

EUROPEAN RECOVERY PROGRAM

Interview With

DR. KONRAD ADENAUER

Bonn, Germany

June 10, 1964

By Philip C. Brooks, Director

Harry S. Truman Library

THE HARRY S. TRUMAN LIBRARY

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DR. ADENAUER: Now, first of all, I must make a few remarks about Mr. Truman. I have been interested for a long time in Mr. Truman's personality. He took over his office as Roosevelt's successor only a few months after Roosevelt had started his new term. Although it was known that Roosevelt was ill, Mr. Truman had no opportunity to prepare himself thoroughly for the very difficult office of President of the United States. He changed drastically American policy as it had been pursued by Roosevelt. This

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change which he brought about gives as much evidence of political farsightedness as of his kind heart.

I have read his *Memoirs* with the greatest interest. His *Memoirs* are the most striking example of how a splendid political truth can be expressed with simple words and simple sentences. Naturally, two things interested me in

particular: (1) the part which he played at the Potsdam Conference, the splendid part which he played there, and (2) the Marshall Plan.

In my opinion -- which I have held for a long time -- Mr. Truman will be judged in subsequent historiography as one of the great American Presidents. He was here in Bonn, and I was very much impressed by his personality as such, by the man as such, and by his simplicity. This is the essence of my thoughts on Mr. Truman.

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I must reiterate: In my opinion he will go down in history as one of the greatest Presidents of the United States. I can't say any more. That is already a great deal.

DR. BROOKS: Would you say something about the importance of the Marshall Plan to Germany? Was it really a turning point in the life of Germany and her attitude toward other countries?

ADENAUER: The extension of the Marshall Plan to Germany was first of all a deed of extremely great political significance. Thereby, in spite of her past, Germany was placed by the President of the United States, by Harry Truman, on an equal footing with other suffering countries. The extension of the Marshall Plan to Germany achieved a twofold success: First, the Germans were given new hope, and second, they were helped by the provisions of the Plan

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itself.

BROOKS: Would you say that the statement of General Marshall in the year 1947 represented the first time that the Germans had confidence that the United States wanted to help them?

ADENAUER: Yes. Because you must not forget that at that time there existed strong intentions among the victorious powers simply to efface Germany from history as a great country. That is why President Truman's decision had such an extraordinarily good psychological effect on Germany.

BROOKS: Would you say anything about whether you expected the Russians to join in the Marshall Plan, and whether it was a good idea of Mr. Bevin's to invite them?

ADENAUER: Neither the one, nor the other.

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BROOKS: How about the Greek-Turkish Aid Plan of the American Government? Did you feel that this was closely related to the Marshall Plan, or did you look on it as something separate? Was it of concern to the Germans?

ADENAUER: Indirectly. Through the extension of the Marshall Plan to Greece and Turkey these nations were readied for their participation in NATO, and Greece was at that time, exclusive of Germany, the poorest European country. By coincidence I read only today that Greek economy has become extraordinarily strengthened and improved in the last few years. Turkey not to the same extent.

BROOKS: I was in Greece about three weeks ago and noticed it. Did you feel that the German interests were fairly considered at the Paris Conference in 1947 when the plans were being made for the

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Marshall Plan?

ADENAUER: That is a very -- but how should this be translated -- you know, a "ticklish question." He who receives the gift regards it differently than the one who gives the gift. He who receives it sees only his own poverty; he who gives it sees also the poverty of others. That is why this is such a difficult question to answer, but I do want to tell you that this Marshall help, the Marshall Plan was for us an extraordinarily great help, psychologically and materially.

BROOKS: I am particularly interested in what you say about the political effect and the moral effect. I am also interested in how the Germans viewed the emphasis on European cooperation that was called for in the Marshall Plan. Did you feel that that cooperation

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was possible as early as 1947?

ADENAUER: To a very small degree, a very small one. You see, at that time it was the endeavor of Russia and France to neutralize the industrial areas, and the Morgenthau Plan had not yet been forgotten either. Against this gloomy background the Marshall Plan idea stands out all the more beautifully.

BROOKS: Say by 1948 or 1949, did you feel that the OEEC in Paris was really proving itself?

ADENAUER: Only slowly.

BROOKS: After 1949, after the Federal Republic was set up in Germany and admitted as a full member, wasn't it working pretty well by then?

ADENAUER: No. As you say quite correctly, in the year 1949, we again became a state, and this event could only furnish the basis for uniting

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the economic strength in the various parts of Germany. For that reason the possibility of actually accomplishing something in the OEEC became much greater for us Germans.

BROOKS: Did you hope then that the Marshall Plan would eventually lead to something like the Common Market, toward an economic union of Europe?

ADENAUER: Well...I do not believe that one thought that far ahead at that time. No, I see the significance of the Marshall Plan in the fact that probably for the first time in history a victorious country held out its hand so that the vanquished might rise again.

BROOKS: What would you say about the comparative importance, since we are looking at this from the point of view of the history of the Truman administration, what would you say is the

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comparative importance of the Marshall Plan, and the Berlin Airlift, the establishment of NATO, and the Korean action?

ADENAUER: I believe that without the Marshall Plan this development would not have been possible.

BROOKS: Would you want to comment on any of the other phases of the Truman administration?

ADENAUER: I do not know very much about that, but I would like to hear how Mr. Truman is now.

BROOKS: Very well, thank you. What about the Airlift, or NATO?

ADENAUER: Well, I feel that the Berlin Airlift was a truly visible sign that America recognized her duty to be the leader of free nations and wanted to fulfill it, and NATO was at that time -- the founding of NATO -- a great accomplishment, and I only hope that

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the vigor which was then in NATO will be preserved in NATO.

BROOKS: Which of these various developments do you think had the most effect in establishing the reputation of Mr. Truman himself in Germany? Which of these developments were the most important from the point of view of the German people?

ADENAUER: You have already mentioned them: the Marshall Plan, the Airlift, the establishment of NATO. Well, in all of these one saw the determined will to preserve freedom here in the face of the Communist threat.

BROOKS: Do you have any particular memories of or comments on the meetings with Mr. Truman that you would speak about?

ADENAUER: I only have the general impression that with all his political greatness he is a kind

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and simple man. He had the great gift which is not shared by every statesman to see what was truly good and to strive for it. One sees that, too, in general conversation with him. This impression was reaffirmed time and again.

His *Memoirs* are widely read in Germany. In my apartment they are also always on the table, not because you came today, but because I want to peruse them from time to time.

BROOKS: Were the opinions in Germany toward the Marshall Plan pretty unanimous, or was there difference of opinion among groups, like labor, industry, agriculture, etc., as to their attitudes toward the Marshall Plan?

ADENAUER: Completely unanimous.

BROOKS: And were most of the people in general conscious of the role of the U.S. as distinguished from the role of Great Britain, France, and others?

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Did most people know a good deal about this?

ADENAUER: But of course!

BROOKS: Now, I want to assure you that President Truman always speaks of you with very high regard. He told me when I left that you were one of the people on my list that he knew, and that he wanted me to give his regards to you.

ADENAUER: Please convey my most cordial greetings to him and please tell him what I said of his *Memoirs* and that I read in them over and over again.

BROOKS: I wonder if there are any comments about the other aspects of the Truman administration that you would like to make. I don't want to trouble you with too much detail about the Marshall Plan, but I am interested in any aspect

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of the foreign relations of that period.

ADENAUER: Dean Acheson was the first Secretary of State who visited the Federal Republic. He was Truman's Secretary of State, and he came here at the request of President Truman. It was extremely important and valuable for us that it was Dean Acheson, whom I esteem highly, who came at that time and the visit strengthened our morale profoundly.

BROOKS: Dean Acheson is a good friend of ours and is very much interested in what we are doing at the Library. We admire him very much, too. He is a friend of Mr. Truman's. Did you know General Marshall?

ADENAUER: I have met him.

BROOKS: I take it you did not know him as well as Dean Acheson?

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ADENAUER: No, no. Dean Acheson I knew very well. Will he become Secretary of State? After the 8th of November?

BROOKS: I don't know. I wish I knew.

ADENAUER: Yes, there is a good deal of talk about this.

BROOKS: He's been very close to President Johnson as one of the informal advisors. Do you know Averell Harriman?

ADENAUER: Yes, but I knew all the gentlemen who were important at that time. After all, I was often over there and at one time or other met all of them. But of course certain individuals impressed themselves particularly on my memory. I have just mentioned Dean Acheson, Foster Dulles, too, and -- well, I would have to name many if I enumerated them all.

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BROOKS: I have read of the decision of General Clay to move ahead without the Russians, even before the Marshall Plan development. Would you want to comment on this?

ADENAUER: Well, you know, during those discussions which started in Teheran and in Yalta, etc., the one who saw through the Russians most clearly was Winston Churchill. It was not Roosevelt.

BROOKS: It was no surprise then that the Russians didn't act in accordance with the agreements of the Yalta Conference?

ADENAUER: For the ones who knew Russia it was not a surprise. But sometimes I worry that in the United States one does not know the Russians even today.

BROOKS: Maybe we do wishful thinking.

ADENAUER: Rather...yes, wishful thinking, and --

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you will not be angry about what I am about to say: That is always a sign of youth. [laughter].

BROOKS: Well, that may well be so. I am sure that people who come to do research in our Library will be interested in any of your comments, Dr. Adenauer, on the history of the Truman administration.

ADENAUER: I recommend to you a book which was published in Germany about Russia. Its title is *The Russian Perpetuum Mobile*.

BROOKS: Can you tell me when it was published?

ADENAUER: A few years ago, but I don't know whether it was translated into English.

BROOKS: I hope that you will be able to visit our Library some time, and I think you will find it interesting.

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ADENAUER: I should really like to do this some time.

BROOKS: I am very grateful to you for your time and your comments. I am sorry that I don't speak German, and I appreciate your patience.

ADENAUER: Not at all. I was happy to do it since I admire Mr. Truman so extraordinarily.

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