11]

disorganization. We needed help in everything. I could not exclude even one single factor.

BROOKS: What were Greece's greatest assets? What did you have to build on or contribute to this program?

DOXIADIS: I must say at that moment, only the will of the Greek people to survive as a free nation, because we did not have a system of transportation; our administration was at a very low level; industry could not operate at all. I don't see any other asset than the real will of the people to survive. I was very much strengthened, one day, when, after touring many villages which were destroyed, I saw in a mountainous village, right in the middle of winter, a teacher sitting on the steps of what was earlier a school -- at that time, there was only a few lower parts of the walls left -- with all his children, and

[12]

he was teaching them in a snowstorm. At that moment, I felt that Greece would survive.

BROOKS: Did you see any special significance to the fact that Greece and Turkey were bracketed in the Truman Doctrine, or did this fact raise any problems, so far as Greece was concerned?

DOXIADIS: When we look at it today, it raises problems. In those days, we were so much concerned with the fate of Greece that we did not care at all if anyone else was put in the same package, Turkey or any other country. Our only concern was to help Greece survive.

BROOKS: The Turkish needs and the Turkish program were very different from those of Greece.

DOXIADIS: That's true. Today we can criticize, but in those days, the concern of Greeks was to survive as a nation.

[13]

BROOKS: It has been suggested to me that perhaps this was done in order to sell the program to the American people more readily.

DOXIADIS: This is quite probable, quite probable, and as I tell you, I don't remember any Greek questioning the wisdom of such an action. Our only concern was Greece.

BROOKS: Now, I asked you a while ago, Doctor Doxiadis, about whether you looked at the Truman Doctrine plan as primarily a matter of defense, military aid, or economic reconstruction. Many people in the United States were conscious of the distinction between the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan on this same basis. There were some people who were more willing to support the Marshall Plan because it was primarily a constructive, economic program. Now, do you think that the

[14]

two can be that readily separated and that they are really quite different?

DOXIADIS: In Greece, the one was a continuation of the other. Thank God, the Truman Doctrine came first, on time and quite strong as a declaration, as a spirit; and then, when the Marshall Plan was declared for all of Europe, then Greece was beginning to get on its feet. Otherwise, the Marshall Plan would have come too late for Greece.

BROOKS: Well, of course, it was almost a year after the Marshall speech, before that program was approved by the Congress.

DOXIADIS: That's true.

BROOKS: And, this made a pretty serious situation in some parts of Europe.

[15]

DOXIADIS: Much more in Greece. Just for an insight on this, in Greece, there was no time to be lost. We needed aid badly, and President Truman made it clear that we'd have this aid. We started on this basis although we knew that this aid would not solve the problem, we needed a continuation. This was provided by the Marshall Plan.

BROOKS: Some ardent backers of the United Nations, which was pretty young at that time, felt that one way to strengthen the United Nations, among other factors, would be to have all aid programs administered by the United Nations. Would that have been worth considering at all?

DOXIADIS: I doubt if this could provide any real solution. The United Nations did not have especially at that time the talent, the experience, the experts, the policies, to help

[16]

in such a difficult program. This could not be very good for the nations on the donor side either, which had enough trouble coordinating the donor with the recipient. If we had problems within the donor side, if we had expected international committees to define their policies, develop programs, and so on this would have meant such a delay, if nothing else, that it would have led to disaster.

BROOKS: Were you in a position to be familiar, Doctor Doxiadis, with the way things went at Paris in July to September of 1947, when the Oliver Franks committee was drawing up the statement of needs of the various countries?

DOXIADIS: I was always studying the problem in Greece and not abroad, so what I learned about the Paris negotiations, I learned indirectly.

BROOKS: Well, this again, is a question about reactions

[17]
rather than about factual details. I am interested to know whether the smaller nations of Europe felt they were adequately represented at that session. Or did the British, French, or the Americans tend to dominate the scene too much?

DOXIADIS: I have had the feeling that the smaller nations were not properly heard, but, to be frank with you, I don't know if decisions could be made in any other way. You see, at that time there was no experience at all about the needs of any country. There were no policies; there was no system, no program. So, if we had to satisfy everybody's needs as he thought his needs should be satisfied, I doubt that we could come to any conclusions. And, our experience, from all types of meetings among nations, or corporations, or professions, shows that at the end two or three people who

[18]
are either more experienced or who have the greatest talent in this field have to take the decisions. So, although I did not like the way the decisions were made, I don't know if there was any other way.

BROOKS: I gather that the estimates made by Greece, itself, were rather drastically cut.

DOXIADIS: That's true. And, if we think of a long term program, I think that they were cut unreasonably, but if we think of the fact that this aid had to be given within the four year period, I don't believe that the absorptive capacity of Greece, all things taken into consideration, was very much larger. So, from a practical point of view, for a four year period, probably, the decision was close to the right one.

BROOKS: Were there differences of opinion here in

[19]
Greece on the part of labor, agriculture, industry, and other groups, or was opinion unified?

DOXIADIS: I think there was no real difference of opinion between any groups; if for no other reason, because there was no proper experience in what a recovery meant. Let us not forget that today, everybody has an opinion about the recovery effort. There are people who are quite wise, I would say, in most of the countries and most of the groups. In those days, nobody had any experience as to what it meant.

We had many experts speaking about requirements without any idea how these requirements would really be turned into actual projects. We had for example, people speaking about the need of so many roads in four years, while we knew that we could not build them anyhow even if we had all the credits and all the money. So was the

[20]
case, in every other sector, and I can't say that the people involved were of bad faith. It was simply that they were never faced with such a difficult problem, as to how to help a country which had lost practically everything, to find its way again. But the effort should be slow at the beginning. It had to pass through a phase or organization of services, of setting new rules, of bringing in a lot of new experts.

BROOKS: Since there was no concrete definition of program on the part of the Greeks, do you think that the people who came in here from the United States or other countries, sometimes for fairly short periods, understood the problems well?

DOXIADIS: I would not say so for the beginning. But I think the most important contribution that America made to Greece's recovery was some very

[21]
high talented people, who when they came here may not have known the Greek problem. But after struggling with some of us for days and nights, struggling to the point that we could finish as enemies, because our discussions were so strong sometimes, they understood the problems, and they helped us enormously. I think, as a nation, we owe a lot to some of these enlightened people, like Governor Griswold, and the two Paul Porters.

BROOKS: Two Paul Porters?

DOXIADIS: The two Paul Porters. To the first for understanding the situation, and to the second for understanding and helping to carry out the very difficult first phases of the program.

Then to many members and experts of the mission. I cannot forget, for example, the enormous contributions of persons like Walter

[22]
Packard, who assisted us in developing rice production in salty soils, so that Greece now can export rice where it was importing earlier, or the Deputy Chief of Mission, Ken Iverson, who assisted enormously in the development of the power program, and many other programs in Greece. Or such short time visitors, but really enlightened experts as Walker Cisler, president of the Detroit Edison, who came here for a few weeks on several occasions, without whose assistance Greece would never have a reasonable power program. Paul Jenkins, deputy chief of mission, who died and who asked that his ashes be buried in Mesolonghi, (they were brought two years ago and he was buried in Mesolonghi) another very good and dedicated friend of Greece's recovery. He worked hard to understand life in Greece in every small city and village; was

[23]
very seldom in Athens, always on tour, to understand and to help.

BROOKS: The Russians were invited to take part in the Marshall Plan, and after preliminary discussion of Molotov, Bevin, and Bidault, decided not to do so. Would it have been welcome here to have Russia participating?

DOXIADIS: Again, I would give the same answer as about Turkey. Greece, in those days, was in such a great danger of going down completely (it was on the eve of anarchy and real disaster), that our only interest was to get assistance in Greece. Irrespective of how this would be given, we were very interested in having a unified administration of it. That's why I believe that the fact that it was given directly by the U.S.A. and not through another organization, was a very wise solution, the right solution.

[24]
BROOKS: How about Germany? Germany had been an enemy, and yet I gather that Germany is very important in the economy of Greece.

DOXIADIS: This we knew. This we knew; therefore, there was no reluctance at all from any Greek groups to see aid given to Germany. We were not negative in our attitude. We were not interested in punishments -- this is another matter -- but in recovery!

BROOKS: There was considerable argument, as I am sure you know, about the level of industry to which Germany would be allowed to rebuild itself.

DOXIADIS: Even so, this was not concerning Greece. I don't believe I should call it any great concern, because, we believe in one thing. In war, we should be the best of enemies; in peace, the best of friends. So, once we were at peace, we had to work together.

[25]

BROOKS: Did you think that the European Recovery Program would develop into anything like economic union, a common market, or political union?

DOXIADIS: There were many people who were very eager about this question; in those days I must confess that again, this was not our main point. We were on the eve of disaster. We were interested in making a recovery, and we thought that the other things could follow in time and after systematic studies and discussions.

BROOKS: Aside from the names you have mentioned, did you have any opportunities to observe any of the leaders in the various countries? You traveled a good deal, I think.

DOXIADIS: Not in those days, no. I was, you see, first concerned officially with the reconstruction of the countryside, the villages, mainly, and the small towns. Then, after the success of this

[26]

program, I was the coordinator for the implementation of the over-all Greek recovery program, so I was carrying out the program here in Greece. I traveled very little. I did not represent Greece abroad in these meetings. I was concerned to see things implemented.

BROOKS: Now, I am interested in how all this worked out for Greece. I have had the comment made to me here, that Greece was really not able to take much advantage of the Marshall Plan because the civil war went on until 1949. Therefore, perhaps the progress wasn't as great here as in other countries.

DOXIADIS: That's true, because, while others were discussing industry and real development, we were still discussing the reconstruction of many bridges which were already reconstructed and were blown up again. Some people like Jack

[27]

Blandford, another deputy chief of mission here, cannot still forget that when we took him around to see our first villages which were destroyed, we had to take him around with tanks and armored cars, because all the roads were still attacked. Bridges were blown up every night.

So you see, in the postwar period, while the others were sitting around a table and making plans for real recovery, we were trying to fill the gaps created every day. Every morning when I went to my office, I had to learn of new disasters and of the need to send new materials, just to take care of the refugees who were coming down from the mountains, because their villages were burned that night.

BROOKS: I am sure it's really difficult for us to realize what this situation was.

[28]

DOXIADIS: We were right in the battle in those days.

BROOKS: Well, I am sure, as an architect, you're concerned with the physical reconstruction and rebuilding here. Athens looks very attractive and prosperous now. Is this true generally?

DOXIADIS: It's more true for the urban areas of Greece than for the several rural areas, although some of those have been completely rebuilt and recovered. I think that we can say that most of the physical destruction has been repaired since the civil war, but the economic recovery is much more important in the plains and in the big cities. You should not forget that life is developing all over the world more and more at a higher rate in the urban areas. And this has influenced the recovery of the poorest areas of Greece.

BROOKS: Are there any other general comments you would

[29]

like to make about this whole subject, sir?

DOXIADIS: Well, I think here that I should add that had it not been for the Truman Doctrine I do not believe that Greece would have been what it is today. And, of all the acts which have been known in relation to Greece for the last many tens of years or in the last few generations, the Truman Doctrine is the one which had the greatest importance for our nation. I think that every Greek should be grateful to this great and courageous man, who, in the middle of such confusion and opposition, had the courage to stand up and say the right thing about a small nation which was fighting for its freedom.

[30]

INDEX

Athens, Greece, 23, 28

Bevin, Ernest, 23

Bidault, Georges, 23

Blandford, Jack, 26-27

Cisler, Walker, 22

Common Market, 25

Detroit Edison, 22

Doxiadis, Constantinos A.:

as Director General of Housing and Reconstruction, 1

and *For the Survival of the Greek People*, 2

and Greece, 25-27

European political union, 25

European Recovery Program, 25

For the Survival of the Greek People, 2

Franks, Sir Oliver, 16

Franks committee, 16

Germany, 24

Greece, 12

- conditions in, 9-12, 15

- and Doxiadis, Constantinos A., 25-27

- and Germany, 24

- and the Marshall plan, 17-18

- recovery of, 3-4, 4-5

- and the Truman Doctrine, 6, 7-8

- and the United Kingdom, 5-6, 8

- and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, 8-9

Griswold, Dwight P., 21

Housing and Reconstruction, Ministry of (Greece), 1

Iverson, Ken, 22

Jenkins, Paul, 22-23

Marshall plan, 7, 13, 14, 17-18

and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, 23

Mesolonghi, Greece, 22

Molotov, V.M., 23

Packard, Walter, 21-22

Porter, Paul, 21

Truman, Harry S., 2, 3, 4, 15, 29

Truman Doctrine, 1, 3-5, 6, 7-8, 12-14, 29

Tsaldaris, Constantine, 4

Turkey, 12, 23

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, 23

United Kingdom and Greece, 5-6, 8

United Nations, 15

United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, 8-9