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H. VANDENBERG, 1937-1949.

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A STUDY OF THE CHANGING VIEWS IN SELECTED
FOREIGN POLICY SPEECHES OF SENATOR
ARTHUR H. VANDENBERG, 1937-1949

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A STUDY OF THE CHANGING VIEWS IN SELECTED
FOREIGN POLICY SPEECHES OF SENATOR
ARTHUR H. VANDENBERG, 1937-1949

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background and Subject of the Study

This study is concerned with the analysis of a selected group of foreign policy speeches by Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg delivered between 1937 and 1949. The basic hypothesis on which the study rests is that this twelve year period includes three major phases of foreign policy: the period of world-wide aggression and of American isolationism, the period of war and of American plans for collective security, and the period of the cold war and of the American policy of Soviet containment. The importance of Vandenberg's speeches, in the context of this study, therefore, lies in the way they represent American ideas on foreign policy during these three phases. This basis for the study can be explicated by a brief review of the major events of these years and the part which Vandenberg played in them.

As America struggled during the 1930's to put her domestic house in order, the hope for a world "safe for democracy" faded. Japan marched on Manchuria in 1931. Hitler withdrew Germany from the League of Nations, scorned the Treaty of Versailles, and entered the demilitarized Rhineland. Mussolini invaded Ethiopia, civil war broke out in Spain, and Japan attacked the China mainland. The climax came when Russia signed a non-aggression pact with Germany, and then Hitler invaded Poland in September of 1939.

America reacted to the world crisis with a series of neutrality acts. It was hoped that legislation would make American participation in the struggle impossible by outlawing the kinds of actions which many believed precipitated America's entry into World War I. Historical revisionists concluded that America had been tricked into that conflict by selfish munition makers, sinister economic forces, and British propaganda. The same opinion was expounded in the conclusions of a Senate investigation committee. This agitation resulted in federal legislation to take profits out of war, prevent the sale of war materials to belligerents, and to forbid Americans from entering war zones.

From 1933 to 1937, the Roosevelt administration seemed to favor the program of strict neutrality, insisting that the United States shun all involvement in foreign squabbles. Roosevelt may have resented the interference by

Congress in foreign policy through the passage of the neutrality laws, but he made no intense effort to stop it.¹ The President warned in his address at Chautauqua during the 1936 campaign that "no matter how well we are supported by neutrality legislation, we must remember that no laws can be provided to cover every contingency."² Still he continued to straddle the issue because he could not "withstand the isolationist cyclone."³ Beginning with his famous "Quarantine" speech in 1937, however, Roosevelt inaugurated a series of attempts to turn back the "isolationist" trend, insisting that America's chances for peace lay in preparedness at home and "concerted efforts" with foreign nations abroad.

During this later "isolationist" period, Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg was referred to as the man "who most nearly symbolizes opposition"⁴ to the Roosevelt administration's attempts to move in the direction of collective security. He asserted that "there is but one rational policy for the United

¹Foster Rhea Dulles, America's Rise to World Power (New York: Harper & Bros., 1954), p. 175. The author reports that Roosevelt "was content to remain on the sidelines while national policy was largely shaped by the impact of events abroad on a strongly isolationist-minded Congressional majority."

²Samuel I. Rosenman (ed.), The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Vol. V: The People Approve (New York: Random House, 1938), 285.

³Cordell Hull, The Memoirs of Cordell Hull, I (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), 400.

⁴The New York Times, October 1, 1939, p. 7.

States, namely, a policy of scrupulous neutrality."⁵ Vandenberg insisted that the United States "avoid all entangling alliances that would morally or otherwise bind the United States"⁶ to foreign powers. He spoke consistently, both in and out of the United States Senate, for legislation designed to insure neutrality, and he strongly supported the neutrality acts of 1935 and 1937.

Vandenberg fought the trend of "cooperative resistance" up to Pearl Harbor. He spoke against the removal of the embargo on arms, ammunition, and implements of war, against the lifting of the "cash-and-carry" provision of the Neutrality Act; he opposed the Selective Service Act; he fought the Lend-Lease Bill; he spoke against the resolution to permit American ships to sail into belligerent waters, referring to the act as "the pending Senate decision substantially settling the question whether America deliberately and consciously shall go all the way into a shooting war."⁷

But when war came, the Michigan Senator said: "I stand with my Commander in Chief for the swiftest and most invincible reply of which our total strength may be capable."⁸

⁵Ibid., September 7, 1939, p. 12.

⁶Ibid., August 31, 1937, p. 1.

⁷U. S. Congressional Record, 77th Cong., 1st Sess., 1941, LXXXVII, Part 8, 8251. Hereinafter referred to as Record.

⁸Record, 77th Cong., 1st Sess., 1941, LXXXVII, Part 9, 9505.

Roosevelt wrote Vandenberg: "In the Senate you have an opportunity granted few men to be of real service to promoting unity in the Congress and the country."⁹

Senator Vandenberg accepted the challenge. By early 1943, he was described as a "middle-of-the-road Republican on foreign policy questions,"¹⁰ and at that time, he stated: "The United States must obviously be a far greater international cooperator after this war than ever before."¹¹ He coupled these words with action as a member of the "Committee of Eight," a group of Republican and Democratic Senators who met periodically with Secretary-of-State Hull to advise him on foreign policy. When the Committee came out in support of a postwar organization involving Great Britain, the United States and Russia, Vandenberg turned his energies to selling the idea to his countrymen. By 1944, he was giving full support to the Dumbarton Oaks agreement, affirming that lasting peace was only possible through "international cooperation," a fact, he said, that is "too obvious for argument."¹²

The final turning point came in 1945 when he addressed the Senate "to make my own personal viewpoint clear . . . I

⁹Arthur H. Vandenberg, Jr. (ed.), The Private Papers of Senator Vandenberg (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1952), p. 25. Hereinafter referred to as Papers.

¹⁰The New York Times, June 14, 1943, p. 17.

¹¹Papers, p. 41.

¹²Record, 78th Cong., 2d Sess., 1944, XC, Part 5, 7177.

do not believe that any nation hereafter can immunize itself by its own exclusive action."¹³ After this, his story was one of international conferences and efforts for legislation designed to enable his country to assert a positive role in world affairs. He was an American delegate to the United Nations Conference at San Francisco, the first two sessions of the General Assembly, and the Paris Peace Conference. When Russian and American postwar relations erupted into a "cold war," Vandenberg led the Senate in supporting policies of containment including "get tough" political negotiations, the Greek-Turkish Aid Program, the European Recovery Program, and the North Atlantic Pact. He told a Washington audience on the eve of his death that America had joined with free nations in a "crusade for honorable peace. We grip friendly hands across the sea."¹⁴

But Vandenberg was not alone in re-orienting his thinking on America's role in foreign policy between 1937 and 1949. A similar shift, of course, had taken place in the attitudes of the American people. It may be said that a vast majority of the American people supported the neutrality policy of the United States. Even to Pearl Harbor, it would appear that the American public opinion remained torn between a strong desire to keep out of the

¹³Papers, p. 135.

¹⁴Record, 81st Cong., 1st Sess., 1949, XCV, Part 16, A5755.

war and an equally strong hope that the Axis could be made to lose the struggle.¹⁵

The impact of Pearl Harbor, however, seemed to carry with it the realization that the United States could no longer avoid foreign wars because of geographical location and the further truth that America was now a part of a world community in which no state could singlehandedly achieve and maintain its own security. This shift of attitude resulted in American approval of the United Nations Charter with virtually no organized opposition.¹⁶ But even after Americans realized that the Grand Alliance of World War II had been replaced by a "cold war" between the two major powers, there was no widespread attempt to withdraw from the international scene. The American people, instead, were prepared for organized resistance to Soviet expansion by means of mutual assistance.

Along with a majority of the American people, then, Vandenberg switched from a belief in isolationism in the thirties to that of internationalism in the forties, and then extended that view to "containment." This is not to imply that he led the change in the attitudes of the American people, but it is to assert that he helped in the construction

¹⁵Philip E. Jacob, "Influences of World Events on U. S. 'Neutrality' Opinion," Public Opinion Quarterly, IV (March, 1940), 64.

¹⁶Dulles, op. cit., p. 219.

of a rationale for each of the points of view along this transition, this sequence of positions. The question of whether Vandenberg's persuasion followed public opinion or was instrumental in molding it is open to further investigation. But it is difficult to deny the view that his was a typical voice in the shift of American attitudes on foreign policy between 1937 and 1949, or that his political skill aided the development of workable policy during these years. There seems little doubt that the analysis of a selection of speeches adequate to represent Vandenberg's views through this time of changing policy ought to provide interesting and useful conclusions.

The Purpose and Method of the Study

The Purpose

The purpose of this study is to describe the pattern of thought in the speeches through which Arthur Vandenberg expressed his changing concept of America's role in world affairs between 1937 and 1949, and to describe his political role in the development of acceptable and workable legislation to implement these concepts. This thesis draws these insights from an examination of selected Vandenberg speeches in the context of the related persons, ideas, and social forces operating during this period.

The changes which occurred in Vandenberg's thinking as he made the transition through the phases of isolationism,

internationalism, and containment may be taken to constitute a significant index of the popular thought of the whole nation, and are partially recorded in his public speeches. His speeches can be viewed as an attempt to verbalize a rationale for his changing attitudes, and to place this rationale in a context acceptable to the majority of Americans. According to Wrage, speeches "serve as useful indices to the popular mind."¹⁷ An investigation of Vandenberg's speeches, assuming they were pitched to the levels of information of his audience, and assuming that they took into account the beliefs and values of this national audience, should add to an understanding of the nature of this transition in the "popular mind." This task is an appropriate one for the rhetorical critic because "the interpretation of a speech calls for an understanding of what goes into a speech." The student "who is schooled in principles and techniques" of public address brings to this task an "essential skill . . . for scholarship."¹⁸

But beyond the consideration of Vandenberg's speeches as an intellectual record of changes in the popular mind lies a second and related purpose. Clearly, Vandenberg performed significant and unique political functions during

¹⁷E. J. Wrage, "Public Address: A Study in Social and Intellectual History," Quarterly Journal of Speech, XXXIII (December, 1947), 453.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 454.

these years. Just as his personal views accompanied the shifts in popular attitude, so he became the mediator of legislative conflict and the "expediter" of workable bipartisan policy. It seems fair to argue that Vandenberg is of less interest as a creative thinker and of much greater interest as an "expediter." His position as minority party leader on foreign policy, as a majority party leader during a hostile administration, and as "elder statesman," placed him in a vital position for the development of specific national policies. Of greatest importance, his early position as isolationist leader made him acceptable to nearly all of the legislative factions after he changed to an internationalist position.

Both during the war and the critical years after it, he distinguished himself by stimulating cooperative effort where its absence might have seriously injured the nation. — One of the functions of this study, therefore, is to identify the political "expediting" or compromising implicit in the nature of his speeches on these critical and controversial issues--thus to inquire into the "political role" of Vandenberg during these years of change.

The Method

The achievement of the purposes of this study is dependent upon the effectiveness of three major processes: the selection, the reporting, and the interpretation of

Vandenberg's speeches. The following sections describe the ways by which these functions were pursued in this study.

Method of selection.--The process of selecting the speeches to be studied also involved the problem of limiting the scope of the study. No attempt was made to treat the entirety of Vandenberg's speaking career. Most or all of his speeches dealing with American foreign relations, however, were examined. An effort was made to select those speeches which best exemplify Vandenberg's idea system within each of the periods defined above. In all eleven of the speeches chosen, Vandenberg's attention is focused on a major issue or on the most critical problem of foreign policy then confronting his country. Obviously, the final choice, based on this criterion, was performed subjectively. The time periods and the speeches selected are as follows:

The period of isolationism, 1937-1941:

- (1) Speech in favor of the Neutrality Act of 1937. The speech was presented in the United States Senate on March 1, 1937.
- (2) Speech in opposition to the proposal to remove the Embargo on arms. The speech was presented in the United States Senate on October 4, 1939.
- (3) Speech in opposition to the Selective Service Act of 1940. The speech was presented in the United States Senate on August 12, 1940.
- (4) Speech in opposition to the Lend-Lease proposal on February 18, 1941. The speech was presented in the United States Senate on February 18, 1941.

The period of collective security, 1943-1946:

- (1) Speech in support of the Connally Resolution, which placed the United States Senate on record

as favoring the participation by the United States in a post-war collective organization to keep the peace. The speech was delivered in the Senate on October 25, 1943.

- (2) Speech in support of the concept of collective security in 1945. The speech was presented in the United States Senate on January 10, 1945.
- (3) Speech in support of the United Nations Charter. The speech was a Senate address, given on June 29, 1945.

The period of containment, 1946-1949:

- (1) Speech calling for a "get-tough" policy with Russia. The address was delivered to the United States Senate on February 27, 1946.
- (2) Speech in support of a bipartisan foreign policy. The speech was delivered before the Council on World Affairs in Cleveland, Ohio on January 11, 1947.
- (3) Speech in support of the European Recovery Program. The speech was presented before the United States Senate on March 1, 1948.
- (4) Speech in support of the North Atlantic Pact. The speech was presented to the United States Senate on July 6, 1949.

Method of reporting.--The reporting process begins with a study of the relationships between Vandenberg as a speaker, his speech, his audiences, and the occasion of the address. According to Berlo, "purpose and audience are not separable; all communication behavior has as its purpose the eliciting of a specific response from a specific person (or groups of persons)."¹⁹ Thus, the task of "getting at" meaning in each speech centers on the concept of the speaker's purpose,

¹⁹David K. Berlo, The Process of Communication (New York: Holt, Rhinehart & Co., 1960), p. 16.

but includes an examination of the speaker, the audience, and the milieu in which he functioned.

In each instance, before any attempt is made to report the ideas of the speech, an analysis is made of the political context of which the speech was a part. The force of events is brought into relation with Vandenberg's purpose in the speech. Although most of his speeches were delivered on the floor of the United States Senate, it can safely be assumed that he usually considered a larger audience--the people of the state of Michigan, the American people at large, and in many cases, the peoples throughout the world. His persuasions represent his attempt to accommodate his ideas to the changes going on about him. An examination of these events, therefore, precedes an examination of the ideas.

Following an analysis of the context of the speech, an attempt is made to report the ideas of the speech. This task begins with the question, what are Vandenberg's major propositions, stated or implied, through which he intended to affect the behavior of his audience? The answer to this question involves more than a listing of the major premises of the speech; his explicit assertions tell only a portion of the story. One must look for the implications of his message. These more basic concepts, usually not overt in the speech, are found in the choices he makes, the questions he raises, the goals he reaches out for, the motives to which he appeals, the values upon which he bases his proposals and in many other

inter-relationships within the speech. Hochmuth notes that the critic must ask: "Does the orator argue from an abiding concept of the 'nature of things'? from a conception of expediency? from the authority of history? from similitude? from transcendental grounds?"²⁰ In short, it is necessary to blend a variety of elements to form an adequate report of the speech.

Once in possession of the speaker's more obvious premises, however, the analysis moves on to the "manner in which the speaker attempts to connect values with proposals in the minds of his audience."²¹ This inquiry involves the manner in which Vandenberg attempted to establish a relationship between his message and the needs, desires, and wants of his audience.

In summary, the method used in this analysis of Vandenberg's speeches may be viewed as a process. The writer takes into account extensive data on the life and times of the speaker, the context in which he spoke, the audience for whom his communications were intended, and the persuasions which he employed to attain his ends. Once in possession of the identifiable proposals in the speech, however, it is possible to extend the levels of meaning in

²⁰Marie Kathryn Hochmuth (ed.), A History and Criticism of American Public Address (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1955), p. 16.

²¹A. J. Croft, "The Functions of Rhetorical Criticism," Quarterly Journal of Speech, XLII (October, 1956), 289.

the address by noting how these proposals entail other concepts, those implied by the speech. The process of "reporting" a speech really asks, "What does the speech mean?" It is possible to derive its meaning and report it by some of the processes above described.

Method of interpretation.--Clearly, "interpretation" as a process is not wholly separable from "reporting." The second step in gaining an understanding of Vandenberg's ideas, nevertheless, necessitates an interpretation of the lines of action, the outcomes, which his persuasion entails. The task involves a discrimination among values. This study makes certain value judgments about Vandenberg's choice of persuasions, and these seem to go beyond the lesser requirements of "reporting." Through his persuasion, a speaker attempts to move men to understand, to believe, to act. This process involves the speaker in choices of means of achieving goals, of choosing among action alternatives, and it is sometimes possible to indicate the nature and consequences of the choices a speaker makes. Baskerville notes that the critic may escape this task by insisting that "truth is relative, that everyone is entitled to his own opinion, and that the rhetorical critic's task is to describe and evaluate the orator's skill in his craft."²² Still Hochmuth's observation is well taken: "However much

²²Barnet Baskerville, "Emerson as a Critic of Oratory," The Southern Speech Journal, XVIII (March, 1953), 161.

the critic may wish to escape discriminating among values, as an effective rhetorical critic he cannot do so."²³

Accordingly, Croft observes that "technique cannot be evaluated apart from its content," adding that a rhetorical technique, for the critic, is only an aid in evaluating the success with which a speaker selected and established the most appropriate idea relationships in the speech,"²⁴ and the description of this process in a speech is part of what is meant by "interpretation." The larger objective of this "interpretative" process is the achievement of the two purposes stated earlier: to reveal the idea systems which accompanied the changes in policy, and to interpret Vandenberg's political roll in these changes.

The Sources of the Study

Previous research.--Two previous studies have concentrated on limited aspects of Vandenberg's speaking career. In 1953, Theodore Robert Kennedy made a study of Vandenberg's foreign policy speeches.²⁵ Kennedy briefly examines in terms of the classical canons of rhetoric many of Vandenberg's foreign policy speeches between 1930 and 1950. While the "change" in Vandenberg's thinking on American foreign policy

²³Hochmuth, op. cit., p. 16.

²⁴Croft, loc. cit., p. 289.

²⁵Theodore Robert Kennedy, "A Study of the Foreign Policy Speeches of Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of Speech, University of Wisconsin, 1952).

is mentioned, only scant effort is made to compare and contrast the various positions Vandenberg took. He attempts to deal with so many speeches that little attention can be given to any single speech. The Kennedy study is clearly not "idea-centered," but is, instead, concerned primarily with abstract rhetorical factors, pointing out those which are thought to be the most effective techniques in Vandenberg's methods of persuasion. Kennedy appears to be more interested in the Vandenberg rhetoric, for the sake of rhetoric, than in the examination of his rhetoric as a means of exploring his ideas and the many social and political implications of his speeches and his speaking career.

A less ambitious project is Fred Smith Robie's study of Senator Vandenberg's 1945 internationalism address.²⁶ The speech analyzed in this study is often said to reflect a turning point in Vandenberg's career--i.e., from isolationism to internationalism. Because of its limited scope, however, the thesis adds little to a full understanding of the pattern of Vandenberg's change of attitude in regard to American foreign policy.

The definitive Vandenberg biography has yet to appear. Much of the data on his life is available, of course, in numerous periodicals and newspapers which trace his career,

²⁶Fred Smith Robie, "An Analytical Study of Senator Vandenberg's 1945 Internationalism Address" (unpublished Master's thesis, Dept. of Speech, University of Michigan, 1949).

both as a newspaperman and Senator. The bibliography contains a full listing of those consulted for this study. In summary, no other study has as yet been discovered which undertakes the purpose of this thesis.

Major sources.--A major source of this study was the processed Vandenberg Papers.²⁷ This collection includes the Senator's diary, and a number of letters, reports and speeches disclosing many "behind-the-scenes" activities.

For purposes of this study, the chief limitation of the Papers is the fact that the book contains only scant information regarding the Senator's activities prior to Pearl Harbor. It provides little information concerning his correspondence, his speech-making, his private thinking, or his activities during the period in which he advocated isolationism for America.

The Papers, however, afford numerous insights into all phases of the Senator's life and work after the middle of 1943. There is much, not otherwise available, for example, on activities of the Committee of Eight, briefings on the Yalta Conference, "behind-the-scenes" activities at the San Francisco Conference, the Paris Peace Conference, the first meeting of the United Nations, and the Senator's work as leader of the Senate from 1947 to 1949.

²⁷The original papers are not available for public examination at this time, and this edited version is the only way to draw upon them.

The Congressional Record was used as the major source for the Vandenberg speeches. The Record was also useful as a daily account of activities. Vandenberg spoke often in Congress, and it is interesting to compare the language used on the floor of the Senate with that used in the privacy of his diary and correspondence.

The limitations of the Record as a source of speeches is recognized. It is always possible that a recorder will make mistakes and what is printed, therefore, will differ from what was spoken. It is also possible for a member of Congress to have his remarks changed before the final printing. For these reasons, the speeches as found in the Record were, when possible, compared with the partial texts in the Vandenberg Papers, The New York Times and Vital Speeches.

Other governmental documents were utilized in this study. Included were such Congressional documents as hearings and reports of the Senate Foreign Relations committees. The limitation here, of course, is the fact that the records of the executive sessions are never made public. Vandenberg's diary was particularly valuable in filling in some significant gaps in this respect.

The Cordell Hull Memoirs²⁸ was an invaluable source of information, inasmuch as the author had access to many official state department records.

²⁸Hull, op. cit.

James F. Byrnes' Speaking Frankly,²⁹ and Tom Connally's My Name is Tom Connally,³⁰ both include significant references to Vandenberg's role in foreign policy.

Among the general accounts of the history of American foreign policy during this period, four were especially useful in this study. These were Foster Rhea Dulles' America's Rise to World Power, 1898-1954;³¹ William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason's two volumes, The Challenge to Isolation, 1937-1940, and The Undeclared War, 1940-1941;³² and Julius Pratt's A History of United States Foreign Policy.³³ A classified listing of other useful sources is provided in the bibliography.

The Plan of the Study

Following this introduction, Vandenberg, the man, is examined in Chapter II. The purpose of the chapter, however, is not to present a detailed biography, but simply to provide a sketch of Vandenberg's personal history as a

²⁹James F. Byrnes, Speaking Frankly (New York: Harper & Bros., 1947).

³⁰Tom Connally, My Name is Tom Connally (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1954).

³¹Dulles, op. cit.

³²William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, The Challenge to Isolation, 1937-1940 (New York: Harper & Bros., 1952), and The Undeclared War, 1940-1941 (New York: Harper & Bros., 1953).

³³Julius Pratt, A History of United States Foreign Policy (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955).

background to an understanding of the twelve-year period with which this study is concerned. While it provides a brief view of his entire life, the main point of the chapter is to provide a summary view of Vandenberg's activities in the field of foreign affairs.

Three chapters are then devoted to a consideration of the eleven selected Vandenberg speeches. Chapter III deals with Vandenberg's speeches in support of American neutrality before Pearl Harbor. Chapter IV is concerned with his speaking in support of postwar collective security. Chapter V discusses his ideas in support of Soviet containment policies after 1945.

Each of these three chapters dealing with the speeches is written in three sections. These are: (1) an introduction to the chapter in which an overview of its content is provided, (2) a critical examination of the speeches, and (3) a summary of the pattern of ideas which dominated his thinking in the speeches. The treatment of the speeches in each of the chapters is made in three sections. These are: (1) a review of the historical context in which the speech was presented, (2) a report of the speech content, and (3) an interpretation of the speech.

A final chapter reports major conclusions about the nature of Vandenberg's ideas as expressions of the changes in American foreign policy from 1937 to 1949, and of his political role in these changes.

CHAPTER II

ARTHUR H. VANDENBERG: BACKGROUND TO TRANSITION

Introduction

This study is intended as an inquiry in rhetorical criticism, and not as a full biography of the man. It treats the system of ideas as revealed in selected speeches of Arthur H. Vandenberg. What the former Senator did throughout his entire life, what he thought, and what he said, however, are all directly related to his family of ideas. For that reason, it is necessary to recall certain portions of Vandenberg's life in order to provide a context for the positions which he took on vital foreign policy issues from 1937 to 1949. This chapter attempts to summarize those matters of particular significance to the study of the ideas in his speeches.

It is possible to divide Vandenberg's life into three phases. The first phase covers the first twenty-two years of his life (1883-1906); he credited certain events of this period as factors which molded his mature social philosophy. The second period (1906-1928) covers the second twenty-two years of his life. It was during this period that he published a newspaper, wrote books, and began his political career.

The third period (1928-1951) covers his career in the United States Senate. The following sections of this chapter are devoted to those three periods of his life, and the fourth section concentrates on the twelve-year period during which his views on foreign policy underwent the transition, which is the focus of this study.

The Early Life, 1883-1906

The Childhood Years

Arthur H. Vandenberg's ancestors were in many ways typical Americans. His father's Dutch ancestors had settled in New York State in the eighteenth century. His mother's people--English--also settled in New York. Like many Americans, his parents--Aaron and Alpha Hendrick Vandenberg--turned their thoughts to the West and toward building a new life. They left the Mohawk Valley of New York in 1878 to settle in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where the future Senator was born on March 22, 1884.

Aaron Vandenberg's harness business provided a comfortable home for his family on Grand Rapid's Washington Street. His business turned into such a success, in fact, that in time he employed over a dozen other artisans. The panic of 1893, however, wiped out the Vandenberg livelihood, forced the mother to take in boarders, and sent young Arthur, at the age of nine, out into the business world. The elder Vandenberg blamed President Cleveland and the Democrats for

his misfortune. The incident made such an impression on the father that one of his final admonitions as he lay on his death bed was "son, always be a Republican."¹

Nine-year-old Arthur met the challenge of family poverty. With a pushcart he put himself into business carrying shoes from a warehouse to a freight yard. Two years later he had two boys assisting him and was earning twenty dollars a week. As his enterprise prospered, he branched out into the selling of lemonade, flowers, papers and vegetables. "I had no youth," remarked Vandenberg. "I went to work when I was nine, and I never got a chance to enjoy myself until I came to the Senate."² But the incident had a brighter side for him:

My experiences as a child bent me two ways, if I assign myself to any political category. I know from bitter experience what it feels like to have nothing in your pocket, but also I know the value of enterprise, and how enterprise can protect old age. I'm half a conservative, half a liberal. The conservatism derives from having gotten moderately rich, the liberalism from my having been poor.³

The Adolescent Years

Early education.--Vandenberg's jobs as a youth, however, did not interfere with his scholastic activities.

¹Beverly Smith, "Russia's Pet Whipping Boy," Saturday Evening Post, CCXIX (April 5, 1947), 105.

²Bill Davidson, "The Two Mr. Vandenberg," Collier's CXXI (June 19, 1948), 80.

³John Gunther, Inside U. S. A. (New York: Harper & Bros., 1946), p. 393.

He viewed education as a means to financial security. "I solemnly promised God Almighty," said Vandenberg, "that if it lay within my power, I would never permit what happened to my father to happen to me."⁴ His "Horatio Alger faith" may have put him at the head of his graduating class. His active forensic mind earned him the nickname of "Senator,"⁵ and brought him honors in speech contests. When only fifteen he won first place with an oration on the peace conference at the Hague. He was fond of this activity. "The debating and literary societies, the fraternity banquets," he said, "were the forums for my constant effervescence."⁶

Early jobs.--Young Arthur's first job after high school was as a factory clerk. But he quit the position when the company failed to meet its payroll. He was fired from his next job. One of his heroes came to Grand Rapids one day, and Vandenberg played "hookey" in order to hear him speak. About this incident, Vandenberg later said:

In 1900, Theodore Roosevelt was running for President, and I was a tremendous TR fan. I was out of high school by this time, working as a billing clerk in a cracker factory. There was a TR parade in town, and I asked the boss for the time out to see it. He refused. I went anyway. I came back, and he fired me. I had to have another job right away, and I got one as an office boy on the Grand Rapids Herald.⁷

⁴Ibid., pp. 392-93.

⁵Smith, loc. cit., p. 106.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Gunther, op. cit., p. 393.

Higher education.--But for a youth with Vandenberg's habits, city hall reporting was not as promising as a college education. After a year on the Herald he entered the University of Michigan with plans to study law. The matriculation fees took forty-eight of the fifty dollars which he had saved from his earnings, and he was forced to tackle a number of odd jobs to support himself. The schedule proved too much for his health, and Vandenberg, on the verge of physical collapse, returned to the Herald after only one year of college. He remained in this work until he entered the Senate twenty-two years later.

Marriage.--In 1907, Vandenberg married Elizabeth Watson, also of Grand Rapids. The young couple had three children, Arthur, Jr., Barbara, and Elizabeth. The first Mrs. Vandenberg died in 1916. Two years later, Vandenberg married Hazel Whitaker, a schoolteacher and newspaper woman, whom he had met while studying at the University of Michigan. Their marriage was ended by her death just a year before Vandenberg died in 1951.

The Newspaper Years, 1906-1928

During the years in which Vandenberg served as publisher of the Grand Rapids Herald he found economic security, began a variety of political activities, and published a number of historical books. This section examines these events in terms of their significance to his later career.

The Young Publisher

Vandenberg plunged into politics almost at the beginning of his newspaper career. He progressed from city hall to state political reporter. He was especially fond of the latter job, because it enabled him to travel around the state on campaign trips. His favorite politician was William Alden Smith, a Congressman, who was to become a Vandenberg hero. "He modeled himself after the older man and imitated some of his grand ways," says one observer. "When you hear Senator Vandenberg launch upon a sonorous peroration, you are listening not merely to him but to an echo from old Senator Smith."⁸

Congressman Smith reciprocated Vandenberg's devotion. Upon his election to the Senate in 1907, Smith purchased the Herald and made twenty-two-year-old Vandenberg editor and publisher. "A break like that can't happen to more than one person in a million," observed Vandenberg years later. "I've been a creature of good fortune."⁹

Under Vandenberg's leadership, the Herald prospered, and so did its editor. His personal fortune became secure as circulation and advertising increased. Vandenberg was then in a position to occupy his time with civic affairs

⁸Smith, loc. cit., p. 107.

⁹Gunther, op. cit., p. 394.

and state politics. "He became a public opinion molder; he led civic movements. If there was a committee, he was on it. If there was a meeting, he addressed it. While still in his twenties, he was a power in state politics."¹⁰

The Young Politician

At thirty-two, Vandenberg served as chairman of the Republican state convention. There was talk of Vandenberg for Congress; some mentioned his name for Governor. But the editor was not interested. He wanted financial security before getting into public life.¹¹ As he put it, "I decided not to go into public life until I was independent of public life."¹²

As an editor, Vandenberg's influence was also felt outside of Michigan. He corresponded with Senator Henry Cabot Lodge on American participation in the League of Nations, contributing the phrase: "unshared idealism is a menace." It is also believed that Vandenberg influenced Warren G. Harding's plank on the League in the election of 1920 inasmuch as he served as one of that "ill-fated" statesman's speech writers. When asked whether he was responsible for Harding's "back to normalcy" phrase, he

¹⁰Smith, loc. cit., p. 107.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Gunther, op. cit., p. 394.

responded: "I don't claim it, and I don't deny it. Normalcy certainly sounds like one of my words."¹³

The Young Author

The Hamilton episode.--Vandenberg's interests were not limited to politics and editorial writing. During the twenties, he "set out to right a historical wrong." He felt that historians had not recognized the contributions of Alexander Hamilton to America. "I felt that America owed a long-overdue debt to the memory of Alexander Hamilton," said Vandenberg. "I determined to make a small payment to account."¹⁴ The net result was three published Hamilton eulogies.

In his first effort, he attempted to prove that Hamilton was the greatest American.¹⁵ This publication was followed with a book entitled If Hamilton Were Here Today, in which he characterized his hero as the "inspired oracle of the Constitution."¹⁶ His final "payment" was made in a book called, The Trail of Tradition,¹⁷ in which

¹³Smith, loc. cit., p. 107.

¹⁴Arthur H. Vandenberg, "Alexander Hamilton," Life, XXIII (July 7, 1947), 65.

¹⁵Arthur H. Vandenberg, The Greatest American: Alexander Hamilton (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1921).

¹⁶Arthur H. Vandenberg, If Hamilton Were Here Today (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1923), p. v.

¹⁷Arthur H. Vandenberg, The Trail of Tradition (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1926).

Hamilton received credit for establishing the "nationalism" tradition in America. This last book is significant in the historical background for American isolationism of the twenties, a policy described by Vandenberg as the "essence . . . of peace,"¹⁸ and falls in the long line of isolationist statements which characterize Vandenberg up to Pearl Harbor.

Hamilton was first in the line of Vandenberg's heroes. He said that "Hamilton stood at my shoulder like a big brother in my youth."¹⁹ His interest in Hamilton, however, was not based on a deep appreciation of that forefather's thought or influence on the American society. Vandenberg was concerned, instead, with Hamilton's career and his rise from a low origin in life to the top of the American scene. His lack of perception, his failure to come to grips with Hamilton's mind, may explain his later attempts to pass his devotion for Hamilton off to impressionable youth. It cannot be overlooked, however, that Vandenberg was thirty-seven when he nominated Hamilton for the honor of the "greatest American." He was later to qualify this conclusion. "The greatest American," said Vandenberg in 1946, "is a type, not a person."²⁰

¹⁸Ibid., p. viii.

¹⁹Richard H. Rovere, "The Unassailable Vandenberg," Harpers, CXCVI (May, 1948), 398.

²⁰Davidson, loc. cit., p. 80.

The Political Career, 1928-1951

Vandenberg's twenty-two years on the Herald were an apprenticeship which he served prior to entering into politics. Through the media of editorials, speeches, books, and pamphlets, he had expressed himself on most of the major issues of his time. When the time came in 1928, for him to announce his long-standing desire to serve in the United States Senate, he was to many citizens of Michigan a symbol of statesmanship. His reward was the appointment to fill out the unexpired term of the Democratic incumbent, Woodbridge N. Ferris. He was sworn into the office on April 5, 1928. The following November he was elected to a full six-year term with a 600,000 vote majority, the largest "ever given to any Michigan candidate in a state election."²¹ He served in that capacity until his death on April 18, 1951. This section will treat the highlights of that career. Brief mention will be made of the senatorial image which he created, his career as a candidate for office, and his Congressional record on domestic affairs. Because of its special significance to this study, his foreign policy activities will be treated in a separate section.

The Image of a Senator

The man as Senator.--Senator Vandenberg was once described as a man that a Hollywood movie director would

²¹"Persons and Personalities," Literary Digest, CXX (September 28, 1935), 39.

cast "for a United States Senator on sight."²² John Gunther says that if he "had to describe him in a sentence, I would be tempted to say that he looks exactly like what he is--a Senator."²³ He was a big man, over six feet tall and around 200 pounds in weight with broad, square shoulders. An outstanding feature was his fat, round face, partially covered with horn-rimmed spectacles. He combed his white hair laterally across a large head. His gold watch chain and ever present cigar were familiar characteristics. His clothes were in the classical American political tradition--with the exception, perhaps, of the Homburg hat, without which he was rarely seen. He had humor and warmth, but his ego sometimes covered his likeable qualities. James B. Reston says many regarded Vandenberg as a "somewhat cocky lone wolf."²⁴ But Dean Acheson, who knew him well, insists this was not the case; that the Senator "took a bit of knowing."²⁵

Although Vandenberg's mind could penetrate the main aspects of an issue, he was essentially a student of men rather than ideas. He possessed, however, some rare

²²Maxine Block (ed.), "Arthur H. Vandenberg," Current Biography (New York: The H. W. Wilson Co., 1940), p. 821.

²³Gunther, op. cit., p. 392.

²⁴James B. Reston, "Case for Vandenberg," Life, XXIV (May 24, 1948), 117.

²⁵Dean Acheson, "Journey Into Our Times," American Heritage, XI (February, 1960), 79.

gifts in his "capacity to learn and capacity for action."²⁶ He learned from his newspaper work the importance of precision when dealing with details. His hard work earned him the reputation of being "the most studious man in Congress."²⁷ He looked upon the time spent in his Wardman Park Hotel and the Senate office building doing his homework as a precondition for effectiveness in the art of statesmanship. One Washington observer noted:

The reason Vandenberg seems to be a cut or two above the average statesman is that he tries so hard to be. He works slavishly as a Senator, attends Senate sessions and committee meetings conscientiously and comes up with solid, specific proposals based on extended research.²⁸

The Senator as compromiser.--Vandenberg earned a reputation in the Senate as a compromiser. He truly viewed politics as the art of the possible. "My lifelong role has been in the middle of the road trying to resolve opposing extremes into workable government,"²⁹ he said. In this sense, he was often able to accommodate his own views to the opinions of others in order to obtain needed legislation. Acheson further notes: "Arthur Vandenberg's mind was not original; but it was open. He was not a

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Milton S. Mayer, "Men Who Would Be President," Nation, CL (May 11, 1940), 588.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Smith, loc. cit., pp. 107-08.

creator of the ideas which he was eminently capable of receiving and using."³⁰ He was, perhaps, at times inconsistent in his voting record. But he was at all times the "classic Man of Action."³¹

The Candidate for Office

Vandenberg won election to the United States Senate four times. He won easily in 1928, but faced close races in 1934 and 1940 during the years of Franklin D. Roosevelt's popularity. In 1946, he won a landslide victory without even campaigning, carrying every county in Michigan.

The 1936 election.--Vandenberg was three times considered a strong possibility for the Republican nomination for President. His success as one of five Republican Senators to win re-election in 1934 pushed him to the front as nominal leader of his party. "From 1934 to 1938 the Senator from Michigan was the Republican Party," noted Mayer. "He rose to the top of the party by the simple expedient of being the only man in it."³² He refused, however, to be considered for the 1936 nomination. After Landon's nomination, many party leaders hinted at a vice-presidential nomination for Vandenberg. He asserted:

³⁰Acheson, loc. cit., p. 47.

³¹Reston, loc. cit., p. 104.

³²Mayer, loc. cit.

"I am sure I can be of greater service in active labors on the Senate floor than on its silent rostrum."³³

The 1940 election.---In 1940, he emerged with Thomas E. Dewey and Robert E. Taft as popular choices for the nomination. While he did not actively campaign for the nomination, he let it be known that he would accept if offered. "When Dewey and Taft have burned themselves out, Vandenberg will come loping down the stretch,"³⁴ predicted one observer. But efforts in his behalf were crushed in pre-convention primaries by Governor Dewey, and at the convention by the Willkie landslide.

The 1944 election.---The Michigan Senator refused even to consider the Presidency in 1944. He did hope, however, that Roosevelt would be out of the White House before the peace conference.³⁵ He cast about for the man whom he thought could defeat Roosevelt for a fourth term. He concluded that General Douglas MacArthur was the man for the job. In an article for Collier's magazine entitled "Why I Am For MacArthur," Vandenberg alleged that the

³³The New York Times, June 7, 1936, p. 32.

³⁴Mayer, loc. cit., p. 589.

³⁵Arthur H. Vandenberg, Jr. (ed.), The Private Papers of Senator Vandenberg (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1952), 75. Hereinafter referred to as Papers. The editor notes that Vandenberg concluded "that the most important step that could be taken to assure a satisfactory peace settlement after the war was to defeat Mr. Roosevelt in 1944."

General "would make the strongest President in the tough days that lie ahead," because he embodied "loyalty to our American destiny. . . ." ³⁶ The boom for MacArthur ended, however, when the General announced that he would not accept the nomination if it were offered to him because of "widespread public opinion that it is detrimental to our war effort to have an officer in a high position of active service at the front considered for President." ³⁷ After this announcement, Vandenberg supported Dewey.

The 1948 election.--In 1948, Vandenberg was a world figure. The Senator "stands on the safest and least assailable ground in American politics," wrote Harpers magazine editors. "Indeed it is hard to see how any public man could ever be any better off than he is at this moment." ³⁸ Many of his friends begged him to let them enter his name in a "draft" movement for the Presidency. Vandenberg refused. He found, however, that "it is harder not to run for President than it is to run." ³⁹ In March of 1948, the editors of United States News pointed to Vandenberg as "the man most likely to take the presidential

³⁶Arthur Vandenberg, "Why I Am For MacArthur," Collier's, CXIII (February 12, 1944), 14.

³⁷Papers, p. 84.

³⁸Rovere, loc. cit., p. 394.

³⁹Arthur H. Vandenberg, "I Am Not Running for President," Life, XXII (March 17, 1947), 43.

oath of office next January 20."⁴⁰ The Senator spoke out. "I am not a candidate," he said. "I do not expect to be a candidate. I shall seek no convention delegates nor approve the efforts of others in my behalf."⁴¹ He later explained:

I believed that I could best serve my country by finishing out my Senate tour of duty. That was my controlling motive. Indeed, it was more than a motive. It was a passion.⁴²

The Republican Convention permitted Vandenberg to remain in the Senate, and turned, instead, to Dewey as its nominee. It is interesting to note that in spite of his disavowed interest in the office, his diary contains an undelivered acceptance speech which Vandenberg had written before going to Philadelphia. "I have always believed in preparedness," said Vandenberg. "I had to be ready for the unexpected and the unsought."⁴³

The Domestic Record

The new Senator.--When Vandenberg first reached Washington in 1928 to begin his Senatorial career, he issued the following statement as a summary of the policies he would pursue:

⁴⁰"People of the Week," United States News, XXIV (March 26, 1948), 39.

⁴¹Papers, p. 422.

⁴²Ibid., p. 435.

⁴³Ibid., p. 442.

All I can say at the moment is that I am a Republican by faith and inheritance. The inheritance comes from a grandfather who helped nominate Lincoln. The faith comes from a belief that history and experience united to recommend basic Republican principles as safest for the Republic.

This demands always an unimpeached Constitution which may be changed but never cheated. It demands unentangled Americanism which makes every possible effort to lead in the pursuits of blessed peace, but keeps its powder dry. It demands economic independence on a high scale for our mass citizenship, a thing possible only under stalwart Republican tariffs.⁴⁴

In actual practice, Vandenberg was neither a "liberal" nor a "conservative." One observation that Vandenberg "on most issues stands somewhat to the right of center,"⁴⁵ is probably appropriate. During his first term, for example, he gained the good will of President Hoover by supporting him on major domestic legislation. He was held in such esteem by the Vice-President, whom Vandenberg had supported editorially in the Herald, that Dawes broke precedent and turned the presiding gavel over to the freshman Senator. But he didn't fare as well with the Republican leadership in Congress. He organized a group of liberals in rebellion who became known as the "Young Turks." The objective of this young group "was to needle the Hoover administration and the 'Old Guard' Party leadership into more liberal lines of action."⁴⁶

⁴⁴The New York Times, April 2, 1928, p. 3.

⁴⁵"People of the Week," loc. cit., p. 39.

⁴⁶Ibid.

The tariff question.--Before the end of World War II, Vandenberg was a strict protectionist. He reflected the commercial interest of Michigan in fighting for high tariffs on antiques, sugar and copper. He insisted that the Roosevelt administration's Reciprocal Trade Agreement Acts were designed to "clothe the President with unchecked and uncontrolled tariff-bargaining powers," resulting in "dictatorial authority."⁴⁷

After America entered her postwar period of internationalism, Vandenberg changed his mind on the tariff question. He did not become an advocate of free trade by any means, but he did insist that "the reciprocal formula is indispensable to our economy in this postwar world." His only announced reason for the change of attitudes was simply, "I happen to be one of those who has come to believe."⁴⁸ James Reston, however, said Vandenberg changed because the Senator believed "the bipartisan foreign policy would be meaningless if it were not extended into the economic field."⁴⁹

The New Deal.--The coming of the New Deal in 1932 found Vandenberg agreeing with its "noble objectives," but

⁴⁷U. S. Congressional Record, 73rd Cong., 2d Sess., 1934, LXXVIII, Part 8, 9081. Hereinafter referred to as Record.

⁴⁸Record, 80th Cong., 2d Sess., 1948, XCIV, Part 6, 8051.

⁴⁹The New York Times, February 5, 1947, p. 1.

feeling "compelled, regretfully, almost tearfully, to knife nine out of ten New Deal measures."⁵⁰ He believed that "the New Deal must be . . . melted over, recast into a new engine, going slowly and rather on the bias in slightly different directions."⁵¹ This inconsistency earned him the reputation of being a "straddler."

Vandenberg wore out his lungs battling against the Wagner Act, the N. R. A., the A. A. A., and the T. V. A., Passamaquoddy, the Florida Ship Canal, and nearly every other New Deal proposal. He was not all black or white, however. In December of 1933, he waged a monumental but hopeless struggle to keep the local banks from closing. This losing fight so impressed him with the plight of the banks' depositors that he wrote an amendment to the 1933 Banking Act setting up the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. Crowley, later head of the corporation, credited Vandenberg with being the "father of the FDIC."

Vandenberg also voted for Social Security, the SEC, and the Child Labor amendments. All this seemed merely to confuse his friends and enemies. . . .⁵²

Because he feared the Roosevelt version of national debts and unbalanced budgets, Vandenberg launched some of his heaviest attacks against New Deal appropriation bills. He referred to many of the President's proposals as "driving wealth out"⁵³ devices. On the other hand, he conceded that the New Deal "launched certain social concepts, which,

⁵⁰Mayer, loc. cit., p. 589.

⁵¹Rovere, loc. cit., p. 402.

⁵²Davidson, loc. cit., p. 81.

⁵³Record, 74th Cong., 1st Sess., 1935, LXXIX, Part 12, 13048.

in their objectives, cannot and should not be reversed."⁵⁴ Vandenberg, however, usually countered with a watered-down version of each fiscal suggestion, further confusing his opposition. In 1935, for example, when he spoke 15,000 words against a work relief bill, Senator Hugh Black arose and said, "I am frank to confess that I am unable to ascertain whether the Senator is for the bill or against the bill."⁵⁵ Milton S. Mayer painted an even more baffling picture of Vandenberg's voting record on New Deal proposals. Observing that the Michigan Senator "doesn't add up to anything. He cancels out. . . ." Mayer added:

On domestic problems you can't locate him at all. He has stood squarely on both sides of every issue for the past ten years. He has been against subsidies to the farmer and for the payment of equalization fees; for the RFC and against pump priming; for economy and against re-organization; for devaluation and against "repudiation"; for housing and against spend-lend theory (and for and against housing); for the SEC and against trading and holding company regulation; for tariff and loan benefits to the suffering poor (and for and against relief); for and against federal control of relief. . . .⁵⁶

Vandenberg's reputation as a compromiser on New Deal measures drew comment from the Washington Gridiron Club one season. The newspapermen painted a scene in which two baseball teams, one dressed in white and the

⁵⁴Mayer, loc. cit., p. 589.

⁵⁵Davidson, loc. cit., p. 15.

⁵⁶Mayer, loc. cit., pp. 587-88.

other in blue, bounced on the field. Each team had only eight players. Suddenly another player marched on the field dressed in a white and red uniform. "My name is Vandenberg," the mysterious player announced, "I'll bat for both sides."⁵⁷

In retrospect, however, it is not hard to understand how Vandenberg earned his reputation as a "Yes" and "No" man. He had a passionate interest in both the humane goals of Roosevelt's reform and his Republican background of "trickle down from the top" theory of prosperity. He feared the consequences of a bureaucratic national government, but he believed that the body politic's major responsibility was to human rights over property rights. He came to think of himself as symbolic of the golden mean. On most issues he stood somewhere between white and black. "He is hardly a liberal in the usual accepted meaning of the word. And he stops short of the extreme conservatism of some of his party colleagues."⁵⁸

Domestic activities after Pearl Harbor.--After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Vandenberg joined the rest of the nation in the mobilization of America's forces for the conflict. He supported most of Roosevelt's war policies, both in the realm of foreign and domestic affairs.

⁵⁷Beverly Smith, "Grand Rapids Boy Makes Good," American Magazine, CXXV (January, 1938), 120.

⁵⁸"People of the Week," loc. cit., p. 39.

After 1945, Vandenberg took an active part in only two legislative issues related to domestic affairs. He assumed the party's leadership of foreign affairs but offered no challenge to the leadership of Senator Robert A. Taft of Ohio in domestic matters. In the case of the Taft-Hartley labor act, Vandenberg, in regard to certain details, held serious reservations, but "gave Mr. Taft his way in the hope of obtaining the Ohio Senator's important backing in foreign affairs."⁵⁹ He sensed the need for party solidarity in dealing with the "cold war."

The Michigan Senator, however, was active in resolving the conflicts over civilian versus military control of the Atomic Energy Commission. He insisted that the military have some contact with all matters involving the use of atomic energy for defense purposes. In addition, he helped to secure the confirmation of David E. Lilienthal as Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission. He aligned himself for Lilienthal against such strong Republican Senators as Taft, White and Bridges to help stop what he called a "political lynching."⁶⁰ He argued that "logic, equity, fair play, and a just regard to urgent public welfare combine to recommend confirmation."⁶¹

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰"Hint: How To Swing a Vote," Time, XLIX (April 14, 1947), 24.

⁶¹Record, 80th Cong., 1st Sess., 1947, XCIII, Part 3, 3108.

Vandenberg also became involved in a controversy over attempts to limit the use of the filibuster. The Congressional Reorganization Act of 1946 provided for a limit on debate when a specified number of Senators agreed to such action. As President Pro Tempore of the Senate, Vandenberg was called upon for a ruling as to whether this limitation applied to motions to consider a bill as well as debates already in progress. He ruled that it did not apply to motions to consider. The Senate sustained his ruling over strong objections of Senator Barkley. The latter as presiding officer in 1949 reversed Vandenberg's ruling. After a vigorous speech by Vandenberg in defense of his original ruling, Barkley's ruling was overridden by a vote of 46-41.

As Vandenberg's concern for foreign policy increased, and as the division of labor between Taft and Vandenberg became more firm, he became less "Mr. Republican" and more the foreign policy arm of the party, and in many ways the President's adviser. The "transition" in his foreign policy views can now be placed in the context of his political career.

The Foreign Policy Career

A major conclusion reached in this study is that Vandenberg's attitudes on America's role in world affairs reflect three major policy phases through which he moved between 1937 and 1949. Until Pearl Harbor, he was an avowed isolationist. After Pearl Harbor until 1946, at least, he

supported the concept of collective security, and following the breakup of big-power unity after World War II, he focused his internationalism on the idea of containment of the Soviet Union.

The Period of Isolationism

Climate of isolationism.--During the 1920's

Vandenberg generally took editorial positions in the Grand Rapids Herald consistent with the "retreat to traditional isolationism . . . not in the sense of complete withdrawal from world affairs but of consistent refusal to make any political commitments infringing upon the nation's freedom of action."⁶² He wanted America to assume a role in world affairs, but in the tradition that avoided any binding commitments. Vandenberg insisted that America preserve her "absolute and untrammelled right of self-decision."⁶³ Dulles describes this brand of isolationism as follows:

Its underlying spirit often served to create a distrust of any dealings whatsoever with foreign nations. It affected tariff policies, immigration legislation, the insistence upon war debt payments. It encouraged other strongly nationalistic activities. Within the broad reaches of foreign policy itself, however, isolationism meant no more and no less than the ability of the American people to realize that

⁶²Foster Rhea Dulles, America's Rise to World Power (New York: Harper & Bros., 1954), p. 144.

⁶³Vandenberg, The Trail of Tradition, p. 314.

moral platitudes about peace were no substitute for acceptance of the responsibilities of collective security.⁶⁴

Vandenberg carried this emphatic opposition to America's participation in collective security with him to the United States Senate in 1928. As a member of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, he consistently opposed all measures which tended to involve the United States in foreign affairs. The one exception to this position might be his stand on the American entry into the World Court. While he voted for entry, he insisted that American participation should not be interpreted to mean that the United States could be subjected to the court's decisions without previous consent.

The neutrality legislation.--Vandenberg viewed with alarm Japan's march on Manchuria in 1931 and her later attack on the China mainland in July, 1937; Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia; Hitler's entrance into the demilitarized Rhineland; and the Civil War in Spain. But he shared the thinking of a majority of his countrymen who "refused to

⁶⁴Dulles, op. cit., p. 145. He also comments on Vandenberg's consistent isolationist stand. He writes: "As a leading spokesman for this approach to foreign affairs [isolationism], Senator Borah invariably stated that the United States was always ready to fulfill its obligations to mankind. But the point he constantly stressed was that the nation should always act independently--neither at the bidding nor through the permission of other countries. Arthur H. Vandenberg, at this time editor of the Herald and destined to take over Borah's position as isolationist leader in the Senate, had very much the same ideas."

entertain any proposal for action with other nations to check the rapid deterioration of the international situation."⁶⁵ The Senator, in fact, was a chief architect in helping to build a wall of neutrality around his country. He supported neutrality acts in 1935-1937 designed to avoid the mistakes of the Wilson era. The legislation was designed to make it impossible for Americans to sell arms to belligerents, extend loans, or travel in belligerent waters.

Defense of neutrality.--After the 1937 Neutrality Act became the law of the land, events in Europe continued to offer a challenge to American neutrality. Germany occupied Austria in the spring of 1938, followed by the Czechoslovakia situation and the Munich crisis, and climaxed by the invasion of Poland. The President suggested that the embargo section of the Neutrality Act be repealed. Vandenberg fought a losing battle in opposing the administration's request.

As war came closer in 1940-41, Vandenberg continued to resist all moves which he thought might mean American intervention. He opposed selective service, Lend-Lease, and the arming of American merchant ships. Although he shared the strong desire of his people to see the defeat of the Axis, he thought it more important for the United

⁶⁵William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, The Challenge to Isolation (New York: Harper & Bros., 1942), p. 11.

States to keep out of the conflict. He feared that intervention might result in a loss of the American way of life. He was further convinced that this was a step which America need never take. His rationale was characterized by the comment: "Two great oceans, though much foreshortened, still relatively insulate our shores against this curse of war."⁶⁶

The onset of war.--Japan ended the neutrality battle in America with her attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. After President Roosevelt asked Congress for a declaration of war against Japan on December 8, 1941, the leader of the Senate, Tom Connally, hoped to move the measure through Congress without any speeches. But Vandenberg insisted on being heard. He assured the world that there was "no shadow of a doubt about America's united and indomitable answer to the cruel and ruthless challenge of this tragic hour."⁶⁷ He noted in his diary, however, that "a wiser foreign policy could have been followed-- although now no one will ever be able to prove it." But he admitted: "We were no longer 'free agents' after the infamous Japanese attack. . . . There was nothing to do but to answer in kind."⁶⁸

⁶⁶Record, 76th Cong., 2d Sess., 1939, LXXXV, Part 1, 104.

⁶⁷Record, 77th Cong., 1st Sess., 1941, LXXXVII, Part 9, 9505.

⁶⁸Papers, p. 17.

The Collective Security Period

In pledging his support for the Allied cause on December 8, 1941, Senator Vandenberg made it plain "that we were not deserting our beliefs, but that we were postponing all further argument over policy until the battle forced upon us by Japan is won."⁶⁹ But his concept of America's role in foreign affairs was never to return to the prewar position. His thinking underwent a gradual change.

A middle-of-the-road position.--By early 1943, it was the voice of a middle-of-the-road man, perhaps, which declared that the average American is "neither an isolationist nor an internationalist." The Senator went on to characterize him as one "who is willing to take his full share of responsibilities"⁷⁰ in the postwar world. He was convinced that America should participate in some type of postwar international organization. But the Senator was unsure of the direction the organization should take. Acheson notes his frustration:

He was very much on the outside trying to look in; and he could see nothing. Suspicion consumed him--suspicion, in his own words, of "Executive dictatorship, by-passing the Senate, flouting of the Constitution"; nothing is more frustrating than not to know what is going on; and the Republican minority in the Senate had not found a channel to the State Department.⁷¹

⁶⁹Papers, p. 35.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Acheson, loc. cit., p. 45.

The "channel" was opened to him in March of 1944 when Secretary Hull requested the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to set up a representative group to confer regularly with the administration on postwar problems. Vandenberg was selected as a member of the "Committee of Eight," which consisted of four Democrats and four Republicans. The Committee was given the opportunity to confer weekly with those responsible for the shaping of American foreign policy. This experience was a valuable one for the Michigan Senator. "This gave Vandenberg an opportunity to try out statements of the merits of the proposal and possible answers to arguments against it," says Acheson. "He thought out loud and his talk would proceed with mounting enthusiasm as conviction and confidence grew."⁷²

The internationalist.--By January, 1945, the change in Vandenberg's mind from isolationism to internationalism was complete. In the most famous speech of his career, he arose on January 10, in the Senate and announced his complete conversion to collective security. "No nation hereafter can immunize itself by its own exclusive action. . . . Our oceans have ceased to be moats which automatically protect our ramparts."⁷³ Vandenberg's historic announcement ended all speculation that he would revert to his prewar isolationism.

⁷²Ibid., p. 40.

⁷³Record, 91st Cong., 1st Sess., 1945, LXXIX, Part 1, 166.

The man who helped Lodge defeat the League of Nations and who on many occasions had followed the lead of Senator Borah in foreign affairs thus gave a clear signal that there would be no Senate fight against the United Nations. "What Vandenberg did by switching from isolationism to internationalism," observed Rovere, "was to make it possible . . . for lots of other isolationists . . . to make an honorable peace with the administration and thereby to give the country something like a workable foreign policy."⁷⁴

President Roosevelt's response to Vandenberg's avowed stand on international cooperation was to appoint the Senator as an American delegate to the San Francisco Conference. Vandenberg responded to Roosevelt: "I appreciate the honor, Mr. President, but you don't have to appoint me. I'll take you off the hook by going out and breaking a leg or something. Then you can appoint someone you really want to have there." Said the President: "Senator, I don't care about any of the others going. You're the one man who must be there."⁷⁵

The diplomat for collective security.--At San Francisco, Vandenberg played a key role in securing the adoption of Article 51 and other provisions of the Charter which provided for regional collective security. He was also instrumental in securing the provision which enabled the General Assembly

⁷⁴Rovere, loc. cit., p. 396.

⁷⁵Davidson, loc. cit., p. 15.

to examine any situation which might be a threat to the peace of the world, including situations arising out of treaties.

President Truman also called on Vandenberg to participate in the first sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations and later the Council of Foreign Ministers' meeting and the Paris Peace Conference. After his association with the Russians at these conferences, Vandenberg exerted influence on the administration in the formation of its "firmness with patience" policy toward Russia.

When the Republicans took over Congress in 1947, Vandenberg was elevated to new positions of importance. He was elected both President Pro Tempore of the Senate and Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations. He very quickly dispelled any fears that the Republicans would attempt any serious change in foreign policy. "Our foreign policy has been developed and executed on a nonpartisan basis," insisted Vandenberg. "I have done my best to strengthen and extend this practice."⁷⁶ His new role meant, however, that he would have to restrict his foreign policy work to Washington. In a letter to Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt explaining why he had just declined an invitation to participate in the spring meeting of the Council of

⁷⁶The New York Times, November 12, 1946, p. 1.

Foreign Ministers, Vandenberg said that after such meetings "I am not a free agent when I return to the Senate."⁷⁷ The Senator, in short, simply did not want to function in a position in which he would have to follow the instructions of the President whether he agreed with them or not. He concentrated, however, in his new position on the attainment of his dream for a bipartisan foreign policy.

The Leader for Containment Policies

As leader of the Senate, Vandenberg guided many of the administration's containment policies through Congress. He had been a part of the American diplomatic team which tried to find agreement on such vital issues as control of atomic energy, peace treaties for Germany and Austria, world disarmament, and the Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe. He also witnessed the grip which Russia was gaining in Europe and Asia. His reaction was a plea to the Truman administration to chart a "get-tough" policy in dealings with the Soviet Union. When this policy failed to stop the Russian goal of exploitation for its own ends, he was ready to join the Truman administration in early 1947 in more overt moves to resist Soviet expansion.

Containment policies.--When President Truman told the Congress on March 12, 1947, that "it must be the policy of

⁷⁷Papers, p. 331.

the United States to support free people who are resisting subjection by armed minorities or outside pressures,"⁷⁸ Vandenberg voiced immediate agreement. He took the lead in securing passage of the bill which granted aid to Greece and Turkey (Truman Doctrine). He stated bluntly that the "President's message faces facts and so must Congress. The independence of Greece and Turkey must be preserved."⁷⁹ Later that year he also pushed through Congress the Rio Pact, and in the spring of 1948, he worked for the passage of the European Recovery Program (Marshall Plan). He was, in addition, responsible for the "Vandenberg Resolution" in 1948 which paved the way for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

After the Democrats regained Congress in 1949, Vandenberg again found himself as leader of the minority. But he continued to exert influence on the formation of foreign policy. He gathered support for the North Atlantic Pact and the Military Assistance Program. His continued influence in the course of foreign affairs was particularly noticeable in the case of the latter measure. After the Truman administration submitted a request for a sum of money which the Michigan Senator thought exorbitant in view of the need, he went to work on an amendment which cut the

⁷⁸Record, 80th Cong., 1st Sess., 1947, XCIII, Part 2, 1981.

⁷⁹Papers, p. 343.

original request. Senator Vandenberg and Senator Dulles rewrote the bill in accordance with what they thought the Congress would accept. The administration agreed to the revision, said Vandenberg, after he "bluntly laid the 'facts of life' before Secretary of State Acheson and Secretary of Defense Johnson."⁸⁰ The Michigan Senator made his last full-dress speech in support of the measure. He told the Congress: "It is all in the clear self-interest of our own national security."⁸¹

Symbol of bipartisanship.---Between 1946 and 1950, Senator Vandenberg came to epitomize "bipartisanship." As the ranking Republican member of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, his support usually meant Congressional approval of administrative proposals. This cooperation was viewed by Vandenberg as absolutely essential for the security of his country. With a Democrat in the Presidency and the Republicans in control of Congress, "you either got bipartisan cooperation on foreign policy or you did not have a foreign policy at all."⁸² Vandenberg thus combined his interest and knowledge of foreign affairs with his Congressional influence to bring about a bipartisan climate which he

⁸⁰Papers, p. 508.

⁸¹Record, 81st Cong., 1st Sess., 1949, XCV, Part 10, 13044.

⁸²"People of the Week," United States News, XXVIII (February 10, 1950), 17.

explained as "an attitude in the minds of individual men."

He added:

It was an acceptance of the principle that world peace was too important to be a plaything of domestic party politics. It was a recognition by certain men that good criticism and responsible opposition had to be based on facts and not on prejudice or supposition. It was an acceptance by the administration that facts in its possession should be made available to responsible Republicans.

. . . it did not take away the opposition's right or will to oppose. It did not prevent discussion and debate in Congress or in the country. It did not at any point in the contacts between the leaders commit the opposition to support a given policy before that policy went through the full legislative process.⁸³

Without the isolationist episode in his life, much of his success in stopping politics at the "water's edge" might never have been possible. Before Pearl Harbor, he worked closely with the conservatives in his party. When he became foreign policy leader in the Senate, he continued to maintain the respect and support of Senators Taft of Ohio, Millikin of Colorado, Bridges of New Hampshire, and Wherry of Nebraska, all of whom held positions on the Republican policy committee. These relations, notes Acheson, enabled Vandenberg "to perform . . . the service of bringing together in support of a foreign policy . . . an administration which could carry it out and an opposition which could have prevented it from doing so."⁸⁴

⁸³The New York Times, January 18, 1949, p. 3.

⁸⁴Acheson, loc. cit., p. 79.

In recognition of his efforts to obtain bipartisan-ship in foreign affairs, Collier's magazine twice awarded Vandenberg the Congressional Award for distinguished service to the nation. Both in 1945 and again in 1949, Vandenberg won the award as a tribute to his work in helping to achieve both formulation and administration of American foreign policies by the two political parties. It was to this work that Vandenberg dedicated the latter years of his life. His efforts were part of his constant search for security which he transposed from his personal well-being to that of security for his country and the entire world.

Conclusion

Fate did not permit the Michigan Senator to complete his fourth term. Illness forced him to leave the Senate in the fall of 1949. The New York Times referred to his absence as the "missing voice," adding that he, "more than any other American, has lined up behind it the massive popular support that has been our greatest asset in the postwar years."⁸⁵ He returned to the Senate for a very brief visit on May 20, 1950--his last. His Senatorial work for the rest of his life was confined to letter writing and telephone calls. President Truman wrote him: "You just don't realize," he said, "what a vacuum there has been in the Senate and in the operation of our foreign policy since

⁸⁵The New York Times, March 25, 1950, p. 24.

you left."⁸⁶ The "vacuum" to which the President referred was observed in the breakdown of bipartisan policy following Vandenberg's retirement. Joseph Harsch described the situation:

Today our foreign policy is dominated by almost a total reversal of the condition which prevailed in the Vandenberg-Marshall period. Senator Taft has taken over the Vandenberg position among Senate Republicans. Dean Acheson is Secretary of State. . . . They do not agree on foreign policy purposes. They do not share a sense of the proper means. They do not trust each other to be nonpartisan. . . . The two men have become symbols of partisan battle, not partners in bipartisan foreign policy as were their predecessors.⁸⁷

The end came for Vandenberg on April 18, 1951, at his home in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Only a month before the Senate had passed a unanimous resolution by standing vote in recognition of the heights to which Vandenberg's many efforts for his country had taken him. It was a fitting tribute for one who had dedicated most of his life to the cause of peace.

In brief review, the experiences of Vandenberg's childhood resulted in a loss of personal security which he later came to regard as the underlining influence of his life. The career as a newspaperman brought him personal security and regional influence as a party faithful. The

⁸⁶William Hillman (ed.), Mr. President (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1952), pp. 53-54.

⁸⁷The Christian Science Monitor, April 23, 1951, p. 1.

years as a Senator were marked by an inconsistent voting record in domestic affairs, and a dramatic switch from a belief in isolationism to internationalism in foreign affairs. His influence on the course of American international relations increased near the end of his career as he concentrated his energies on the attainment of a bipartisan foreign policy. In elevating the nation's security above personal and party interest, he reached a high level of statesmanship which he employed to his country's advantage in moments of national crises.

Against this background, the following three chapters will be given over to a consideration of the patterns of the ideas which he advanced in selected foreign policy addresses. The speeches are grouped in such a manner that they serve as representation of his major concepts on foreign policy between 1937 and 1949, and so that they represent the three phases of the "transition" of his ideas on foreign policy.

CHAPTER III

THE RHETORIC OF ISOLATIONISM

Introduction

The foregoing chapter is an attempt to describe the events in Vandenberg's life between 1937-1949 which have a significant bearing on his speeches. Since this study is primarily concerned with the changes in Vandenberg's ideas on foreign policy during these years, the emphasis of Chapter II has been on the chronology of political events in which Vandenberg was an active participant. It is the purpose of this chapter and the two which follow to describe the "idea-system" in Vandenberg's speeches as they paralleled these critical events in American history.

From the beginning of the aggression of the Fascist powers until Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, Vandenberg spent great energy in attempting to block those actions which would have enabled the United States to play a more positive role in world affairs. He did so, it seems evident, because his supreme objective was to keep America out of the conflict. He supported all legislation designed to keep the country neutral and joined in all attempts to block legislation which he thought might lead to intervention. His

public speeches made between 1937 and 1941 are a record of his attempts to mold public attitudes in the "isolationist" direction.

Four of Vandenberg's speeches will serve as representative of the major themes which ran through his rhetoric from 1937 to 1941, namely, neutrality, preparedness, and intervention. These four speeches selected for report and interpretation in this chapter are as follows:

1. The Neutrality Act of 1937 Address. Vandenberg spoke in favor of the major provisions of this act on March 1, 1937. He also supported an amendment which would have denied the President any discretionary power in dealing with the embargo of war materials.
2. The Embargo-Repeal Speech of 1939. Vandenberg spoke on February 27, 1939 against the administration's request that the embargo be lifted on war materials, and a "cash-and-carry" provision be substituted in its place.
3. The Selective Service Address of 1940. Vandenberg spoke on August 2, 1940 against the drafting of American men.
4. The Lend-Lease Address of 1941. Vandenberg spoke on February 18, 1941 against the proposal to aid Great Britain.

Each speech is treated in three sections for purposes of estimating the expressed and implied meanings. The first section treats the social and political context in which the speech was given. The second section attempts a report of the ideas in the speech including a consideration of the overt propositions and the apparent values accepted by the audience to which the arguments were geared. The third section interprets the speaker's ideas in terms of his

purpose and his choice of persuasions. The chapter concludes with a summary of Vandenberg's defense of isolationism.

The Address on the Neutrality Act of 1937

From Mussolini's attack on Ethiopia in October, 1935, to Japan's attack on the United States on December 7, 1941, Vandenberg never lost faith in the belief that America could remain out of the war if she wanted to do so. He dedicated this portion of his life to seeking Congressional legislation designed to keep his country at peace. One of his major efforts came in support of the bill to extend the existing neutrality legislation in 1937. His March 1, 1937 Senate speech in support of the measure contains a rationale for his belief that America could stay at peace by adhering to a policy of strict neutrality. To understand his thinking on this vital issue, it is necessary to examine the context in which the speech was given, the sequence of events of which this legislative battle was a part.

The Context of the Speech

America in the early thirties.--Although Americans entered the 1930's filled with despair about the grim effects of economic depression, they were hopeful for a peaceful world. The new wave of optimism swept the world with the signing of the Kellogg-Briand Anti-War Treaty in 1928.¹

¹Foster Rhea Dulles, America's Rise to World Power (New York: Harper & Bros., 1954), p. 157.

Most of the world's great powers including Great Britain, Japan, Germany, and Italy joined the United States in renouncing war as a means of settling international controversies. Secretary of State Kellogg promoted the treaty with the encouragement of President Coolidge and Senator Borah, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who looked upon the measure as an attempt to outlaw war with moral suasion rather than with the use of force.

Although the pact contained no provisions whatsoever for enforcing its pledges, the American people viewed the treaty as a step toward the ideal of peace among nations. To be sure, a few warned against such naive faith in a signed document. The young Henry Cabot Lodge, for example, noted that the treaty was an "attempt to get something for nothing," and thus promoted a "sense of false security."² But for the most part, the American people fell into line and the Senate gave almost unanimous approval to the pact.³

In their general attitude toward foreign affairs, the American people were thus unable to face the facts of international politics. But they could not evade the reality of a creeping paralysis of the domestic economy. By 1932, the gross national product stood at 107.6 billions

²Henry Cabot Lodge, "The Meaning of the Kellogg Treaty," Harpers, CLVIII (December, 1928), 41.

³Dulles, op. cit., p. 160.

of 1947 dollars, a drop of 41.7 billion over that of 1929. Per capita disposable income had dropped from 927 billion in 1929 to 703 billion in 1932.⁴ Fite and Reese note that "the drop in income was accompanied by lower production, more business failures, increased unemployment, and falling prices."⁵

But the statistics tell only part of the real story. The ill effects are best noted in the disruption which the economic collapse caused in the lives of Americans. Frederick Lewis Allen describes the signs of the American city in depression:

First, the bread lines in the poorer districts. Second, those bleak settlements ironically known as "Hoovervilles" on the outskirts of the city and vacant lots--groups of makeshift shacks constructed out of packing boxes, scrap iron . . . shacks in which men and sometimes whole families of evicted people were sleeping on automobile seats. . . . Third, the homeless people sleeping in doorways or on park benches and going the rounds of restaurants for left-over half-eaten biscuits. . . . Fourth, the vastly increased number on the highways. . . .⁶

Faced with this crisis, it is little wonder that Americans were reluctant to take up the burdens of international conflict. The election of President Roosevelt in 1932 marked no immediate departure from this attitude. The

⁴Gilbert C. Fite and Jim E. Reese, An Economic History of the United States (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959), p. 579.

⁵Ibid., p. 577.

⁶Frederick Lewis Allen, Since Yesterday (New York: Harper & Bros., 1939), pp. 59-60.

new President was interested in social and economic reform. He concerned himself with domestic problems, spearheading the concept which came to be known as the New Deal. In his concern for recovery and reconstruction, he seemed content to leave foreign policy decisions to Secretary of State Hull.⁷ The only reference to foreign policy, in fact, which Roosevelt made in his 1932 Inaugural Address was an assurance that the United States believed in the good neighbor policy. For the most part, he accepted the isolationist sentiment of the nation in remaining aloof from foreign affairs.

But as the Roosevelt administration adhered to the isolationist policy, Fascism grew in Germany and Italy, militarism in Japan and Marxism in Russia. These events were alarming, but the shadows of depression crowded them into the background. Americans were absorbed, in part,

⁷Cordell Hull, The Memoirs of Cordell Hull (2 vols.; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1948), I, 194. He recalled: "During his first term in office President Roosevelt was so immersed in an avalanche of domestic questions that he left me in almost full charge of foreign affairs. I kept him thoroughly informed on all major developments, but he expected me to furnish the initiative in policy and action"; and Richard Hofstadter, The American Political Tradition (New York: Vintage Books, 1957), p. 343. He states: "Busy with domestic affairs, he [Roosevelt] showed no interest in international action up to the fall of 1937, except for an unsuccessful attempt to get Congress to affiliate with the World Court. (In 1933, he had implicitly endorsed the 'Stimson doctrine' of non-recognition of Japanese penetration of China, and his intimates heard him expressing a desire in the spring of 1935 'to do something' about Hitler.) His overt policy may not have reflected his private convictions. . . . But he was in no mood to try to remold the dominant isolationist and pacifist feeling of the country."

with the everyday circumstances of life. Prohibition repeal, the Lindbergh kidnap case, John Dillinger and the like were in the news. But the main attraction was an economic transformation symbolized by the New Deal. In short, America was absorbed in economic depression and had no time for foreign affairs.

Drifting into war.--The first big break in the peaceful appearance of the world occurred in 1931 when Japan invaded Manchuria--a bold move which made a mockery of the League of Nations, the Nine-Power Treaty, and the Kellogg Pact. At that time, most Americans did not seem to think that the Far Eastern situation was a serious problem because so few of them "took Japan seriously in those days." The picture darkened, however, when "the foundations of peace were overturned in Europe."⁸ Hitler touched it off by his withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1933. The situation was further intensified in 1935 by the German conscription program, in direct defiance of the Versailles Treaty. Mussolini added to the unrest by his frequent threats against Ethiopia.

Americans were determined to stay out of these conflicts, but the world faced Japanese militarists in the Far East and Nazism in Europe. Disappointment over the Treaty of Versailles

⁸Allen Nevins and Louis Hacker, The United States and Its Place in World Affairs, 1918-1943 (Boston: D. C. Heath & Company, 1943), pp. 388-89.

along with failure of the World War I European Allies to settle their war debts with the United States combined to make many Americans shy away from any mention of collective security.⁹

The Nye Committee.--The general distrust of Europeans was intensified by the report of the Nye Committee in 1934. These findings grew out of a resolution introduced in the Senate early in 1945 by Senator Vandenberg and Senator Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota which called for an investigation of the manufacture, sale, and distribution of instruments of war. A special committee, headed by Senator Nye, was organized for that purpose. Drummond notes, however, that its efforts were focused on trying to prove that "the true causes of America's recent intervention were to be found in the policies which bankers and industrialists had selfishly foisted upon the government."¹⁰ The end result was a number of public hearings which did much to convince a large portion of the American people that the United States participated in World War I to protect the economic interests of American munitions makers. Langer and Gleason credit the Nye Committee with playing a major role in the neutrality legislation of 1935-1937.

⁹Julius W. Pratt, A History of United States Foreign Policy (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1955), p. 596.

¹⁰Donald F. Drummond, The Passing of American Neutrality, 1937-1941 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1955), p. 40.

The Congressional Investigating Committee under Senator Nye's chairmanship had just demonstrated to the satisfaction of most Americans that the First World War had resulted chiefly from mad imperial ambitions of the European antagonists, and that the United States had been sucked into the conflict through insidious propaganda and the machinations of powerful munitions-making interests. The new neutrality laws were designed to forestall a repetition of such a calamity.¹¹

Neutrality legislation of 1935.--A number of other circumstances coincided with the Nye Committee findings to make possible the neutrality legislation of 1935. The market was flooded with revisionist books and magazine articles "exposing the diabolically clever intrigues and the horribly fat profits of the European 'merchants of death,' the private manufacturers of the implements of war."¹² In Europe, Mussolini began mobilizing for war, and Congress thought it time to enact legislation to remove profits from war, prohibit the sale of war materials to belligerents, and restrict Americans from travel in war zones. Consequently, a joint resolution was rushed through Congress, later known as the First Neutrality Act.

Senator Vandenberg supported the resolution with enthusiasm because he believed it would "keep us entirely detached from foreign wars."¹³ President Roosevelt did not share the Senator's eagerness for the bill, but signed it

¹¹William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, The Challenge to Isolation, 1937-1940 (New York: Harper & Bros., 1952), p. 14.

¹²Nevins and Hacker, op. cit., p. 390.

¹³The New York Times, October 27, 1935, p. 34.

reluctantly. The President and Secretary Hull had hoped for a bill that would permit the President to forbid weapons of war to an aggressor nation, but at the same time, retain the discretionary power to aid a nation that had been attacked. Congress, instead, passed a substitute which required the President to forbid the selling of arms to all belligerents.

The resolution also prohibited American ships from carrying shipments to belligerents, and it empowered the President to warn Americans travelling in belligerent ships that they did so at their own risk. The act was extended in 1936 with new provisions which forbade American loans to any belligerent, and in addition, exempt from ban of war goods any American state engaged in conflict with a non-American state.

The Neutrality Act of 1937.--By the time the Neutrality Act of 1935 came before Congress for extension in 1937, world tensions had climbed to a new high. Mussolini had completely overrun Ethiopia in 1936, intimating as he did that League sanctions meant war, and the weak League was not prepared to go this far. With the League shattered, Hitler marched into the demilitarized Rhineland. He followed this move by signing an Anti-Comintern Pact with Italy and Japan, which combined the forces of two powerful European dictators with the war lords of the Far East. With the aggressors "calling signals," the world was faced with a series of recurring crises.

America reacted to the world situation in 1937 with a third Neutrality Act. The 1935 and 1936 resolutions were experimental efforts. Opinion measurements then indicated that about ninety-five percent of the American people thought that the United States should not participate in another war, and about seventy percent thought that the country blundered in intervening in World War I.¹⁴ The time seemed ripe for a permanent neutrality measure. The new bill was signed into law on May 1, 1937.¹⁵

The new resolution contained from the 1935 law several restrictions which were to operate automatically in case of war, and, which gave the President no discretionary authority. There were restrictions on: (1) export of arms, ammunition, and implements of war to belligerents; (2) purchase of sale of securities or other obligations of belligerents; (3) solicitation of war contributions; (4) transport of implements of war in American vessels to belligerents; (5) travel by Americans on belligerent vessels, and (6) arming of American merchantmen. However, the bill did give the President several discretionary powers. If needed, he could authorize: (1) the transportation of certain articles or commodities on an American vessel to a belligerent

¹⁴George Gallup and Claude Robinson, "American Institute of Public Opinion Surveys, 1935-1938," Public Opinion Quarterly, II (July, 1938), 388. Also see Drummond, op. cit., p. 43.

¹⁵Nevins and Hacker, op. cit., p. 395.

state; (2) the export of any goods to a belligerent after transfer of title to the foreign government; (3) the use of American ports as a basis of supply for belligerent warships; and (4) use of such ports by foreign submarines and armed merchant ships but only in accordance with specific regulations.

The phases of the bill which would restrict shipments of arms to belligerents and the matter of prohibiting loans to belligerents were generally agreed upon by most Congressmen. Sharp differences of opinion occurred, however, over the "cash-and-carry" provisions of the act. Others objected to the discretion given to the President in the application of certain restrictions. Vandenberg was of the latter group.

Report of the Speech

Senator Vandenberg addressed the United States Senate in support of the Neutrality Act of 1937 on March 1, 1937.¹⁶ He endorsed all phases of the resolution with the exception of the latter group of discretionary provisions given the President, as listed above. He proposed an amendment which would have eliminated this part of the resolution. His chief goal in the speech was to support his belief that the United States could stay at peace by adopting a policy of strict neutrality. The speech was concerned with the most effective means of implementing this policy.

¹⁶Record, 75th Cong., 1st Sess., 1937, LXXXI, Part 2, 1673.

The address divides into two parts. In the first division, Vandenberg presented his arguments in favor of the proposal. These were presented in four brief paragraphs in which little or no attempt was made at rhetorical development. The remainder of the brief address was given over to a defense of his amendment to strike out the discretionary powers afforded the President by the bill.

Introduction.--In his opening remarks, Vandenberg voiced agreement with Senator Pittman, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, who had just introduced the bill to the Senate. Vandenberg registered "complete approval"¹⁷ of the four main arguments which Senator Pittman had advanced in support of the measure.

The case for the neutrality legislation.--Vandenberg unequivocally endorsed "the complete mandatory embargo upon loans, credits, arms, ammunition, and implements of war to all peoples in a given crisis."¹⁸ His support of this section of the bill was apparently based on the assumption that a removal of the commercial motive from the war situation would automatically remove "an inevitable source of international resentments and frictions."¹⁹ Neither he nor Senator Pittman made any attempt to prove this assertion. Vandenberg apparently thought that Americans accepted the validity of the Nye Committee findings and the

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

revisionist literature which reported that the United States had been drawn into World War I by the machinations of powerful munition-making interests. His support of the measure was thus based on the belief that it would help to avoid a repetition of such a calamity. Since he alluded to World War I but did not even draw on historical comparisons, it seems evident that Vandenberg thought his countrymen believed that an embargo on shipments of munitions to belligerents would eliminate one of the major causes of friction between the United States and other nations. He was content to assert that international incidents growing out of trade "can climax in a deadly menace to our own tranquillity."²⁰

In a second assertion, Vandenberg approved the prohibition "against American travel in belligerent ships." He insisted that when a citizen entered a war zone "he carries his country into precisely the same element of danger." An American's rights end "where they intrude upon the rights and safety of 125,000,000 of his fellow citizens." Recognizing that such a policy would sacrifice individual freedom, he said that such rights were "infinitely less important than 'freedom from the war' which might finally have to be fought to vindicate a fruitless principle."²¹ Again, he apparently supported this belief because he thought

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

any loss of American lives through war operations was likely to draw his country into the conflict. Senator Pittman had just contended that "it was this destruction of the lives of our citizens" travelling in belligerent waters which "was one of the chief causes that dragged us into that terrible and futile war."²² Without enumeration, Vandenberg also alluded to such incidents as the sinking of the Lusitania to which Pittman had made brief reference. Vandenberg implied that Americans had the right to stay out of war at any price, including surrender of freedom of the seas in time of war.

Third, he argued that the "mandatory so-called 'cash-and-carry' formula respecting the shipment of commodities, other than arms, ammunition and implements of war, to all belligerents," would help to avoid the possibility of going to war "in defense of the commercial interest that is not worth the hazard involved."²³ He made it clear that in his mind American neutrality hinged on whether the United States had any economic interests to safeguard with belligerent nations. He wanted to insure this aspect of neutrality of outlawing all dealings with foreign nations at war. The resolution authorized the President to prevent the export of any goods to a belligerent until after ownership had been transferred to a foreign agent. He recognized

²²Ibid., p. 1668.

²³Ibid., p. 1673.

that this was contrary to "traditional practice," but he argued that the sacrifice in trade was worth the risk.

In supporting the "cash-and-carry" provision, Vandenberg again assumed a general acceptance of the conclusions of the Nye Committee which insisted that America's entry into World War I had been partially the result of efforts to protect American trade with Allies. He was willing for Congress to abandon these American neutrality rights, because he thought that a defense of them might involve his country in war. Such a policy might isolate America. But such isolation, he obviously believed, would have the effect of keeping America out of war. His failure to offer evidence in support of this assertion again seems to indicate his belief that the American people had already accepted a surrender of traditional rights as a bulwark against involvement.

Vandenberg, fourth, would further insure neutrality by avoiding any possible clash of arms. For this reason, he endorsed the bill's provision prohibiting armed merchant ships from entering American ports along with the "mandatory prohibition against arming our own merchant men when engaged in trade with belligerent countries." This provision, he believed, would "eliminate a large measure of incentive to friction and trouble."²⁴ Implicit reference was made in this

²⁴Ibid., p. 1674.

case to the controversy which arose out of the arming of merchant ships during World War I. Senator Pittman had just declared that President Wilson's arming of American merchant ships was "the gravest mistake that our government made," adding that he could "conceive of no argument against the adoption of the section of the resolution prohibiting the arming of our merchant ships."²⁵ Neither did Vandenberg. He seemed confident, in fact, that the American people wanted to avoid any direct intervention in the troubles of the world and would be willing to let American ships be sunk and still refuse to defend these interests. A parallel conclusion is that Vandenberg thought such challenges to American honor would never arise once neutrality had been legalized. His failure to offer evidence to substantiate these claims indicates his belief that the American people thought as he did about the matter, and extended proof or persuasion was unnecessary.

As a transition between the first division of the speech and the defense of the proposed amendment, Vandenberg made reference to the brief time he allotted to a discussion of the resolution. "The brevity of the endorsement in no sense bespeaks any limitation upon the enthusiasm with which I approve the sections to which I have referred," he stressed. "It is my profound belief in the wisdom of all these other

²⁵Ibid., p. 1669.

portions of the bill that leads me the more earnestly to seek to save it from what I believe to be an utterly serious fallacy,"²⁶ he added.

Defense of his amendment to deny the discretionary powers.--Vandenberg's amendment was designed to remove the provisions which gave the President some discretion in deciding which commodities other than munitions of war would be allowed to travel to belligerents on American ships. He argued that this power in the hands of the President was "an almost unescapable threat to all the objectives" of the bill, because once the President removed American ships out of trade "the effect of his decision is to precipitate resentment, if not reprisal, from the belligerent which gets the worst of it." On the other hand, if the President "picks and chooses the commodities to be included and excluded," insisted Vandenberg, "he brings us face to face with double jeopardy." He contended that this would enrage the belligerent which was "principally penalized by his selection of commodities to be proscribed, . . . and thus substantially vitiates the effect of the joint resolution."²⁷ In other words, he was opposed to the President waiting until the conflict began before the decision was made as to which American goods would be withheld.

²⁶Ibid., p. 1674.

²⁷Ibid.

Vandenberg tried to keep the issue on a bipartisan level. He insisted that his fear of the failure of the executive to maintain neutrality under these circumstances was not a "reflection upon the wisdom or patriotism with which a President might try to use this discretionary power," adding that the "trouble was implicit in the formula itself."²⁸ He thus made an ethical appeal in an obvious effort to discredit the argument of those who might say that Vandenberg opposed this power in the hands of the President simply because he was in the opposition party.

The solution to the problem, he believed, was for Congress to make the embargo on all materials to belligerents mandatory. "Basic neutrality decisions cannot be safely made after the necessity for them arises," he argued. By specifying which goods could be sold to belligerents before war had started, Congress could demand that all such purchases be placed on a "cash-and-carry" basis. "They are foreign commodities--not American commodities--if anything happens to them." This he specified as the "theory of transferred risk--namely, that title passes to the foreigner ahead of export." This type of "cash-and-carry" did not preclude the use of American ships in transporting the goods. But Vandenberg did insist in reply to an inquiry from another Senator that "the American vessel which goes to sea with

²⁸Ibid.

foreign goods under these circumstances . . . is on notice that it is proceeding at its own risk. . . ."29

Conclusion.--Vandenberg closed with a quotation of Walter Lippmann's in which the columnist alleged, on the basis of a statement from an expert in international law, that the discretionary power allotted the President in the bill would involve the country in war. This was the one thing Vandenberg hoped to avoid. "We have probably reached the point in a foreshortened world," said the Senator, "where we cannot be isolationists, but we certainly have not reached a point where we cannot be insulationists."30

Interpretation of the Speech

Controlling the causes of war.--Senator Vandenberg's support of the Neutrality Act of 1937 represented an earnest attempt to control the forces which he believed had taken his country into World War I. With hindsight, of course, it is possible to note the naive assumptions that those who supported this measure were making. But in 1937, the evidence was mounting that the United States had been tricked into the conflict of 1917. His conclusions, no doubt, were based on a number of considerations, not the least of which was the effect of American export trade on the relations of the United States with the belligerents.

²⁹Ibid., p. 1675.

³⁰Ibid., p. 1676.

The figures show that American exports to Great Britain, France, Belgium, and Italy made an aggregate gain of 1760 millions of dollars in trade between 1912 and 1916 while the trade with Germany and Austria-Hungary showed an aggregate loss of 321 millions of dollars during the same period. Angell noted that "before the war, Germany alone had imported from us almost three times as much as France, nearly five times as much as Italy," but added that with the war Blockade in force there arose "the enormous consuming power of the Allies." This change, he alleged, added up to the fact that American producers "acquired a 'vested interest' in the continuance of the war-market provided by the Allies' desperate need. . . ."31

Vandenberg also had knowledge of American investments in Allied lands. Angell affirmed that between 1914 and 1917 "American investors had staked over two billion dollars upon the financial solvency of the Allies."32 Right or wrong, many agreed that the "flag follows the dollar," and had done just that in 1917.

The question of contraband in the shipment of American goods between 1914 and 1917 was also a consideration. As German submarines took a large toll of British ships carrying munitions, Great Britain retaliated with attempts to shut

³¹Ernest Angell, "Can We Stay Out of War," Harpers CLXXI (August, 1935), 466.

³²Ibid., p. 467.

off vital supplies to the German mainland. Her list of contraband expanded to include just about all commodities. In an effort to paralyze the economy of Germany, England searched and seized American shipments designed for the Germans. The final result was that Germany "was driven at last to the use of the only remaining weapon; unrestricted submarine warfare." When American ships were attacked, the natural cry was one of defense. "Had we in America declined the venture of sending our goods and ships into the danger zone we would have been far less affected and roused by the inevitable consequences,"³³ argued Angell.

Finally, American memories of the rage which swept the country when 124 Americans went down on the Lusitania illustrated that it was dangerous for Americans to travel in war zones. Vandenberg agreed with others of his time that if Americans were kept out of belligerent waters, then another possible source of conflict would be removed.

Vandenberg's support of the neutrality law was obviously based on the belief that legislation could prevent the United States from doing those things which the Nye Committee indicated had taken the country into World War I. The cause for American entry into that struggle, he had concluded, was primarily economic. It was this cause which he hoped neutrality would erase. He did not entertain other reasons

³³Ibid., p. 468.

for America's entry into the struggle. His analysis did not consider the political, social, philosophical, or psychological considerations of American entry. In fact, he did not question the idea that Americans might be willing to fight to protect neutral rights. He simply concluded that they should not. And the fact that he felt no compulsion to offer rhetorical proof for his assumptions would indicate that he believed he spoke to an agreeing audience.

If one is prepared to accept Vandenberg's conclusion that the causes of war are essentially economic, then his brand of neutrality was certainly logical. He made a choice among types of neutrality. The first type would have meant that America continued to trade with belligerents without any limitation, except on equal terms. He was right in concluding that World War I demonstrated the involvements to which this policy would lead. The other type of neutrality was that prescribed in the Neutrality Act of 1937. This brand specified that American trade would be restricted, but on equal terms to all belligerents. Such a policy would keep American exporters out of the center of activities.

Neutrality and the discretionary powers.--Assuming that this proposed type of neutrality was desirable, then his amendment also becomes defensible. He objected to the discretionary power afforded the President in deciding which commodities other than munitions of war would be permitted on American ships for travel to belligerents. There is logic

in his argument that such a policy would invite criticism because the decision would be made after the conflict had developed. Even American exporters might object to having a flow of goods cut off once the orders had already been received in his country. If the issue, therefore, was simply one of degree of involvement, then his argument that all such decisions should be made before the conflict began was certainly a valid one.

But there were other considerations. Another major factor was how neutral was American neutrality? If trade were withheld from two belligerents in conflict with each other and one had a Naval capability to carry on and protect trade and the other did not have, then the American policy aided one but harmed the other. Such was the case in the Italy-Ethiopian war of 1935 in which American goods were withheld from Ethiopia while Italy could come to the United States for her own. The new bill was worded in such manner that the President could have had discretion in the shipment of goods other than munitions. But Vandenberg's amendment would have denied the President this power. Vandenberg wanted no distinction made between an aggressor nation and the victim of an attack. He, therefore, expressed indifference to the nature of the conflict. Neutrality in his mind was designed to prevent American partisanship in any foreign conflict. His implicit reference is that economic sanctions would lead to military sanctions. "I do not believe," said

Vandenberg, "that there is any tenable middle-ground in dealing with the transportation factor in this equation."³⁴

It is, of course, possible that Vandenberg's insistence on denying the President this limited discretion in the choice of commodities to be denied aggressors in part reflected a political bias. Dulles notes that "the refusal to heed the pleas that the President should be given some discretionary powers . . . reflected in some measure the strong anti-Roosevelt feeling at a time when the President was repeatedly being charged with seeking dictatorial powers."³⁵ It must be recalled that Senator Vandenberg was at this time a major spokesman for the Republican Party. The Neutrality Act of 1937 came before the Senate shortly after the President's proposal to "pack" the Supreme Court had shaken the country. Although Vandenberg expressly denied any casual connection between his amendment and his distrust of President Roosevelt, it is not beyond the realm of possibility.

Effects of "Vandenberg neutrality."--It must be admitted that Vandenberg built a good case to support his belief that America could stay neutral in the face of another war. But it was based on the assumption that wars are fought primarily for economic reasons. He offered a plan to bring under control

³⁴Record, 75th Cong., 1st Sess., 1937, LXXXI, Part 2, 1675.

³⁵Dulles, op. cit., p. 177.

the economic forces which had been partially responsible, and in his mind almost solely, for America's entrance into World War I. This policy was a planned withdrawal from the scene of the conflict. It was based on the assumption that it was geographically possible for the United States to isolate herself from the rest of the world. His reasons for believing this possible were not overtly expressed in the speech. He implied that neutrality would probably have kept the country out of World War I, and the same policy would hold true twenty years later. While he concluded such neutrality was possible, he never questioned the fact that it was desirable.

In the first place, it is open to question just how much of an economic price Americans should pay for neutrality. It is doubtful that Americans would have kept the law on the books if it seriously interfered with any attempts to procure the necessities of economic growth.

Vandenberg's position ignored several other important considerations. His overt argument in support of neutrality did not deal with the vital question of whether it was America's best course of action to remain strictly neutral in the face of world disaster. This was taken for granted. Neither did he ask the economic question of whether America had anything at stake in the remainder of the free world, not did he raise the moral question of whether it was right for a great democracy to stand idle while large portions of

the free world were "swallowed up." Buell noted that "the isolationist fails to realize that even if America does not enter hostilities, the present type of 'peace' and 'neutrality' is slowly . . . undermining American institutions and values."³⁶ Vandenberg's 1937 speech did not show any concern for the type of world in which America might wish to live after outside wars took place. His sole effort was concentrated on how the United States might stay out of war. In this frame of mind, he seemed willing to put Ethiopia, who appealed to the United States for help, in the same class with Italy--the rather obvious aggressor.

Neither does Vandenberg's speech indicate that he was bothered by the possibility that neutrality might threaten any attempt by the League of Nations to resist aggression by calling for economic sanctions from the United States. The Neutrality Act, instead, might even punish the League members with countersanctions. The Senator proposed to make this situation worse by offering an amendment to the Neutrality Act which would have bound the executive's hand in such manner that he could not have distinguished among aggressors with any commodities of trade; in effect, then, sanctions would have been applied against League members resisting aggression. His desire to keep his country out of war at any price apparently forced him into such a position.

³⁶Raymond Leslie Buell, Isolated America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1940), p. 348.

Finally, the Senator never really considered the possibility of a total Nazi victory and its consequences for the United States. He proceeded on the assumption that no foreign power could ever physically attack the American continent. He even assumed the validity of the doctrine of American economic and political immunity. In this naivete he, of course, was not alone. But Americans had been warned. As early as 1935, an American official in Berlin, Douglas Miller, admonished that Hitler planned to expand until Germany "dominates the entire globe," adding that "Germany is to engage in a gigantic struggle with the rest of the world to grow at the expense of its neighbors."³⁷ Ambassador William E. Dodd in Berlin also reported that "since American intervention will not be repeated, the Third Reich will at [the] strategic moment seize the [Polish] corridor or Austria and if war follows win what was lost in 1918. . . ." He added: "Civilized Europe offers a sad and barbaric picture."³⁸ And in 1936, President Roosevelt told the country that "no matter how well we are supported by neutrality legislation, we must remember that no laws

³⁷U. S., Department of State, Peace and War: U. S. Foreign Policy, 1931-1941, No. 1983 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1943), pp. 211-13.

³⁸U. S., Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1935: The British Commonwealth, Europe, No. 4564, II (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1952), 321.

can be provided to cover every contingency."³⁹ Hitler's drive to Paris and his threatened invasion of England began to awaken the American people to the full significance of these warnings. In the case of Senator Vandenberg, it took bombs on Pearl Harbor. With 3,000 miles of ocean between the United States and any potential aggressor, Vandenberg joined many of his countrymen in believing that America could and must isolate herself from attack.

The Address on the Embargo Repeal

Vandenberg shared with a majority of his countrymen in 1937 a passion for peace so acute that America practically shunned all responsibilities to the rest of the world. As international anarchy continued to spread over Europe and Asia, however, administrative leaders began to challenge the wisdom of the neutrality position. Vandenberg stood steadfast with a group of Americans who strongly opposed any change in the existing neutrality laws. By 1939, world events conspired to force Vandenberg to defend a position which he had taken for granted only two years earlier. For a full understanding of his speech in defense of neutrality, it is necessary to recall the context of political events in which the speech was given.

³⁹Samuel I. Rosenman (ed.), The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Vol. V: The People Approve (New York: Random House, 1938), p. 291.

The Context of the Speech

The "Quarantine" speech.--The first real challenge to neutrality came in the ceremonial dedication of a bridge in 1937. It was an occasion which many historians consider the first step in America's departure from a policy of isolationism in world affairs.⁴⁰ It was here, on Chicago's Outer Drive, that President Franklin D. Roosevelt delivered his now famous "quarantine" speech. Although "billed" as a simple ceremonial address, it condemned "international anarchy," and substituted in its place a limited concept of collective security. Whether intended as a "trial balloon" or a "feeler," a first step in a deliberate effort to change the mind of a nation, or as simply a subtle warning of impending world war, may never be known. It is recognized, however, that the speech was delivered in the face of a world growing closer to war and an America retreating into a shell of continentalism.

Roosevelt, first, reviewed the political situation which he described as a cause of "grave concern and anxiety. The landmarks and traditions," he said, "which have marked the progress of civilization toward . . . law, order and justice are being wiped out." He appealed to the American traditional belief in morality and justice. He did not call names, but it was not difficult to see that he spoke

⁴⁰Langer and Gleason, op. cit., p. 11; Pratt, op. cit., p. 624; and Dulles, op. cit., p. 179.

of Germany, Italy, and Japan. With strong emotional language, he reminded Americans that "innocent peoples, innocent nations are being cruelly sacrificed to a greed for power and supremacy which is devoid of all sense of justice."⁴¹

For the isolationist who felt that the answer was for America to withdraw and rely on distance and strength at home, Roosevelt had an answer:

If those things come to pass in other parts of the world, let no one imagine that America will escape, that America may expect mercy, that this Western Hemisphere will not be attacked and that it will continue tranquilly and peacefully to carry on the ethics and the arts of civilization.⁴²

But Roosevelt went further. He gave a new answer to those seeking to avoid war. He offered collective security in place of neutrality legislation as a formula for keeping the peace. "The peace-loving nations," he claimed, "must make a concerted effort to uphold laws and principles on which peace can rest secure."⁴³ To calm any fears that the freedom-loving nations were not strong enough to stop aggression, Roosevelt reminded America that it would be collective action by the "ninety percent of the population of the world" that was being "jeopardized by the remaining ten."⁴⁴

⁴¹Samuel I. Rosenman (ed.), The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Vol. VI: The Constitution Prevails (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1941), p. 406.

⁴²Ibid., p. 406.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 410.

The President actually asked the American people to re-evaluate the neutrality legislation in the light of its objective. Could it keep the nation out of wars? Available evidence indicates that a majority of Americans still believed that it could. The reaction to his proposed change in foreign policy was fast and furious. James Burns' comprehensive, vivid account tells the story:

Back in Washington, Hull, surprised and shocked by Roosevelt's strong words, remained quiet. Other party leaders were silent. It was the opposition that spoke up. Pacifists charged the President with starting the people down the road to war. Isolationist Congressmen threatened with impeachment. The AFL resolved against involvement in foreign wars. A telegraphic poll of Congress showed a heavy majority against common action with the League in the Far East.⁴⁵

Vandenberg received Roosevelt's "quarantine" suggestion with little enthusiasm. He told a Michigan radio audience that "we shall pursue an insulating neutrality despite the President's refusal thus far to follow the mandate of the last Congress," adding that "our recent flirtations with sanctions and with the punishment of aggressors, and with international alliances, shall stop short of putting America's feet upon even the first steps that lead to war." He said that although "the alarms of war are wracking the nerves of the world," the United States has a sedative that is "clearly

⁴⁵James M. Burns, Roosevelt, the Lion and the Fox (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1950), p. 318.

prescribed by contemporary necessities. It is prayerfully wished for by 99 Americans out of 100."⁴⁶

The President bowed to the pressure of the isolationists. The world waited for elaboration on the meaning of "quarantine," but the President retreated. "As the year 1937 grew toward its close," writes Beard, "advocates of collective action . . . seemed unable to discover any proof that President Roosevelt contemplated any effective application of his quarantine doctrine."⁴⁷ Langer and Gleason note, however, that "though for the time being he shelved his plan, the President remained firmly convinced that the United States, in its own interest could no longer stand wholly aloof from the world affairs."⁴⁸

Increased appropriations for defense.--A second challenge to isolationism came in the year of 1938, and forced the issue of war or peace out into the open again. Hitler was on the march. Austria fell, and the world looked on in dismay while the democracies gave Hitler Czechoslovakia at Munich. The administration reacted with a request for a larger appropriation for the Navy. In spite of the fact that "this period was the low point in popular disregard of

⁴⁶Record, 75th Cong., 2d Sess., 1937, LXXXII, Part 3, 101.

⁴⁷Charles A. Beard, American Foreign Policy in the Making, 1932-1940 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940), p. 208.

⁴⁸Langer and Gleason, op. cit., p. 24.

responsibilities and obligations, and also the dangers, that were the inescapable consequence of the position of world power that the United States had attained,"⁴⁹ the appropriation was granted. But several isolationists opposed the appropriation. Vandenberg voted against it because he did not believe "a showing was made to justify it," adding that "I particularly did not want America, while protesting simultaneously against a world naval race, to be the first government on earth officially to set the new battleship tempo at 45,000 tons."⁵⁰

In his annual message to Congress in 1938, Roosevelt warned again of the impending dangers to the world's peace. Although he did not specifically point them out, he made indirect reference to Hitler's conquest of Czechoslovakia, Mussolini's role in Ethiopia, and Japan's war in China. Using tones of his 1937 address, the President reminded Congress of the "old, old lesson that probability of attack is mightily decreased by the assurance of an ever ready defense."⁵¹ A week later the President called for additional appropriations for national defense. This time only the extreme isolationists objected to his request. Senator

⁴⁹Dulles, op. cit., p. 183.

⁵⁰Record, 76th Cong., 1st Sess., 1938, LXXXIV, Part 2, 1920.

⁵¹Rosenman, The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Vol. VIII: War and Neutrality, p. 4.

Vandenberg was one of those who opposed the measure. He emphasized that he objected to the President calling for more arms to make the defenses of the United States adequate without defining "adequate":

Adequate for what? Adequate to implement national defense in the traditional American sense of minding our own business? To that I can uncompromisingly answer, "Yes."

Adequate for what? Adequate to sustain the realities of the Monroe Doctrine in the sense that we cannot allow alien ideologies to close in upon us through Western Hemisphere approaches? Again, "Yes."

Adequate for what? To implement the President's Chicago speech which talked of quarantines and suggested the use of American sanctions against so-called "aggressor nations" on other continents? This time, "No," unless the sanctions are the deliberate and conscious order of Congress, reflecting the conviction of the whole American people.

Adequate for what? To help police the world under theories of collective security? Again, "No." It would leave us the residuary legatee of a responsibility that would require so vast an enginery of war that even the pending mammoth program would be wholly impotent.⁵²

But in spite of the opposition of the extremists, the bill for increased appropriations passed Congress. When the session ended, Congress had increased the previous year's appropriation by about two-thirds. "The increase was obviously made," writes Rauch, "in anticipation of war in Europe and in the belief that it and the Japanese war, already in progress, were very real dangers to the United States."⁵³

⁵²Record, 76th Cong., 1st Sess., 1939, LXXXIV, Part 2, 1920.

⁵³Basil Rauch, Roosevelt: From Munich to Pearl Harbor (New York: Creative Age Press, 1950), pp. 110-11.

The repeal of the embargo laws.--A third challenge to isolationism came in the spring of 1939 when Hitler made a mockery of the Munich agreement by taking Czechoslovakia and pressed Poland for consent to annexation of Danzig. President Roosevelt and Secretary Hull hoped to counteract these assaults with a revision of the neutrality laws which would let the world know America's "determination to support the cause of the democracies by unstinted material aid."⁵⁴ Public opinion polls at the time indicate that the country supported the administration in its views, but strong opposition remained in Congress.⁵⁵ When Roosevelt turned to the Senate for help, he met with stiff opposition. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee let the proposal die in committee by a vote of 12-11. Dulles notes that this was the final victory for the isolationists. "Never again," he says, "would they hold the strategically dominant position which was theirs in mid-summer 1939."⁵⁶

Hitler's march on Poland in September, 1939 demonstrated that public opinion in America could not be counted on to remain indifferent. Neutrality legislation could prevent the act of lending money to belligerents, but it could not outlaw the fear that the success of the Nazis

⁵⁴Langer and Gleason, op. cit., p. 137.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Dulles, op. cit., p. 186.

might mean the downfall of America. After invoking the neutrality law, President Roosevelt called Congress into special session and requested a repeal of the arms embargo, asking for a substitute measure which would permit belligerents to purchase from America on a "cash-and-carry" basis. While the President insisted that "by the repeal of the embargo the United States will more probably remain at peace than if the law remains as it stands,"⁵⁷ there was never much doubt but that the President wanted a means to aid Britain and France. Secretary Hull pointed to the real issue: "The new legislation would afford us a better chance of keeping out of war than the old legislation because, if Britain and France won the war, we could remain at peace, whereas, if Germany won, there was every likelihood that we would soon have to fight."⁵⁸ Public opinion polls showed that a majority of Americans had come to share the administration's view.⁵⁹ But the isolationist block in Congress strongly opposed any change in the existing neutrality laws. Vandenberg stood steadfast with this group.

Vandenberg became the Senate leader of the opposition to Roosevelt's request for the embargo repeal. Time magazine

⁵⁷Rosenman, The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, VIII, 518.

⁵⁸Hull, op. cit., p. 684.

⁵⁹Hadley Cantril (ed.), Public Opinion, 1935-1946 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), pp. 987-68.

viewed it as "the greatest legislative battle since the 1919 Senate fight over ratification of the Versailles Treaty and entrance of the United States into the League of Nations." Gathered to Vandenberg's side were a mixture of so-called conservatives and liberals. They included Progressive Bob LaFollette, Jr., Harry Byrd of Virginia, Missouri's Bennett Champ Clark, and Senator Claude Pepper of Florida. "It looked as if Arthur Hendrick Vandenberg was the biggest paradox of all," insisted Time, adding that he was chosen to lead the defense of the embargo because he "best symbolized all phases and shades of the opposition to embargo repeal." Reported Time:

To weatherwise political observers, Vandenberg's stand looked like first-class, Grade A politics. For he stood to win much--to lose little. He had in his grasp the kind of issue politicians dream about; national, emotional, impeccably honorable. With that stick he could drum a roll that would be felt by every mother's heart in the U. S.; "I will never vote to send your sons to war."⁶⁰

But Americans were already adhering to the belief that America's best protection from war might be aid to Britain. The Gallop poll showed in March of 1939 that 76 percent of Americans favored the selling of goods to England and France in case of war.⁶¹ After the attack on Poland, the Roosevelt administration contended that the

⁶⁰"National Affairs" Time, XXXIV (October 2, 1939), 16.

⁶¹Allen, op. cit., p. 332.

embargo contributed to the defeat of the Allies. Although Vandenberg's group insisted that repeal would lead to war, the nation took the advice of President Roosevelt, who entered the Senate debate with a radio address on October 26 to announce that "no person in any responsible place . . . has ever suggested . . . sending the boys of American mothers to fight on the battlefields of Europe."⁶²

Report of the Speech

Vandenberg joined in the debate on the repeal issue early in the special session. He occupied the Senate floor for two hours without interruption on October 2, 1939,⁶³ in an effort to prove his case that any change in the Neutrality Act of 1937 meant war for America as well as a complete repudiation of the basic tenets of American foreign policy. He must have sensed that the mood of the country had changed since 1937 for in his discussion he felt compelled to muster evidence in support of his position, whereas in 1937 he assumed its acceptance without proof.

Vandenberg designed his address to accomplish four objectives: First, he wanted to show that war was not desirable for America; second, he desired to prove that a repeal of the embargo would take the United States a step

⁶²Rosenman, The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, VIII, 556.

⁶³Record, 76th Cong., 2d Sess., 1939 LXXV, Part 1, 95.

closer to war; third, he wanted to establish that a "cash-and-carry" policy was not a satisfactory substitute for the embargo; and fourth, he wanted to refute those who seemed to think that America's entrance into war was inevitable.

The Michigan Senator chose to pitch his defense of the arms embargo on the issue of war or peace. He seemed to have realized that Americans were growing increasingly sympathetic with the British. He doubted, however, that a majority had reached the stage where they favored aid to Britain even at the risk of war. His hope for success, therefore, was centered around his efforts to convince his countrymen that repealing the embargo would lead to war.

Introduction.--Vandenberg opened with a reminder of the tremendous importance of the issue before the Congress. "I believe this debate," he insisted, "involves the most momentous decision, in the eyes of America and of the world, that the United States Senate has confronted in a generation." Then he plunged into his thesis statement which both summarized his basic objections to repeal and emphasized his own position.

. . . in the midst of foreign war and the alarms of other wars, we are asked to depart basically from the neutrality which the American Congress has twice told the world since 1935, would be our rule. . . . We are particularly asked to depart from it through the repeal of existing neutrality law establishing an embargo on arms, ammunition, and implements of war. We are asked to depart from it in violation of our own officially asserted doctrine. . . . We

are asked to depart from it in behalf of one belligerent whom our personal sympathies largely favor. . . . In my opinion, this is the road that may lead us to war, and I will not voluntarily take it.⁶⁴

Vandenberg then moved to an ethical plea for bipartisan consideration of the measure ending with an appeal that the measure be divorced from domestic politics. "To prostitute the peace of America to politics," he insisted, "would be sheer treason."⁶⁵ In this, he agreed with President Roosevelt who had made the same plea. He also echoed the President's wish that all Americans "ascribe an honorable desire for peace to those who hold different views."⁶⁶ Vandenberg's reply was an assurance that he would "respect the motives behind every vote that shall be cast upon the roll call."⁶⁷

Argument against war for America.--Before building his case for retention of the embargo, Vandenberg raised the question of the desirability of America remaining at peace. Two years earlier, he assumed the acceptance of this goal. He seemed to sense that many Americans were growing more sympathetic to the Allied cause and might risk war to help the democracies. He said: "There is the group that is so righteously sensitized to the cause of one belligerent against the other . . . that they do not wholly reject the hazards of our involvement. . . ."⁶⁸ Although he did not mention

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 96.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Ibid.

the President at this point, there was an apparent awareness of the strength of Roosevelt's statement: "We know what might happen to us in the United States if the new philosophies of force were to encompass the other continents and invade our own."⁶⁹ In essence, Vandenberg's reply was that a war to preserve a democracy cannot produce the conditions essential to maintain a democracy. He alluded to the Treaty of Versailles and to the reductions of the rights of the individual in time of war. He added: "We cannot order Europe's destiny, not even if we took it as a permanent assignment. It is not our war, despite our devotion to democracy."⁷⁰

Vandenberg built a strong case to support his position that war does not build democracy. He capitalized on American experiences at Versailles in parading the false hopes of 1918 before his audience as an example of America's attempts to right the wrongs of Europe. America can render a greater service to humanity, implied Vandenberg, by setting a good example than by joining in the conflict. He reduced America's role to that of maintaining liberty, freedom and free institutions on this side of the world. He gave no hint of an awareness that threats to peace might also be a

⁶⁹Rosenman, The Public Papers and Address of Franklin D. Roosevelt, VIII, 514.

⁷⁰Record, 76th Cong., 2d Sess., 1939, LXXV, Part 1, 98.

threat to democracy. He asked, instead, what would we get?

First, we would get such a regimentation of our own lives and livelihoods, 20 minutes after we entered the war, that the Bill of Rights would need a gas mask, and individual liberty of action would swiftly become a mocking memory. . . . If the war went long enough, I doubt whether we shall ever get the Republic back. . . .

Second, we should come out of the victory with an infinitely pyramided debt. . . . Repudiation or ruinous inflation would be inevitable. Our economic values would collapse. Nothing but all powerful central government could save the pieces. . . .⁷¹

Argument that repeal is a step toward war.--To

establish his belief that repeal of the embargo would lead to war, Vandenberg first had to meet the administration's argument that repeal would strengthen neutrality. The demand for repeal, said Vandenberg, came not from a desire to keep the country neutral, but from a desire to aid one belligerent over another. This action, he contended, would "strike down a great, indispensable, insulating defense against our involvement in this war."⁷² After making this observation, he said, however, that he was willing to overlook this obvious motive of risking war to help Allies and debate the issue purely on the declared objective of the proponents of repeal--the business of keeping America at peace. "I oppose repeal because I believe repeal makes us relatively vulnerable," he argued, "while the embargo leaves us relatively immune. And there the major issue lies."⁷³

⁷¹Ibid., p. 97.

⁷²Ibid., p. 96.

⁷³Ibid.

With his thesis repeated, Vandenberg turned to the business of meeting Roosevelt's assertion that repeal of the embargo would be a better guarantee of peace than the existing legislation. The Michigan Senator attempted to prove that the "change must be less safe, less insulated, less calculated to achieve the American detachment to which we say we are devoted."⁷⁴ His major argument in support of this assertion was simply that repeal would place America in violation of international law since she would be changing her policy toward belligerents after war had begun. "When we pass this bill," he said, "we abandon our own solemnly announced conception of what our neutrality ought to be, no matter what aliens should be involved."⁷⁵ He stressed:

. . . the arms embargo is the dominating symbol of the neutrality which we almost unanimously said we would preserve. Its repeal must be the dominating symbol of a conscious drift away from neutrality as we ourselves defined it.⁷⁶

He then pushed the fear of war in his efforts to show that it would be "unneutral" to change the rules during the course of war. "We know that repeal will be construed abroad," he said, "as the fruition of a deliberate purpose to help one belligerent . . . and an encouragement to

⁷⁴Record, 76th Cong., 2d Sess., 1939, LXXV, Part 1, 98.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 100.

⁷⁶Ibid.

believe that we may later come closer to the battle line."⁷⁷ Implicit in this argument was both the belief that Germany might strike back if America should release arms to Nazi enemies in the middle of hostilities and that the Allies would be encouraged to think that America had joined their cause. The fear of war, he thought, was greater than the desire of many Americans to see Germany defeated. He alluded to 1918 again to show that America should not permit other nations to pull her into war which she would later regret.

But Vandenberg seemed to sense that his whole case hinged on whether he could demonstrate that repeal of the embargo violated American neutrality. "The code, I say again and again, is the symbol of non-involvement. To change the symbol is to change the attitude,"⁷⁸ he insisted. He then cited numerous authorities including Roscoe Pound of Harvard Law School who contended that American attempts to change its neutral position were in violation of international law. He also alluded to incidents during World War I in which several state department officials had frowned upon any American attempts to change its neutral position in the war as indicative of "unneutral" acts. "I do not believe," he said, "that unneutrality--no matter what you call it is the safer or the wiser road to peace."⁷⁹

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 101.

Argument against the "cash-and-carry" provision.--

Vandenberg next attempted to meet Roosevelt's implication that a "cash-and-carry" policy would be safer than a complete embargo. He depended upon the memory of 1917-1918 as proof that enemy ships would attempt to sink vessels carrying contraband the moment they left American shores. He contended that Roosevelt's request was an invitation to enemy ships to come into America's "front door" where conflicts and misunderstandings would occur. He simply asked: "Is it possible that anyone can seriously argue that "cash-and-carry" is less hazardous and less likely to involvements than no trade in munitions at all?"⁸⁰

Vandenberg warned of a second hazard in the "cash-and-carry" policy. He took implicit advantage once again of the Nye Committee report to remind his audience that once manufacturers had a taste of war profits, they would want more. When that times comes, said Vandenberg, if nations cannot pay cash, the cry will go up to extend credit. "And does not all of this," continued Vandenberg, "land us precisely where it did in 1917-18?"⁸¹ This argument was clearly attached to the public's hatred of war profits at the expense of human suffering. While a continuation of the embargo, insisted Vandenberg, would be "temporarily

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 102.

⁸¹Ibid.

harder on our cash registers, but it would be easier upon our permanent stabilities and certainly it would be infinitely easier upon our sons."⁸²

Those Americans who were willing to run some risk if repeal would help England and France were the target of Vandenberg's final argument against the "cash-and-carry" provision. "Our expectations are distorted," said Vandenberg, "and our hopes are deceived when we try to be neutral and unneutral in the same breath."⁸³ With historic prophecy, he warned that once nations had no cash, they would want credit, and when their credit was gone, they would ask for gifts, and when munitions proved to be inadequate, they would call for men. In other words, he insisted that partial aid ultimately meant complete involvement. He knew that even those who favored repeal did so in the name of peace. He did not hesitate then to demand neutrality or total involvement. "If we ever reach the point . . . that American destiny is linked with . . . a European war, . . . let us go all the way with everything we have got."⁸⁴

Argument against inevitable involvement.--It is clear that the Senator did not foresee how close the world had come to conquering space when he argued that "two great oceans . . . still relatively insulate our shores against

⁸²Ibid., p. 103.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Ibid.

this curse of war and the clashing European rivalries and menaces out of which it seems perpetually to grow."⁸⁵ This argument was directed against those who had come to believe that American involvement was inevitable. On this issue, he probably shared the thinking of a majority of his countrymen who believed that a great ocean provided an isolated location and separation from Europe. He appears to have been profoundly unaware of the revolution in warfare, particularly in regard to air power, which Hitler had forced upon his enemies.

Conclusion.--Vandenberg's conclusion indicated his willingness to compromise on the repeal issue. He said: "We may disagree among ourselves as to the wisest means to win and save this benediction. But in the face of this objective, we must finally be one people."⁸⁶ The sincerity of this remark is evidenced by the fact that after the embargo was repealed and the President had signed the new act into law,⁸⁷ Vandenberg accepted the verdict and voted for funds to administer the new provisions.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 104.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Langer and Gleason, op. cit., p. 231. They write: "The final vote on the conference report, November 3, [1939] was 55-24 in the Senate and 243-172 in the House. . . . The President signed the bill on November 4, 1939. . . ."

Interpretation of the Speech

The issue of war or peace.--President Roosevelt requested the Congress to repeal the embargo and institute a policy of "cash-and-carry" in its place. "Our acts must be guided," said the President, "by one single hardheaded thought--keeping America out of this war."⁸⁸ Roosevelt had thus presented the request for repeal on a war or peace theme.

Vandenberg agreed to meet the President on his terms. But he implied at several points in the speech that he suspected the President of other motives. Roosevelt had said on occasions that an embargo deprived countries with powerful navies of natural advantages over land powers. In other words, the embargo worked against England and France. Its repeal would work for them. Vandenberg probably opposed the move because he was afraid that Roosevelt would use it as a means to aid England and France and thus edge America closer to involvement.

It is difficult to ascertain why he viewed the new law as less neutral than the 1937 act. Under the new act, no American vessel could carry goods or passengers to any belligerent, no American goods could be shipped to belligerents until title had been transferred, no American could travel in certain combat areas, no American citizen could travel on any belligerent ship, no American merchant ships could

⁸⁸Rosenman, The Public Papers and Address of Franklin D. Roosevelt, VIII, 518.

be armed, and no American businessman could engage in the exchange of bonds or securities with any belligerent state. The President's discretionary power over American foreign policy was still limited. The only major change was the provision which would permit America to sell to belligerents.

The only defensible argument against the proposal was probably the one employed by Vandenberg, namely, that repeal would involve the United States in a rules change after the conflict had begun and thus would be in violation of international law. The inherent danger was the possibility of reprisals by an angry Germany since it would appear that the United States had joined the side of Great Britain and France. Hitler was no doubt aware that American sympathies were with the Allies. Vandenberg, of course, was also aware of this. His real fear, though denied in the speech, was that the President would use the new provision to help quarantine aggressors--a step which Vandenberg viewed as moving away from continentalism toward collective security. He probably felt that Roosevelt preferred victory for England and France--even at the expense of American involvement. In this case, his fear was not so much of repeal, but of the chain of events it might precipitate. As Vandenberg said, once Britain could no longer pay cash, then the President might request loans. Once Britain could not come for her own supplies, then America would take them to her. That would mean war. This actually happened later. By opposing repeal, Vandenberg hoped to prevent it.

The neutrality argument.--In arguing that embargo repeal might invite reprisals from Germany, Vandenberg, no doubt, advanced the strongest argument against the measure. Although American sympathies were on the side of England and France, there was no evidence that they were ready to get in the struggle. But did the repeal of the measure really increase the risk of war? The United States was already shipping everything just short of munitions to the Allies as fast as they could be gotten there. Vandenberg gave no hint that he was willing to add such items as steel, cotton, corn, and oil to the restricted list. He probably knew the reaction which he would get from American businessmen and farmers. Yet, England in 1917 considered many of these items contraband. The truth was that most Americans were probably willing to take on a slight risk if it meant that in adding munitions it offered help to the Allies. Americans had no desire to see Hitler dominate Europe. They were not neutral in thought. Many probably thought that the addition of the "cash-and-carry" provision offset any slight degree of increased danger which the repeal of the embargo might invoke.

The "real" issues.--Although Vandenberg mustered strong logical and emotional appeals to support his contentions, he nevertheless completely ignored some of the major measures advanced by those supporting repeal. As stated, he chose to argue the issue solely on the basis that it was presented

by the administration, i.e., the strengthening of American neutrality. But the real issue was hidden in the hearts of the American people. Dulles notes that with the outbreak of the war, there was "almost universal sympathy for the Allied cause."⁸⁹ Vandenberg recognized this attitude, but he appeared to have missed its significance. He narrowed the issue to war or peace. Buell notes that the real issue revolved around the belief that "should Germany become the dominate power as a result of this war, America would be left the only great democracy in the world."⁹⁰ One might add to this issue the question of international justice. This, perhaps, accounted in part for the American sympathy for the Allied cause.

In introducing the bill, the Senate Majority Leader, for example, urged the repeal of the embargo "because it prevents Great Britain, which is surrounded by water, from purchasing in our market."⁹¹ Such a law was said to work for Germany and against Great Britain and France. Many Americans, perhaps, found it difficult to support a neutrality law which worked in favor of the aggressor and against the democracies. But Vandenberg failed to discuss this contention. He did, of course, recognize that repeal might discriminate

⁸⁹Dulles, op. cit., p. 187.

⁹⁰Buell, op. cit., p. 454.

⁹¹Record, 76th Cong., 2d Sess., 1939, LXXV, Part 1, 53.

in favor of Great Britain and France because these countries had control of the seas, but this move he viewed as a step toward war. He misjudged the moral consciousness of his country if he thought it would support a policy that might encourage aggression just because the opposite move might mean war.

But Vandenberg's biggest mistake, perhaps, was his failure to come to grips with the most significant argument of those who supported repeal; i.e., the belief in many quarters that "cash-and-carry" supplies from America might help England and France to defeat the aggressors. This position was never expressed by the President. But Langer and Gleason believe that it was implicit in the President's request to revise the law. They note that Americans did not want to send armies abroad. But "in the President's and the public's mind, was, of course, the desire to see the Axis quickly defeated and to contribute to that end insofar as dangers of involvement could be safely avoided."⁹²

While it is true that Vandenberg made a strong stand in attempting to prove that war did not insure democracy, he never really met the argument that a Nazi victory might seriously threaten the security of America. In spite of the 3,000 mile separation, the opponents of the embargo argued that the United States had an interest in the maintenance of

⁹²Langer and Gleason, op. cit., p. 213.

a world balance of power. The administration asserted, in fact, that the United States could not insulate itself against the influence which a Nazi victory could have on America. It was held, that if England and France lost to Germany, the United States would be menaced throughout the globe. It was not hard to convince Americans that an Allied victory did not pose such a threat. Vandenberg simply could not erase the possibility that a Nazi victory might threaten the United States. For this reason, he found it difficult to meet the argument that the United States should do nothing to aid the democracies.

Neither did Vandenberg successfully refute the argument that "cash-and-carry" would be a safe method of selling to belligerents. The Senator simply asserted that ships might be fired on near American shores. But the opposition contended that this really involved no danger to America since the purchaser must pay cash and come to America for his goods in his own ship. In fact, the only really logical reply that Vandenberg could make was simply to infer that England and France would do just that and Germany could not, therefore, the totalitarian states would take it as an "unneutral" act against them. But this did not answer the opposition's obvious reply that as long as the opportunity was open to them to buy in America, the United States had made no violation of international law. The administration further argued that the existing law was even a great danger

to the peace, because it permitted American ships to carry uncompleted implements of war to belligerents. On the other hand, the new bill would not permit American ships to carry any goods to belligerents. The President said: "Let us be factual and recognize that a belligerent nation often needs wheat and lard and cotton as much as he needs anti-aircraft."⁹³ Vandenberg's reply was simply that America could, in this case, shut off all shipments to belligerents.

The American Congress, of course, was not willing to risk wrecking the American economy in the middle of a depression by stopping all trade with the major purchasers of American goods. Americans would not purchase peace at any price. Neutrals still had rights. The American people in supporting repeal were in effect saying that just because one nation attacks another, this does not mean that the belligerents gain all the rights. Vandenberg called for this retreat, and a majority rejected his request.

In summary, Vandenberg centered his arguments against the repeal of the arms embargo on the effectiveness of the embargo in keeping America out of war. He insisted that repeal would lead the country into war. He tried to show that any effort to supply Great Britain with munitions was an invitation for America's involvement. He was aware,

⁹³Rosenman, The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, VIII, 517..

however, that American sympathy was overwhelmingly with the democracies, and that there was a growing American enthusiasm for sacrifices to avert a German victory. He recognized, nevertheless, that Americans wanted to avoid war. With this awareness, he continued to stress that America's geographical aloofness enabled her to avert the struggle, but a break in neutrality might pull her into the battle. What he failed to show, however, was how the United States could escape the consequences of a predominately totalitarian world.

The Address on the Selective Service Act

The German sweep of the low countries and the fall of France in 1940 removed any remaining American complacency toward war. It was generally believed up to that time both in Washington and among the American people that the Allied powers would win.⁹⁴ The reality of the European situation after the summer of 1940 brought frantic demands in the United States to "put the national defenses in order," and "to do everything possible to save France and Britain from destruction."⁹⁵ The President faced the first demand by calling for increased military appropriations, a two ocean Navy, and the adoption of peacetime conscription. The latter proposal aroused the old isolationist block. Senator

⁹⁴Langer and Gleason, op. cit., pp. 469-80.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 472.

Vandenberg again joined with this group to stage a defensive battle. His rationale for opposing selective service can best be understood by an examination of the context of events which occurred between the repeal of the embargo in 1939 and the fall of France in the summer of 1940.

The Context of the Speech

American attitudes in 1939.--In spite of their desires to aid the democracies, Congress and the American people in late 1939 desired to keep America at peace..

After Germany and Russia overran Poland, the world got a breathing spell during a six months "phony war."⁹⁶ Although men like Bernard Baruch warned Americans that their forces were "pitifully small, untrained, lacking modern arms and up-to-date munitions,"⁹⁷ the country refused to grapple with the impending danger. Under-Secretary of State Welles warned, after a trip abroad, that there was little possibility of negotiated peace talks unless the United States threatened to intervene. Even so, the "country had settled down to the expectation of a long-drawn conflict ending eventually in an Allied victory," while even the "British and French governments themselves had remained

⁹⁶A term often applied to the relative inaction by Hitler between the fall of Poland in September, 1939, and the invasion of Norway in the spring of 1940.

⁹⁷The New York Times, September 17, 1939, p. 20.

confident of ultimate victory and were intent on fighting a cheap war."⁹⁸

American attitudes after the fall of France.--Hitler's invasion of Norway and Denmark in April of 1940, the fall of the low countries in May, and the collapse of France in June awakened Americans to the realization that Britain might be defeated and the whole continent lost. When the President told Congress that "the past few weeks have made it clear to all our citizens that the possibility of attack on vital American zones ought to make it essential that we have the physical, the ready ability to meet those attacks,"⁹⁹ he met with little opposition.

The President's first move was an attempt to add stronger leadership to the Navy and War Departments. On June 19, 1940, he asked Frank Fox to become Secretary of the Navy, and Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of War. Both were Republicans. His appointment of Knox, a newspaperman who was Alfred Landon's running mate in 1936, met with little opposition. But a group of isolationists including Arthur Vandenberg tried to block Stimson's appointment. While admitting that Stimson's "patriotism, his conscience, his integrity, and his capacities are above reproach,"¹⁰⁰ the Michigan Senator

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Record, 76th Cong., 3rd Sess., 1940, LXXXVI, Part 8, 9260.

insisted that Stimson's willingness to transport American goods to the British in American ships and his approval of selective service made his appointment dangerous for the country. In spite of this opposition, however, the Senate approved the appointment.

The President's second move was an appeal to Congress for an enlargement of the armed forces and additional production of war materials. The Congress approved a defense appropriation of five billion dollars and authorized sixteen billion dollars for production contracts. The authorized size of the army was increased from 280,000 men to 1,200,000; the air force was given permission to add 18,000 planes to its strength, and the Navy was authorized to increase its total tonnage to 1,325,000 tons making the "two-ocean Navy" a reality.¹⁰¹

The President's next move was a recommendation that Congress enact a selective service law. Stimson, in fact, is said to have accepted Roosevelt's appointment with the understanding that the President support his views on selective service.¹⁰² But the President was slow to announce his avowed support of the measure despite the fact that the polls showed that by August of 1940 over 86 percent of the

¹⁰¹Pratt, op. cit., p. 637.

¹⁰²Langer and Gleason, op. cit., p. 620.

American people favored conscription.¹⁰³ "The President seems to have been on his guard," writes Langer and Gleason, "against the standpat isolationist elements in Congress, of whom he had more than a merely wholesome fear."¹⁰⁴ Eventually, however, the President reluctantly announced his support, and was soon joined by a statement from Wendell Willkie, who asserted that selective service is "the only democratic way in which to assure the trained and competent manpower we need for national defense."¹⁰⁵

But in spite of the support of Roosevelt, Willkie, General Pershing, and General Marshall, along with a majority of the public, selective service faced a battle in Congress. The isolationists viewed it as another effort to force the United States to play a more positive role in world affairs. Vandenberg joined the oratorical efforts of this group to defeat the bill.

Analysis of the Speech

Debate over the Burke-Wadsworth Bill, which called for the registration of all men in America between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-five, erupted in August, 1940. Vandenberg made his major speech in opposition to the act

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵The New York Times, August 18, 1940, p. 33.

on August 12, 1940.¹⁰⁶ He advanced two major arguments against the bill. He maintained, first, that conscription was in direct opposition to the spirit of democracy, and second, that conscription was not needed for national defense. Both of his contentions appealed to the American belief that no liberty should be sacrificed without due provocation.

Introduction.--Vandenberg's opening remarks took him straight into the core of his address. "I am opposed to the peacetime conscription," he announced, "unless it is reasonably established that a positive national emergency can be served and saved in no other way."¹⁰⁷ From this assertion, he moved into his first argument against the proposition.

Contention that conscription destroyed Democracy.--Vandenberg first attempted to prove that compulsory service violated the spirit of democracy. For this chore, he relied primarily upon bare assertions. "Peacetime military conscription is repugnant to the spirit of democracy and the soul of Republican institutions," he insisted. He pictured peacetime conscription as a form of involuntary servitude which was incompatible with American democracy. Such a program, he argued, would mark a radical departure from "150 years of peacetime history and tradition," adding that such a policy

¹⁰⁶Record, 76th Cong., 3rd Sess., 1940, LXXXVI, Part 9, 10123-30.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 10123.

would take from America "a precious possession with which we should not lightly part."¹⁰⁸

The Michigan Senator flatly denied that America must submit to peacetime conscription in the name of freedom. In contrast, he argued that military conscription was a major premise of totalitarianism. "The American voluntary system," on the other hand, was pictured as "one of the glorious trademarks of our democracy."¹⁰⁹ He called on his audience not to abandon that system without due provocation. The issue, he insisted, was whether "the fateful time has now come, in 1940, when the American ways, from 1787 to 1939, must be abandoned."¹¹⁰

This is the question: Has the volunteer system, under adequate trial, demonstrated that it cannot be trusted to produce the recruits required by the Army and Navy as swiftly as may be neededfully to match and man our new facilities for the defense of America and her essential outposts?¹¹¹

In the light of this statement, Vandenberg apparently was telling his audience that he would vote for conscription in spite of ill effects if it were necessary to mobilize the entire force of the country against an enemy. "If and when the justified answer is 'Yes,' I will vote for peacetime conscription," he invoked. "So long as the justified answer is 'No,' I will not vote for peacetime conscription."¹¹²

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 10124.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 10123

¹¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Ibid.

Argument that conscription was not needed for defense.--

After attempting to prove that selective service was incompatible with democracy, Vandenberg conceded that such a step might be necessary under extreme circumstances. But he denied that the world situation in 1940 demanded the act. He asked:

Has the volunteer system under adequate trial demonstrated that it cannot be trusted to produce the recruits required by the Army and the Navy as swiftly as may be needed, fully to match and man our new facilities for the defense of America and her essential ideals? I answer "No" and I now propose to examine my proofs.¹¹³

He turned to induction to prove that conscription was not needed. First, he showed from official records that "the Army and Navy have filled every volunteer quota they have sought this year."¹¹⁴ Second, he asserted that the government had made no real effort to make the volunteer system work. Here he attempted to blame any deficiency in the status quo directly on the inadequacy of the President's administration of it. In a display of fine scorn, he said:

Has the President issued a ringing call for volunteers? He has not. Has there been a persuasive fireside chat upon the subject? There has not. Has there been a rigorous campaign to instruct young America in its country's need for volunteers? There has not.¹¹⁵

Vandenberg then pointed to specific steps which the government might take to make the voluntary system workable.

¹¹³Ibid., p. 10126.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

He suggested increased pay, a one-year instead of a three-year term, and stepped up quotas. "Compulsion should be embraced," insisted Vandenberg, "only when the volunteer system shows at least some sign of failing . . . it has shown no such sign. . . ."116 He cited numerous newspaper references to show that quotas were being met throughout the country. At this point, Senator Burke interrupted with the assertion that the voluntary system was failing until talk of compulsion began. Vandenberg evaded him, and continued with the question: "How about the thousands of colored patriotic citizens . . . who cannot get into the voluntary service because so relatively few units are provided for them?"117

In arguing the selective service issue on the basis of "no need" and a loss of personal liberty, Vandenberg's reasoning differed somewhat from others who opposed the step. Many of the isolationists tried to prove that the administration wanted a large army as a preliminary event to involving the country in war.¹¹⁸ Vandenberg hinted throughout his speech that he would like to make war or peace the major issue, but he was careful to attach honorable intentions to those with whom he disagreed. But at one or

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 10128.

¹¹⁷Ibid.

¹¹⁸Langer and Gleason, op. cit., p. 681.

two points, he indirectly questioned the real intentions of the administration in proposing the measure. Said Vandenberg: "I can understand why the defense needs took on a new color of urgency--particularly in the minds of those who fearfully believe that our involvement in the European war sooner or later is inevitable, and who favor a foreign policy which might, however, unwittingly take us nearer to this hazard."¹¹⁹ But Vandenberg let the point pass without further comment.

Later, however, he hinted at ulterior motives on the part of the President when he questioned the proposed size of the Army. Referring to the administration request for 400,000 men by October 1, the Senator asked, "Why? I will accept the figure," he said, "in spite of the fact that I cannot understand it." But the dig at the President was implicit. "What lies ahead," said Vandenberg, "depends . . . upon decisions almost exclusively in the hands of the President, and I have no means of knowing what he contemplates." Then having made his point, he said: "I dismiss all collateral controversy, and I come back to the one and single proposition upon which I stand: This democracy cannot afford . . . to embrace peacetime military compulsion. . . ."¹²⁰

Conclusion.--Vandenberg concluded with a restatement of his objections to the proposal: "First, because it is

¹¹⁹Record, 76th Cong., 3rd Sess., 1940, LXXXVI, Part 9, 10126.

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 10129.

presently unnecessary in behalf of full defense; second, because it is a wrenching departure from the traditional American ideal of liberty. . . ."121 And then contrary to his usual practice, he added two additional objections to conscription which he had not mentioned in the speech and which he let pass without adequate development. Almost as an afterthought, he objected to the bill

. . . because it injects into our economy a philosophy of forced controls which should be resisted because of their direction and their further implications, . . . and because Congress is here and can promptly supply any correction if it be required by unfolding destiny.122

Interpretation of the Speech

The extent of the emergency.--Vandenberg's objective in this speech was refutation of the argument that America needed a selective service act. Those who favored the compulsory plan were alarmed by the pressure of events in Europe. In August of 1940, there were no signs that Hitler was about to be defeated or that Japan was withdrawing from the power race. Many, including the President, viewed a strong army as a necessity in the face of a world situation which seemed destined to grow even worse. Vandenberg challenged this point of view. He could see no need for a nation at peace to maintain a large peacetime army.

¹²¹Ibid., p. 10130.

¹²²Ibid.

Thus, Vandenberg's case was based on a false premise. In 1940, the United States was not really at peace. It was true that war had not been declared and the American people hoped that the use of American soldiers would never be necessary. Nevertheless, the country was actually living in a state of war, psychologically at least, that would exist as long as Hitler remained unchecked. This was a reality, which Vandenberg apparently could not admit. His defense of the voluntary system was based on the assumption that America was not in the war and need never be.

The distrust of Roosevelt.--Although difficult to detect in his speech, Vandenberg's real fear of selective service was probably his distrust of President Roosevelt's use of American forces. Vandenberg had not usually balked at preparedness. The Burke-Wadsworth Bill was not by any means a universal military training program. It was advanced simply as a defense measure. Vandenberg probably did not have serious objections to the proposal. He had, in fact, voted only the week before for a peacetime compulsory draft for the National Guard. Why then did he object to this measure? He might have suspected the President of seeking the measure as a preparatory step to intervention on the side of the Allies. The Senator had been suspicious of Roosevelt since he spoke in favor of quarantining aggressors in 1937, and he hinted at this in the selective service speech. "I am frank to say," he contended, "that I think we sometimes

are entirely too prone to ask for trouble."¹²³ But he dismissed this phase as "collateral controversy," which in reality may have been his real objection to the proposal.

It is not so surprising that Vandenberg would view selective service as an attempt to "meet force with force" or to add to the balance of power against the Nazis. While he probably recognized that the possession of manpower might make others less likely to challenge the United States, he seemed also to feel that President Roosevelt would be more reluctant to face a challenger, to lead the country into war, if America did not have that manpower ready at hand. When he said he did not know the President's plans, he was implicitly voicing fear that the President might have viewed the bill as a step toward war.

The case for selective service.--In 1940 America stood at the crossroads of world affairs and few Americans claimed to know the safe road to follow. An evaluation of Vandenberg's argument reveals serious weaknesses in his premises. But in August of 1940, bombs had not fallen on Pearl Harbor and most Americans had never heard of atomic energy. Europe still seemed 3,000 miles away.

In arguing his case against conscription on the grounds that there was no "sign" of a need, Vandenberg was probably right in asserting that quotas had been met. What he failed

¹²³Ibid., p. 10129.

to emphasize was that the authorized strength of the army was limited by law. After the terrifying fall of France and the constant threat hanging over Great Britain, American military leaders, including General Marshall, began calling for at least a regular army of one million men. "There was no chance of securing so many men by voluntary enlistment," writes Langer and Gleason, "which had never yielded large numbers and which of late had been falling off to an alarming degree."¹²⁴ Vandenberg replied that the voluntary system should be tried and if and when it failed the country should turn to conscription.

But Vandenberg had before him the hard earned lessons of recent history. Washington officials, including Henry L. Stimson, hastened to point out that voluntary conscription had never worked in time of serious threats.¹²⁵ America had turned to the selective, compulsory system in 1918. Although admitting this fact, Vandenberg insisted that the situation in 1940 could not be compared to the one in 1918 because at that time America was at war. But he ignored the fact that nations no longer declared war--they waged it first. Americans faced the realization that Germany did not declare war on Holland, Norway, Belgium, and France--she simply waged it. In other words, his insistence that the

¹²⁴Langer and Gleason, op. cit., p. 680.

¹²⁵Ibid., p. 681.

voluntary system could produce adequate preparedness failed to come to grips with the defense needs of Nazi Blitzkrieg. He continued to cling to the idea that the voluntary system could meet the demands of the hour by adding some inducements for young men to volunteer. But he could muster no evidence to prove that such a system could yield a million or more men. A panicky American public faced the possibility of having to defend itself against unprovoked and unannounced attack.

Further, Vandenberg's argument ignored the necessity of a reserve of trained manpower. Military authorities had repeatedly shown that a major weakness of America's defense system in 1940 was the absence of a large reservoir of trained men from which, in time of attack, adequate forces could be drawn.¹²⁶ If Vandenberg's advice had been accepted, the attack on December 7, 1940, would have found America trying to wage a war in both Europe and Asia with voluntary enlistments. The Senator was, in effect, calling on his countrymen to depend upon three thousand miles of ocean for protection rather than trained, equipped manpower ready for service. Pearl Harbor proved that America was vulnerable to attack in spite of distance.

There is also some reason to question Vandenberg's insistence on preserving voluntary conscription as a

¹²⁶Ibid.

"glorious trademark" of democracy. With disaster threatening, Americans became more concerned with safety than tradition. Even Vandenberg's assertion that conscription destroyed individual liberty met with serious challenge when faced with the argument that the obligation to defend one's country should be recognized as a corollary to the right to enjoy the privileges of one's government. As a matter of fact, Vandenberg did not recognize that it might be undemocratic to ask a man to undertake a military obligation with little training--a distinct possibility in case of sudden attack.

The selective service issue was the only foreign policy measure between 1937 and 1941 on which Vandenberg did not explicitly insist that the proposal would lead the country directly into war. He argued, instead, that compulsory conscription was undemocratic and unnecessary. He said that since conscription represented a restriction on individual liberty the move should not be taken without due provocation. He insisted that the need did not exist, that America's geographical remoteness from the European conflict did not demand a larger army than the voluntary system could provide. But apprehensions resulting from the failure of the Maginot Line and the British Fleet were more powerful as forces of persuasion than was Vandenberg's rhetoric. The Burke-Wadsworth Bill was signed by the President on September 16, 1940.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 683.

The Address on the Lend-Lease Act

By early 1941, following the "blitz," England had almost exhausted the funds with which to buy "cash-and-carry" goods from the United States. The American people were forced to find a means of aiding her and the other nations fighting Hitlerism. At this hour, many Americans favored aiding Britain even at the cost of war. Most, however, hoped for a "short-of-war" policy. The administration came up with an answer in January, 1941. A bill was introduced in Congress which the public came to characterize as "Lend-Lease." The proposal authorized the President to lend, lease, sell and transfer any American goods including food, munitions of war, and weapons to any country whose national safety he thought connected with American security. The President, furthermore, was permitted to make such transactions under any terms he so desired. Senator Vandenberg spoke against the measure in the United States Senate. The rationale presented in his speech opposing Lend-Lease can best be understood by an examination of the events which precipitated the President's proposal.

The Context of the Speech

The British appeal for aid.--By the end of 1940, it was evident that neutrality had failed. The fall of France along with the signing of the Tripartite Pact on September 27,

1940¹²⁸ convinced many Americans that the defense of the United States meant more than a large army capable of defending the hemisphere. It had become apparent that there was a limit to the amount of war supplies that England could purchase from the United States on a "cash-and-carry" basis, and the administration sought a means to increase the aid to Britain beyond the limits set by the existing neutrality laws. The President presented his first warning in January of 1940. He said: "I hope that we shall have fewer American ostriches in our midst. It is not good for the ultimate health of ostriches to bury their heads in the sand."¹²⁹

Lord Lothian came to the United States in November to emphasize that Great Britain's war expenditures had depleted British dollars. The matter was brought to a climax on December 8, 1940 in a 4,000 word letter from Winston Churchill to President Roosevelt in which the Prime Minister asserted that the American people must not "confine the help which they have so generously promised only to such munitions of war and commodities as could be immediately paid for," adding

¹²⁸Drummond, op. cit., p. 175. He notes that the Pact stipulated "that the three signatory nations--Germany, Italy, and Japan--would assist one another by all political, economic, and military means should any one of them be attacked by a power not then involved in the European war or the Sino-Japanese conflict. . . ."

¹²⁹Rosenman, The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Vol. IX: War and Aid to Democracies, p. 4.

that this was "not an appeal for aid, but a statement for the minimum action necessary to achieve our common purpose."¹³⁰

The President's reaction to Churchill's appeal.--The President in his usual manner put out a "feeler" at his news conference on December 17, 1940. In an effort to avoid putting the "dollar sign" on help for Britain, he proposed aid instead of trade. He stressed that war supplies could be better utilized to defend the United States "if they were sent to Great Britain than if they were kept in storage here." He compared aid to Great Britain to lending one's garden hose to a neighbor to put out a fire. "I don't say to him before that operation," said Roosevelt, "neighbor, my garden hose cost me \$15; you have to pay me \$15 for it. What is the transaction that goes on? I don't want \$15--I want my garden hose back after the fire is over."¹³¹ This was Lend-Lease in analogous form.

The country's reaction to Roosevelt's suggestion.--While the President prepared a more specific proposal, he waited for reactions to his proposal from Americans. Only the "die-hard isolationists" made strong objections. Senator Vandenberg's reaction was typical of this group. He viewed the President's suggestion as an attempt to repeal the

¹³⁰Winston S. Churchill, The Second World War, Vol. II: Their Finest Hour (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1949), 404.

¹³¹Rosenman, The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, IX, 607.

neutrality laws. He countered with a proposal calling for "an American inquiry to belligerents as to the possibility of a negotiated peace which would suggest that the price of refusal to accept a just and realistic formula might be a powerfully enlarged activity on the part of the United States."¹³² He stressed that he was "opposed to sending American ships into belligerent zones or providing American convoys" because he thought such action would invite our "own unavoidable participation." He indicated a mellowing tone in regard to Britain, however, when he stressed that he favored aid to England "within the present limits."¹³³

Roosevelt's Lend-Lease proposal.--Roosevelt presented the rationale for his Lend-Lease proposal in his famous "arsenal of democracy" speech on December 29, 1940. "If Great Britain goes down, the Axis powers will control the continents of Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia, and the high seas," said Roosevelt. "It is no exaggeration to say that all of us, in all the Americas, would be living at the point of a gun." Then he stressed his main point: "We must be the great arsenal of democracy . . . no dictator, no combination of dictators, will weaken that determination by threats of how they will construe that determination."¹³⁴

¹³²The New York Times, December 27, 1940, p. 1.

¹³³Ibid., p. 4.

¹³⁴Samuel I. Rosenman, Working with Roosevelt (New York: Harper and Bros., 1952), p. 259.

Following his fireside chat, the President officially presented his proposal to Congress. House Resolution 1776, symbolic of another great legislative struggle, gave the President power "to make available to the governments of any country whose defense the President deems vital to the defense of the United States any defense article, any service, or any defense information."¹³⁵ Two months of debate both in and out of Congress ensued before the bill became law on March 11, 1941.¹³⁶

Roosevelt received support for his proposal from the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies. This group was organized in May of 1940 under the leadership of William Allen White of Emporia, Kansas, who had declared that "the time had come when the United States should throw its material and moral weight on the side of the nations of Western Europe that are struggling in battle for a civilized way of life." The motive, he insisted, was self-preservation. "Terrible as it may seem," he said, "the people of our country cannot avoid the consequences of Hitler's victory and of those who are or may be allied with him."¹³⁷ By the time Roosevelt's Lend-Lease proposal reached Congress, the organization had thousands of members on its roll books from

¹³⁵Pratt, op. cit., p. 639.

¹³⁶Ibid.

¹³⁷Walter Johnson, The Battle Against Isolation (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944), p. 69.

all walks of life. It was nonpartisan in nature, counting among its recruits such personalities as Adlai E. Stevenson, Paul H. Douglas, Dr. Henry Noble MacCracken, President of Vassar College, Dean Acheson, and scores of others. Among those who spoke for the measure, for example, was Wendell Willkie, the 1940 Republican presidential nominee. This group welcomed Roosevelt's proposal and put the whole weight of its organization behind the measure to gain Congressional support.

But the bill also had its organized opposition. Another powerful pressure group worked against the act equally as hard as the Committee to Defend America worked for it. This group called itself the America First Committee, and its chief aim was to keep America out of war. It was organized under the leadership of R. Douglas Stuart, Jr. of Chicago on September 4, 1940, and had as its first national chairman General Robert E. Wood.¹³⁸ The membership reached thousands including such well-known names as Colonel Charles Lindbergh, John T. Flynn, George N. Peek, Chester Bowles, Senators Burton K. Wheeler, Bennett Champ Clark, and Gerald P. Nye, and Robert M. Hutchins. Although Vandenberg was never a member, he supported most of the organization's goals.

The America First Committee announced immediate opposition to the Lend-Lease proposal. General Wood told

¹³⁸Wayne S. Cole, America First (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1953), p. 43.

the nation on January 11, 1941 that the organization would oppose Lend-Lease "with all the vigor it can exert." He said that Roosevelt "was not asking for a blank check, he wants a blank checkbook with the power to write away your manpower, our laws and our liberties."¹³⁹ From this point until the bill became law, the organization engaged in an all-out effort to defeat the measure. It urged all Americans to write or wire Congress, it organized speakers' bureaus, it demanded full Congressional hearings, its members testified before Congress, and it made full use of radio time and newspaper space. In short, no avenue of public relations was slighted by the group in an effort to get its message before the public. Burton K. Wheeler probably struck the most telling blow. He called the program "the New Deal's Triple 'A' foreign policy--it will plow under every fourth American boy."¹⁴⁰ President Roosevelt felt compelled to reply. He described Wheeler's comment as "the most untruthful; as the most dastardly, unpatriotic thing that has ever been said. Quote me on that. That really is the rottenest thing that has been said in public life in my generation."¹⁴¹

¹³⁹The New York Times, January 12, 1941, p. 7.

¹⁴⁰The New York Times, January 15, 1941, p. 1.

¹⁴¹Ibid.

America rejected the pleas of the America First Committee. With the passage of the Lend-Lease measure, Britain officially became America's first line of defense. It was in the heat of this battle that Vandenberg spoke to Congress on the Lend-Lease Bill.

Report of the Speech

Congressional opposition to Lend-Lease came from two groups. One school of thought viewed the measure as a direct step toward American intervention. Another group, while willing to admit that aid to Britain was necessary, expressed the belief that the particular bill proposed by the administration placed too much power in the hands of the President and sacrificed America's own defense. Senator Vandenberg allied himself with the latter proponents. His major address against the bill on February 18, 1941,¹⁴² reveals not only his objections to the proposal, but also allows one to note the clear changes in his thinking on American foreign policy since 1937.

It is possible to divide Vandenberg's address against the Lend-Lease proposal into two parts. In the first division, Vandenberg made a psychological defense of his current attitudes toward neutrality, war and peace, and aid for Britain. In the second part, he presented four objections to the President's

¹⁴²Record, 77th Cong., 1st Sess., 1941, LXXXVII, Part 1, 1102.

bill. These arbitrary divisions, however, are not distinct, separate entities. The Senator, in fact, felt compelled throughout the speech to keep before his audience the fact that he was not opposed to aiding Britain, but instead, was only against the specific aid being proposed in the Lend-Lease Bill.

Introduction.--Vandenberg began with an ethical appeal in which he recognized the importance of the decision before Congress. "It leads to momentous conclusions," he insisted, "which inevitably affect the peace, the security, and the free institutions of the United States for generations to come." He admitted that "there is no safe sure way . . . there are risks at every turn."¹⁴³ In an effort to place the debate on a statesman's level, he insisted that "if we ever respected each other's motives and sought to avoid the acrimony and the intolerance which kills reason . . . here is the occasion." Then he announced his text. "I state my reasons for opposing H. R. 1776 which . . . is intended to promote the defense of the United States and for other purposes." Finally, he previewed the reasons for his stand on the bill.

. . . I must oppose it because I deeply believe that, in its pending form, it is a potential and needless threat to the peace and security of the United States; that it impairs democracy at home in the promise of supporting it abroad; that it

¹⁴³Ibid., p. 1101.

may lead us even closer to dire involvement in the fires of war itself; that it could strip us of the essential means, in the last analysis, to implement our own pledge to maintain hemispherical defense in this New World . . . that it still nullifies the checks and balances . . . which have been the bulwark of 150 years of American freedom, and that it is an unnecessary means to achieve, short of war, that "aid to England" which has come to be our dominating aspiration which I share. . . .¹⁴⁴

Background of the proposal.--Before developing his major reasons for opposing the measure, Vandenberg turned to the background of his stand. He argued that America had departed from neutrality on the President's assurance "that the purpose was to keep us out of war and out of any hazards that would drag us in."¹⁴⁵ The result, he asserted, was "aid to England short of war." Then he admitted: "Having lost the battle of neutrality, I moved forward in cooperation with the will of the majority," adding that "I supported . . . and I continue to support . . . aid to Britain." Then to make sure no one would think he still possessed any illusions about American neutrality, he announced his sympathy with "the intrepidity of these amazing Britains who glorify the finest traditions of free men."¹⁴⁶

But he drew back when faced with the specific proposition of whether the United States should intervene as a

¹⁴⁴Ibid., p. 1102.

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

full belligerent. He reminded America of Roosevelt's promise at Philadelphia: "We shall not participate in foreign wars and we will not send our army, naval or air forces to fight in foreign lands outside of the Americas except in case of attack."¹⁴⁷ Vandenberg, too, had promised the people of Michigan that America would not become a "cobelligerent." "That is my position today,"¹⁴⁸ he said.

Neither would he admit that Britain was America's first line of defense. He regarded, instead, the building of America's own resources as the first step in national defense. But his thinking had shifted since 1939. During the embargo repeal debate he had made it clear that he regarded neutrality as America's first line of defense. He had now switched to military preparedness as America's major means of avoiding war. While admitting "there is no clear road ahead,"¹⁴⁹ he still thought isolation was the safest policy. He was willing, however, to sacrifice that isolation for aid to Britain, since Hitler might declare war on the United States regardless of whether America helped Britain or not. This was an admission he would not make in 1939.

Although Vandenberg had abandoned neutrality, he had not given up hope that America could avoid the war in Europe. While he admitted that "it will be a far safer world for us

¹⁴⁷Ibid., p. 1103.

¹⁴⁸Ibid.

¹⁴⁹Ibid., p. 1101.

if Britain wins,"¹⁵⁰ he refused to work for that victory at the price of American intervention or the surrender of American war materials needed for self defense. He tried to prove that Lend-Lease might sacrifice those two objectives. But his case against the measure was not built solely around the issue of war or peace for America. He also tried to show that Lend-Lease challenged the American way of life. He seemed to sense that the American public was willing to aid Great Britain even at the risk of war, but he assumed that they were not willing to give this help at any price. His arguments against the proposal represented his attempt to demonstrate the "price" his countrymen would have to pay if the Lend-Lease Act were approved.

The powers given the President.--He objected to the Lend-Lease Act because it offered the President dictatorial powers. In advancing this argument, he appealed to the current worldwide fear of dictators. He pointed out that the bill authorized the President to grant Lend-Lease to any country whose safety was geared to America's. This step, he argued, would enable the President to control "war strategy everywhere,"¹⁵¹ adding that the proposal made "the White House the war capital of half the earth, and our President the No. 1 power politician of the world."¹⁵² He used

¹⁵⁰Ibid., p. 1103.

¹⁵¹Ibid.

¹⁵²Ibid., p. 1104.

historical comparison to develop the argument. He argued that Roosevelt's power would be greater than Woodrow Wilson's in 1918, or even that which Great Britain had bestowed upon Winston Churchill in the current crisis. "I cannot escape the conclusion," said Vandenberg, "that this is too much power for any one man to have in a democracy of 130,000,000 people, and that it invites commitments, complications, and involvements."¹⁵³

Vandenberg then tried to show that the bill sacrificed traditional American values by the virtual surrender of powers given to Congress to declare war. The President would be in a position, he said, to "roam a war-torn world and to reward whatever way he pleases."¹⁵⁴ The implicit danger, in effect, was that the President could get the country involved without the consent of Congress. Vandenberg obviously hoped that while his countrymen were willing to help Britain, they were not willing to write a blank check to involvement with nations throughout the world. With a series of free-standing assertions, he tried to prove that this would be the case. "Not even Jove, with his monopoly of lightning bolts, was more powerful . . . here on Pennsylvania Avenue is the heart and center of the wars of the world."¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³Ibid.

¹⁵⁴Ibid.

¹⁵⁵Ibid.

The "America First" argument.--Vandenberg also hoped to defeat the proposal by showing that it would sacrifice America's own defense. Although Americans were willing to help Britain, Vandenberg apparently did not think most of them were willing to do so at the expense of American security. The theme of his argument became "America First." He argued that this specific bill would permit the President to sell America's defense short in a frantic effort to aid the Allies. "I believe the President once said," declared Vandenberg, "that the division of planes should be on a 50-50 basis . . . the recent division has been running 90-10--the 10 for us."¹⁵⁶ Obviously fearful that the President would continue the same policy, Vandenberg called for a rejection of the proposal since it placed no limitation upon the quantity of goods sent abroad, and thus threatened America's defense. Still he favored all aid to England that America could spare.¹⁵⁷

Aware of the growing opinion that Britain was America's first line of defense, Vandenberg warned that "we have no right to base our program on the convenient assumption that even with our aid Britain cannot lose." Adding that he thought England would win, he pushed the point that "we cannot defend" the Western Hemisphere "with American munitions that have been sent to our friends abroad--particularly if

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 1105.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

those American munitions have fallen into the hands of our enemies." Appealing to nationalism, he announced: "I am sorry but it is not enough for me to hear . . . 'Give the Allies all they need to win if possible.' My answer must be, 'save enough for America so America is safe.'"¹⁵⁸

Vandenberg was also concerned with the cost of the proposal. He called it a "blank check" power which could wreck the American economy. "The maintenance of a sound public credit," he argued, "is the first line of American national defense."¹⁵⁹ Taking a stab at the New Deal, he noted that the budget was already drained by eleven years of deficit spending. "If the blank check proves to be big enough," he insisted, "it can undermine us at home beyond any possibility of compensatory salvation abroad." He warned, in other words, of the possible danger of squandering money which America needed for her own defense. "Despite the easy philosophy that American resources are without limit--and that is highly popular today--the fact is they are not."¹⁶⁰

The increased danger of attack on America.--The issue of war or peace was not completely omitted from Vandenberg's speech. He used it explicitly when discussing the fact that the bill would enable belligerent ships to enter American

¹⁵⁸Ibid.

¹⁵⁹Ibid., p. 1106.

¹⁶⁰Ibid.

ports. The danger, he thought, was that Nazi submarines would come close to United States' harbors in order to attack their enemies. Appealing to the public's fear of attack, he insisted that Lend-Lease would expose America to such catastrophes. "Intimidation acts," he warned, "adversely affect us."¹⁶¹

Against this background, Vandenberg reduced the proposal to an all or nothing situation. Obviously thinking that Americans were not willing to risk "all" for Britain, he insisted: "If we are going to war . . . I would go all the way to war . . . and not drift in or back in, deliberately pretending to be unconscious of anything but peace in our hearts."¹⁶² In this manner, he made his point that the proposal would take the country into war; yet he avoided a direct accusation that those who favored the bill were advocating war. He argued: "It is not enough to say that sinister things would not occur. . . . It is enough to say they could occur. And they could occur to our everlasting damage."¹⁶³

An alternative proposal for aid to Britain.--The Michigan Senator, however, did not propose that America abandon Britain. He suggested that "Britain shall have loans or gifts. But I do not accept the thesis that the only way to achieve these

¹⁶¹Ibid.

¹⁶²Ibid.

¹⁶³Ibid., p. 1104.

ends is to let one man--although admittedly he be ever so great a man--have sole and exclusive power to nominate who shall be our international friends."¹⁶⁴ Although he made little attempt to develop his counter-plan, he tried to imply that those who rejected it for Lend-Lease were seeking direct intervention. Said Vandenberg:

If we shall stop short of the arena of war itself, there is precious little in this bill which can aid England in her approaching crisis. If we shall not stop short of war, Congress should say so directly on its own constitutional processes.

If we shall stop short of war, there is precious little in this bill for Britain save loans and gifts--and those can be provided in a single sentence amendment to the neutrality act . . . and . . . it would pass Congress almost unanimously. . . .¹⁶⁵

Conclusion.--In concluding the address, he said, "I have never faced an issue which has disturbed me in my mind and soul like this one." Then he repeated his belief that "we defend America by defending America right here at home."¹⁶⁶ He was firm in the conviction that America could survive no matter what happened in England, and that his countrymen should not sacrifice American democracy to save it abroad.

Interpretation of the Speech

The issue of intervention.--In most Vandenberg speeches, he promoted an explicit and clear statement of what he really believed. His speech on the Lend-Lease proposal appears to

¹⁶⁴Ibid., p. 1107.

¹⁶⁵Ibid.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., p. 1108.

be an exception. Only by a process of inference can his real purpose be located. He seemed to believe that with Lend-Lease the President was both trying to lead the country into the war on the side of Britain and at the same time establish himself as dictator.

Although Vandenberg stressed that he was not assigning dishonorable intentions to the President, still he said, "everything flows hereafter through omnipotent Presidential hands. He writes the ticket for the whole round earth." Later he asserted that no executive held such power unless it "be in Rome, Moscow or Berlin."¹⁶⁷ The office of the President of the United States was grouped with that of Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin. This tactic was not an ordinary one for Vandenberg. It is doubtful that Vandenberg really held the extreme belief that the bill would make the President dictator. The Congress still controlled the purse strings. It is probably more accurate to say that the position taken reflects his awareness that he was losing the battle of neutrality. He needed something stronger than the fear of involvement in war to defeat Lend-Lease. His search for persuasive tools brought him to an indirect attack on the character of the President.

Neither did Vandenberg hide the fact that he viewed the measure as an attempt by the President to intervene on

¹⁶⁷Ibid., p. 1103.

behalf of Britain. "If we are going to war--which God forbid--I would go all the way to war,"¹⁶⁸ he admonished, clearly implying that even though the President had presented the measure as a step toward peace, he probably had in mind a step toward intervention. He hoped, of course, that Congress would not aid Britain at the price of American security. He was warning Americans to beware; the man who would quarantine aggressors was not to be given the power to force the country into war.

Why was Vandenberg not more explicit if it were his intention to question the motives of the President? The answer is found both in the character of the speaker and in the address itself. It was not Vandenberg's practice to engage in personality attacks. He usually tried to keep the debate on the level of issues. He also feared disunity among American leaders when the nation's survival was involved. "Out of this controversy, when the final answer is written for America, must come the nearest possible approach to that national unity which is our source of greatest strength when we face the world,"¹⁶⁹ he said. To this must be added the fact that he had knowledge of the serious rebuke which the press had given Senator Wheeler¹⁷⁰ for his unscrupulous attack on the motives of the President in sponsoring the bill.

¹⁶⁸Ibid., p. 1106.

¹⁶⁹Ibid., p. 1102.

¹⁷⁰Supra, p. 137.

Vandenberg's speech, however, was not in any sense a campaign against aid to Britain. He freely admitted that he had lost the battle of neutrality, and he made no intense effort to stem the tide. He was aware that the American people wanted aid for the Allies in an effort to insure the defeat of the Axis. His purpose in this speech was to discourage the kind of aid which the measure entailed, and the methods through which that aid would be channeled. With sentiment throughout the country running so strong in favor of the act, at best he could only hope to detain the movement to aid the British at any cost.

The inevitability of Lend-Lease.--With the hindsight of history, it is easy to conclude that Vandenberg's position was questionable. It could be argued that the only alternatives to Lend-Lease were probably appeasement of the Axis powers or complete intervention. Americans, of course, did not want either alternative. It is evident now that Lend-Lease alone could not have halted the Axis powers. But it was also equally clear that American withdrawal from the struggle was impossible.

Clearly, Vandenberg made a strong stand against Lend-Lease for a nation at peace. There is little question but that the program involved grave risks, both in its drain on the taxpayer and in the powers it gave to the executive. It called for emergency treatment, and Roosevelt never tried to hide this fact. "For us this is an emergency as serious as

war itself,¹⁷¹ he contended. Still Vandenberg tried to deny that the President needed such broad powers. It was clear that if the program was to turn back the Axis, it would have to be done with speed. If the President had to turn to the Congress at every move in helping Britain, Germany could strike the telling blow while the issue was being debated in Washington. For this reason, Roosevelt called on the Congress to let him send Britain whatever help she needed.

In the face of Roosevelt's request, Vandenberg viewed his task as that of persuading his countrymen that the emergency was not that great. He argued that Britain was not necessarily America's first line of defense. He suggested that the United States might not be able to solve the problem in Europe. He agreed, however, that it was wise to offer some aid. He proposed, therefore, that the United States extend only loans and gifts to the British as a substitute for Lend-Lease.

The counter proposal of gifts and loans.--Vandenberg's counter proposal may be viewed as an attempt to "have his cake and eat it too." He offered to help the British, but he wanted to do it without extreme risks or sacrifices. He refused to admit that if aid to Britain were to turn the tide of war that aid had to be "all out" aid, short of war. He

¹⁷¹Rosenman, The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, IX, 633.

also refused to acknowledge that a defeated Britain would face America with an even greater challenge. The burden of proof fell on Vandenberg to show a safer course than Lend-Lease, and his counter-proposal apparently was inadequate.

In effect, Vandenberg was calling on the American people to prepare to face the Nazis alone. While he was willing to help Great Britain to some degree, he was not willing to gamble all out aid to help her defeat Germany. If the American people had followed his advice, the United States might have waited until all of Europe and possibly Asia had fallen. This view not only ignored the fact that America was not isolated, but it also lost sight of the fact that many Americans felt an ethical obligation to help prevent an injustice against innocent men, women and children in the other democracies. Congress may have realized this in passing the Lend-Lease proposal. Buell captured the difference between Vandenberg's route and the one chosen by Congress:

American today is confronted with the choice either of traveling a solitary independent road, ending possibly in dictatorship and war, or of using its vast powers to assist in bringing this war to an end, culminating in a peace based on justice, and some new and realistic form of international organization.¹⁷²

The intervention controversy was never settled; the debate was never ended. Before final policy decisions of

¹⁷²Buell, op. cit., p. 453.

this sort were required, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, the United States was irrevocably at war along with the Allies, and the whole issue of the Lend-Lease debates became irrelevant. In this sense, that phase of American foreign policy in which isolationism was an issue had ended. Begun in the middle 1930's, this set of debates was closed on December 7, 1941. The following section is intended to describe the pattern of ideas and political action which are reflected in the Vandenberg speeches of this period from 1937 through 1941.

The Defense of Isolationism

As stated in Chapter I, the basic hypothesis from which this study proceeds is that the twelve-year period, 1937 to 1949, is divisible into three major phases of American foreign policy: the period of isolationism, the period of collective security, and the period of Soviet containment. The foreign policy speeches of Senator Arthur Vandenberg are taken to represent the changing ideas which accompanied these three phases. This section reviews the changing pattern of Vandenberg's ideas during the period of isolationism, as represented in these speeches, and the changing pattern of his political leadership in his efforts to obtain legislation to implement the concepts as deduced from the strategy of his speeches.

The Pattern of the Speeches

Review of the speeches.--Vandenberg lost every major foreign policy contest in Congress between 1937 and 1941. While he was on the winning side of the neutrality battle in 1937, his amendment to deny the President certain discretionary powers was defeated. He also lost in his efforts to prevent the repeal of the embargo in 1939, to defeat the Selective Service Act in 1940, and to defeat the Lend-Lease Act in 1941. The basic idea behind Vandenberg's speaking in opposition to all of these proposals was consistent. He believed America could and should remain isolated from foreign wars. He changed the form of his persuasion, however, as conditions changed in American politics and in world events.

In arguing the case for the Neutrality Act of 1937, Vandenberg assumed an agreeing audience and thus presented his case for neutrality legislation with little supporting argument. He was content to remind his audience of the findings of the Nye Committee and the revisionists who asserted that America had been tricked into the conflict by munition makers, Americans traveling on belligerent ships, and the transportation of instruments of war on American ships. The way to avoid a repetition of this future incident, he insisted, was to pass a law making such incidents impossible. He made no effort to prove that America could

geographically, politically, economically, or morally isolate herself from the rest of the world; this he took for granted.

When the Roosevelt administration challenged his position in 1939 by calling for a repeal of the embargo section of the Neutrality Act, Vandenberg pointed his defense at the belief that it was a violation of international law to change the rules in the middle of the war, and he argued that the repeal of the act would lead the country into war. On this occasion, however, he recognized that American sympathies were mounting for the British cause, and he endeavored to muster a volume of logical, ethical and pathetic proof to defend his case that repeal would lead to war.

As war came even closer in 1940, the American people began to seek better military preparedness for defense. The administration recommended the adoption of a peacetime selective service act. Vandenberg was concerned that the administration was using the act as another in a series of steps to draw the country into intervention on behalf of the Allies. He avoided the assigning of such intentions to the President, however, and argued the case on the grounds that selective service was both undemocratic and unnecessary. Fully aware that Americans viewed with alarm the events in Europe, he felt compelled to muster a variety of inductive evidence to support his position.

By the time the Lend-Lease proposal reached the Senate in 1941, Vandenberg admitted defeat on the neutrality issue. He sensed that the mood of Americans had seriously shifted. They were now firmly on the side of the British. The remaining issues to be settled were what kind and how much aid should America contribute to the British? He based his argument against the proposal on the proposition that America would become a cobelligerent if she adopted the Lend-Lease proposal, and further, that the measure would sacrifice American defense for British defense.

During this period Vandenberg never altered his belief that the 3,000 miles of ocean separating America from other continents at war could protect his country. He was convinced that a free America could survive in a totalitarian world. Neither did Vandenberg lose faith in his belief that America had nothing fundamentally at stake in the conflict. It is true that he expressed sympathy in the Lend-Lease debate with the British cause, but he still clung to the belief, based on America's World War I experience, that the United States needed to be concerned only about herself. In other words, he never really connected the American national interest with the well-being of other countries. For this reason, he viewed all attempts to aid the Allies and many of the defensive measures proposed by the administration as attempts to involve the country in a war which America both could and should avoid.

The shift in the foreign policy rationale.--In reality, the major changes from isolationism to internationalism to containment between 1937 and 1949 are not sharply divisible. American public opinion slid along this continuum and, with the possible exception of Pearl Harbor, did not ever shift quickly and dramatically from one position to another. In this sense, the term "isolationism" names a period during which American opinion slide from the extreme of opposition to war on any basis (in 1935-1938) toward a position in 1940-1941 where Americans could calmly estimate the likelihood of sending soldiers overseas if ultimately necessary. Americans were more psychologically prepared for Pearl Harbor than is commonly thought.

This hypothesis receives clear support from the analysis of the Vandenberg speeches presented in this chapter. It seems evident that Vandenberg, in planning this series of persuasive speeches for the nation-wide audience, was forced to alter the structure of premises which he could expect Americans to accept without overt proof. In the three years from 1937 to the fall of France he could and did argue American indifference to the squabbles of Europeans. But during the nearly two years from the fall of France to Pearl Harbor he had to face a public attitude of strong concern and commitment to the support of Britain and the anti-Nazi cause.

When war threatened America in the mid-thirties, Vandenberg supported the concept of neutrality as a means of

implementing his view that America could and should isolate herself from the conflict. The aim of the neutrality legislation which he endorsed was to avoid all provocations that might lead to war. Hitler dealt the first serious blow to Vandenberg's position by invading Poland in March of 1939. The Senator was forced to defend his position in the face of a growing sentiment in America to support President Roosevelt's request for a repeal of the embargo section of the Neutrality Act. Vandenberg, along with others who felt as he did, failed with the argument that "cash-and-carry" was not as "neutral" as the embargo; that issue had become irrelevant.

American neutrality ended completely with the fall of France in 1941. From that time on, the American people gave complete endorsement to the British cause. Sensing the mood of the country, Vandenberg switched his defense of isolationism from neutrality for peace to that of isolationism for peace. Instead of aid short-of-war, he proposed that America meet the Nazi threat through preparedness and the extension of loans and gifts to Britain. He, too, had joined the British cause in spirit, but not at the expense of sacrifices or risks.

From 1937 to 1939, Vandenberg had enjoyed vigorous backing from the American people for his neutrality position as a means of avoiding the war in Europe, but after Hitler marched on Poland, he was thrown into a strategic but slow

retreat. From the summer of 1940 until Pearl Harbor, his views lagged consistently behind those of the public. His speeches show that he was on the defensive in both the debate on selective service and the Lend-Lease measure. He, too, had come to share the hope that Britain would win and that American aid should contribute to that end, but he refused "all out" aid because he thought it more important for America to keep out of the war than it was to help assure a British victory over the Axis. In this decision, his thinking lagged behind a majority of Americans.

Vandenberg's goals.--Vandenberg's goal in supporting isolationism and neutrality for America was, at the outset, peace in his own time. He connected America's national interest with peace. In this, he was never out of step with his countrymen. His original support of the neutrality legislation was in keeping with the sentiments of the nation. After 1937, however, he retreated from the popular view. He opposed the repeal of the embargo because he believed such action would lead to war; a majority of the American people, on the other hand, supported the "cash-and-carry" substitute as a means of aiding Britain while still avoiding the conflict. The country gave its support to selective service on the theory that preparedness would deter aggression, and tacitly that Americans needed to be ready for war if it came; Vandenberg opposed the act as a step to war. Finally, Americans supporting Lend-Lease hoped that a British victory

would avert the struggle for America, and because some risk was justified to assure a democratic victory; Vandenberg argued that the step would lead to war, and that America, not Britain, was the country's first line of defense.

Another goal ran consistently through his speeches from 1937 to 1941. He wanted the decision of war or peace to be settled by Congress rather than the White House. This attitude reflected his distrust of President Roosevelt. He objected to all discretionary powers given the President in foreign policy legislation because he feared that Roosevelt would break the neutrality and invite an attack. Vandenberg viewed with great alarm, for example, the section of the Neutrality Act of 1937 which gave the President discretionary power in the use of the embargo on non-munitions of war, the latitude entailed by the repeal of the embargo, and the wide range for administrative action and delegated power granted in the Lend-Lease measure. All of this, he thought, was a means of giving the President rather than Congress the final decision in determining whether America would go to war.

The Changing Pattern of Political Leadership

The role of the opposition.--For the most part, the Republican Party as the minority in the Senate between 1937 and 1941 lined up against the Roosevelt administration's foreign policy. But the degree of opposition varied with

each Senator. The membership in the party split roughly, however, into two groups. One camp, under the leadership of Senator William E. Borah and Senator Hiram Johnson, was of the "America First" type who insisted that America had nothing at stake in the European struggle and thus refused to surrender any ground on the neutrality issue at any time. Another camp, although devoted to isolationism, shifted ground as American sentiments moved in sympathy and support of the British cause. In this camp were Senator Robert A. Taft and Senator Charles McNary. Vandenberg, wishing to preserve the appearance of a united front, assumed the role of mediator between the two camps. His speeches show that he was trying to adapt to both positions by avoiding either extreme. He, therefore, supported "cash-and-carry" but not embargo repeal, he supported defense but not conscription, he supported aid to England and France, but not Lend-Lease. He obviously looked for a middle ground around which both elements could rally.

The role of the public.--Vandenberg grasped the significance of the fall of France. He acknowledged that "neutrality" was dead. He was fearful that the Selective Service Act and Lend-Lease were war measures, but he realized that indifference to the British cause might brand him as an "irresponsible" in the face of crisis. How to oppose the administration's proposals, without, at the same time, stripping himself of sympathy for the other democracies was without doubt, the

gravest problem he faced. He countered with alternate suggestions to meet it. He, therefore, proposed limited aid. He insisted that his heart was on the side of Britain, but that America should not sacrifice her own defense to aid the British.

The role of non-interventionists.--On the side of the opposition to Roosevelt's foreign policy were a number of Democrats, both in and out of Congress, who consistently supported the President on domestic issues. In order not to alienate this group, Vandenberg wished to remove foreign policy from the appearance of partisan controversy. He realized, of course, that if the matter were reduced to a question of party alignment, several loyal Democrats might vote with the administration who would otherwise support the cause of the non-interventionists. For this reason, he avoided character attacks on the President. He used the public platform to let the world know that he took the President at his word that such measures as Embargo Repeal, Selective Service, and Lend-Lease were sincerely designed to keep America at peace.

Vandenberg was well suited for this role, because he played the part of the intelligent opposition in both domestic and foreign affairs. This role, in addition to its function in helping to keep the debate on a non-partisan basis, surrounded his cause with a degree of respectability which it might not otherwise have enjoyed. It is understandable

that the public would place more emphasis on the voice of one who expressed his disagreements in a rational manner, than it would a Senator who objected to everything the President proposed in foreign and domestic affairs. Thus, it served the Senator's cause to make full use of his reputation as a compromiser and as a member of an intelligent and loyal opposition. It can be argued that this position led to increased acknowledgment of Vandenberg as the Republican leader on foreign policy.

CHAPTER IV

THE RHETORIC OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY

Introduction

The attack on Pearl Harbor silenced isolationism in the United States. Americans not only had a war to win, but the Japanese assault emphasized the fact that the United States could not insulate itself from world affairs. "Its tremendous emotional impact," notes Dulles, "united the country almost overnight in the final realization that the United States . . . could not escape direct participation in the war because of its geographical position."¹ According to Wilson, "the controversy of the months immediately before Pearl Harbor might seem as remote from political actuality as the debate on the nature of the Union, and of slavery that preceded the Confederate War."²

Senator Vandenberg apparently was among those whose opinions were altered in regard to America's place in international relations. "In my own mind," he said, "my convictions

¹Foster Rhea Dulles, America's Rise to World Power (New York: Harper & Bros., 1954), p. 207.

²Francis Graham Wilson, The American Political Mind (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1949), pp. 459-60.

regarding international cooperation and collective security for peace took firm form on the afternoon of the Pearl Harbor attack. That day ended isolationism for any realist."³ But he made no such immediate public statement. Instead, he let the world know that the "isolationist" forces could be counted upon to assist in the prosecution of the war.

The Michigan Senator's new concept of America's position in world affairs was not formally announced until late 1943 when discussion began to center upon the role of the United States in the postwar world. As the Senator joined in the efforts to commit America to a role in a postwar international organization, he gradually made the shift from a belief in the concept of isolationism to that of collective security. This chapter is devoted to a description of the ideas expressed in Vandenberg's speeches during this transition. The three speeches selected for report and interpretation are as follows:

1. The Address on the Connally Resolution of 1943.
Vandenberg spoke in favor of the Connally Resolution on October 25, 1943. The Resolution placed the Senate on record in favor of United States postwar collective security efforts.
2. The Address on American Foreign Policy.
Vandenberg addressed the Senate on January 10, 1945, concerning his general attitudes on America's place in the postwar world. The speech received world attention and is generally regarded as the most famous of his speaking career.

³Arthur H. Vandenberg, Jr. (ed.), The Private Papers of Senator Vandenberg (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1952), p. 1. Hereinafter referred to as Papers.

3. The Address on the United Nations Charter. Vandenberg addressed the Senate on June 29, 1945, giving his endorsement to the United Nations Charter.

As in the preceding chapter, each speech is treated in three sections: the context of events, a report of the ideas in the speech, and an interpretation of the speaker's purpose and persuasions. The chapter concludes with a summary of Vandenberg's rationale for collective security and the nature of his political leadership during this second "phase."

The Address on the Connally Resolution of 1943

By 1943, pressures were increasing to place Congress on record in support of a postwar organization to keep the peace. Conflict developed among those who wanted a resolution which set forth specific American aims and those who favored a resolution in general terms. Vandenberg supported the latter position. He argued for the Connally Resolution before the United States Senate on October 25, 1943.⁴ The speech shows his fears about the ill effects on allied war unity which a Senate debate over specific objectives might invoke. It also indicates the kind of collective security which he would later support.

⁴U. S. Congressional Record, 78th Cong., 1st Sess., 1943, LXXXIX, Part 7, 8665. Hereinafter referred to as Record.

The Context of the Speech

The impact of war.--While the United States was arguing about the issue of intervention in the European conflict, Japan ended the debate by attacking Pearl Harbor. Although shocked by the assault, there was no hesitation on the part of the American people in replying to President Roosevelt's request that America answer the "unprovoked and dastardly attack"⁵ with a declaration of war. For most Americans it was final proof that neutrality had failed. Even for such strong non-interventionist groups as the America First Committee, it was evident that the debate had ended. The organization urged "all of those who have followed its lead to give full support to the war effort of the nation until peace is attained."⁶

Three days after America's answer to Japan, the Congress declared war on Germany and Italy in response to a similar move by these two powers against the United States. This immersed the country in total war. The mobilization of national resources, the sacrifice of time and money, the war-time controls of individual liberties were accepted as a necessity for victory. But out of this pattern of activity, emerged an inspiration that the war would add up to something; that it would not result in another Versailles.

⁵Roosevelt's Foreign Policy, 1933-1941 (New York: Wilfred Funk, Inc., 1942), p. 553.

⁶The New York Times, December 12, 1941, p. 22.

In the background lay the goals for the postwar world agreed upon at a meeting between President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill off the coast of Newfoundland in August of 1940. In a document known to history as the "Atlantic Charter," these two heads of state agreed that the democracies would settle only for a peace with justice. While the immediate goal of Americans after Pearl Harbor was to win the war, they envisioned a postwar world based on the Atlantic agreement. American political leaders, including Senator Vandenberg, looked for the means to implement this goal.

Vandenberg's search for executive-legislative cooperation.---Although Vandenberg supported most of Roosevelt's war policies, he remained an ardent critic in areas in which he saw a need for improvement. He was especially fearful of Roosevelt's conduct of the war and his plans for a postwar world. Above all, he thought that members of Congress were entitled to more information about the war. "The President . . . is the one who must get . . . new vision before it is too late."⁷ On December 15, 1941, he wrote to Roosevelt suggesting a Joint Congressional Committee on war cooperation for the purpose of establishing "a more intimate connecting link" between Roosevelt and the Congress. Roosevelt made a polite reply. "If Congress thinks the proposal wise," said the President, "I will be delighted to accept its judgment."⁸

⁷Papers, p. 27.

⁸Ibid., p. 25.

But nothing immediate came of Vandenberg's suggestion. The bipartisan approach to foreign policy was yet to come.

The Senator's lack of communication with the executive was also reflected in his reaction to the extension of Lend-Lease. He voted for its extension throughout the war years because he believed Lend-Lease to be the "key to our coordination for Allied victory," but he insisted that the program was exclusively "an instrumentality of war."⁹ In 1943, he suspected the executive of using Lend-Lease in connection with a "general postwar commitment on our behalf to worldwide economic relations,"¹⁰ to which Vandenberg objected "no matter how inherently worthy in themselves."¹¹ He became especially concerned in 1944 upon discovering that the Lend-Lease agreement contained a section in which Roosevelt had agreed "to the elimination of all forms of discriminatory treatment in international commerce, and to the reduction of tariffs and other trade barriers."¹² For one committed to a high tariff policy to protect American industry, such words were frightening. "It is perfectly clear," said Vandenberg, "that the sole initial power to deal with any such subjects does not rest in the Executive, but . . . in

⁹Record, 78th Cong., 1st Sess., 1943, LXXXIX, Part 2, 1846.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 1847.

¹¹Ibid., p. 1846.

¹²Record, 78th Cong., 2d Sess., 1944, XC, Part 3, 4096.

the Congress of the United States."¹³ He then joined in the support of an amendment which specified that if the President made any agreement under Lend-Lease which in any way reduced tariffs it would be held void by Congress.

Early plans for postwar world.--While Americans were engaged in defeating the Axis powers, the nation's leaders were looking ahead to the postwar world. Roosevelt quite early set the stage for the policy he would advocate. In 1942, he asserted that while there were still Americans who thought "we can tell the rest of the world to stew in its own juice," he warned that "it is useless to win battles if the cause for which we fight these battles is lost."¹⁴ At that time, he initiated studies within the State Department on the problems involved in collective security after the peace had been won.¹⁵ In early 1943, the President became more specific about American plans for the postwar world. "I have been told that this is no time to speak of a better America after the war. . . . I dissent. . . . Today the United Nations are the mightiest military coalition in all history. . . . [They] can and must remain united for peace. . . ."¹⁶

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Samuel I. Rosenman, Working With Roosevelt, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1952), p. 363.

¹⁵Cecil V. Crabb, Jr., Bipartisan Foreign Policy, Myth or Reality (Evanston: Row Peterson & Co., 1957), p. 44.

¹⁶Rosenman, Working With Roosevelt, p. 368.

At this time, Vandenberg was going through a "period of deep frustration." Acheson notes that the Senator "was very much on the outside trying to look in; and he could see nothing. Suspicion consumed him. . . ."17 He was, perhaps, finding it difficult to discard America's traditional policy of isolationism, but he was clearly moving toward a compromise. "Of course," he said, "we shall defend our ideals in peace as well as war; and unquestionably we must prepare ourselves to accept a larger share of international responsibility. . . ."18 He characterized himself as a "middle-of-the-roader,"

. . . who wants to win this war as swiftly and as cheaply as possible; who then wants a realistic peace which puts an end to military aggression; who wants justice rather than force to rule the postwar world; who is willing to take his full share of responsibility in all these directions . . . and who wants "enlightened selfishness" mixed with "generous idealism" when our course is chartered.19

Vandenberg's middle-road in operation.--Vandenberg put his "middleground" position to work in March of 1943. At that time, he was named to a special Senate subcommittee to study the various resolutions which were being introduced in the Senate concerning America's role in a postwar collective security organization. He became alarmed that the proposals sought to "particularize prematurely," and he

17Dean Acheson, "Journey Into Our Times," American Heritage, XI (February, 1960), 45.

18Papers, p. 35.

19Ibid.

thought this "could easily divide our Allies abroad . . . could jeopardize victory itself."²⁰ After conferences with Secretary Hull and Senator George, Vandenberg and Senator White of Maine formally introduced a resolution which gave their version of America's role in the postwar world. It read as follows:

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), that this Congress favors: (1) the prosecution of the war to conclusive victory; (2) the participation by the United States in postwar cooperation between sovereign nations to prevent by any necessary means, the recurrence of military aggression and to establish permanent peace with justice in a free world; (3) the present examination of these aims, so far as consistent with united war effort, and their ultimate achievement by due constitutional process and with faithful recognition of American responsibilities and American interests.²¹

The Republican Conference at Mackinac Island.--During a brief recess in the Congress in September of 1943, the Republican Advisory Council held a conference for the purpose of planning the foreign policy plank in the Republican platform of 1944. The conference included all the Republican governors, fifteen Representatives and Senators and ten members of the Republican National Committee.²² Vandenberg's role included the planning of a plank on postwar objectives.

²⁰Ibid., p. 40.

²¹Record, 78th Cong., 1st Sess., 1943, LXXXIX, Part 5, 6998.

²²Papers, p. 55.

The Michigan Senator was fearful that he would encounter stiff opposition from prewar isolationists on any approach to international cooperation after the war. He announced in advance of the conference that he was "hunting for the middle ground between those extremes . . . who would cheerfully give America away and those . . . who would attempt a total isolation which has come to be an impossibility."²³ He called on the conference to extirpate the belief that "the Republican Party would retire to its foxhole when the last shot in this war has been fired,"²⁴ and to do so by writing a program that "must beat the fourth term."²⁵ This type of policy, he said, would respect the sovereign power of the United States and the Constitutional Process of decision-making without letting "the world rot in its own anarchy."²⁶

Vandenberg proved to be the energizer and mediator of the conference. The stiff opposition from prewar isolationists never developed. The Willkie group which called for a stronger postwar role for the United States than Vandenberg desired was not present. The final result was a statement much like the Vandenberg-White Resolution which committed the Republican Party to favoring "United States participation in a postwar organization of sovereign nations."²⁷ His defense of

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., p. 56.

²⁵Ibid., p. 57.

²⁶Ibid., p. 56.

²⁷Ibid., p. 58.

the conference resolution in the Senate indicates the direction his thinking had taken by late 1943. He had already decided to favor international cooperation as long as American sovereignty was not sacrificed. His middle road was not a super state, but neither did it mark a return to a prewar brand of isolationism.

The Connally Resolution.--After the Mackinac Conference, Vandenberg returned to the Senate where his work on the Senate resolution for postwar cooperation was resumed. Soon after Congress reconvened in October of 1943, Senator Connally introduced a new resolution which the committee approved. Vandenberg supported it because it pledged the United States to use "Constitutional process" and to maintain "American sovereignty." He also took occasion to note that the Committee Resolution "is more like the Vandenberg-White Resolution than any of the other proposals."²⁸ The resolution was adopted by the Senate without change on November 5, 1943.²⁹ Objections to the resolution came primarily from those who thought America should take a more specific position on her postwar peace plans. The resolution read as follows:

Resolved, that the war against all our enemies be waged until complete victory is achieved.

²⁸Ibid., p. 62.

²⁹Record, 78th Cong., 1st Sess., 1943, LXXXIX, Part 7, 9222.

That the United States cooperate with its comrades-in-arms in securing a just and honorable peace.

That the United States, acting through its constitutional process, join with free and sovereign nations in the establishment and maintenance of international authority with power to prevent aggression and to preserve the peace of the world.³⁰

Report of the Speech

Senator Vandenberg's speech on October 25, 1943,³¹ in favor of the resolution came immediately after Senator Connally presented the matter to the Senate with the assertion that "isolation has failed. Let us try collective security."³² Vandenberg recommended the adoption of the resolution "without change."³³

Vandenberg began with a brief statement of four arguments in support of the resolution, and then proceeded to elaborate on each.

The continuance of wartime unity.--He first supported the resolution because its intent was to maintain the war-time unity "beyond our victory at arms," in order that the world could experience "a happier and a safer civilization."³⁴ His main support for the contention lies in the phrase, "it is obvious." He maintained that "we are indeed a physically

³⁰Ibid., p. 8663.

³¹Ibid., p. 8665.

³³Ibid., p. 8666.

³²Ibid.

³⁴Ibid., p. 8665.

foreshortened universe in which America cannot live unto herself alone."³⁵ This being the case, argued Vandenberg, "we must organize for peace and for the power to preserve it. . . ."³⁶ He thus committed America to a venture in collective security. It was taken for granted that this was the direction in which the United States must now move. Although no mention of the event was made, he implied that Pearl Harbor has made this an "obvious" move.

Collective security and sovereignty.--He next argued that America should support the resolution because it pledged the United States to collective security without imparting "the essential sovereignty and independence of our own free Republic."³⁷ From the beginning of his interest in collective security, he had stressed that America must not surrender any sovereignty in her international relations. He now asserted that American public opinion agreed with him. By a process of induction he drew on the concurring views of the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Republican Party at Mackinac, and the editorial views of The New York Times, as mounting evidence that the American people "denies our disappearance in any world government of a world state."³⁸ The Senator assumed an agreeing audience on the question of

³⁵Ibid., p. 8666.

³⁶Ibid., p. 8665.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid., p. 8667.

sovereignty. His concern was probably directed at the minority group who hoped for a real world government.

Collective security and executive-legislative relationships.--In a third argument Vandenberg endorsed the resolution, because it called for American participation in the postwar world through the "due constitutional process."³⁹ The Senator offered only scant elaboration of this phase of the resolution. But he did make his chief concern rather obvious. He wanted all binding commitments for America's part in the postwar world approved by the United States Senate. "I fervently believe it is of the highest concern that the Senate and the Executive should work in closest possible cooperation in the evolution of the formulas of peace so that we may avoid the sterile deadlocks of 25 years ago."⁴⁰ The implication followed that the administration should seek the advice and consent of the Senate or it might face the situation that Wilson encountered upon his return from Versailles.

General, not specific commitments.--Vandenberg finally argued that the resolution presented American postwar objectives without the "crystal-gazing details in respect to happenings and attitudes which are yet to reveal the actual circumstances which we shall confront at the peace

³⁹Ibid., p. 8665.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 8667.

table. . . ."⁴¹ He called upon the Senate "to withhold our blueprints until we are at grips with the realities of tomorrow."⁴² He wanted to avoid a Senate fight over the statement of the resolution; the greater portion of his time in the speech was thus given over to an attempt to convince his audience that the resolution contained all that should be stated at that time.

His first attempt to support this contention was pinned to the bipartisan efforts that went into the writing of the resolution. He referred to the untiring efforts of the subcommittee which phrased the resolution. He praised the work of "the able chairmanship of the distinguished Senator from Texas[Connally]."⁴³ He made reference to the fact that the committee which drew up the resolution consisted of five Democrats and two Republicans--"men who profoundly differed in their pre-Pearl Harbor views," and concluded that "the pending resolution was the common denominator of all these official and semi-official contemporary pronouncements on American foreign policy."⁴⁴

But Vandenberg did not rest his argument that the Senate should accept the resolution without change solely on the ethical proof that competent, unbiased men wrote it. He argued that any change in the resolution at that hour

⁴¹Ibid., p. 8665.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴²Ibid. .

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 8668.

could harm not only the postwar peace, but could also "prejudice the war and our victorious momentum."⁴⁵ In essence, Vandenberg issued a warning to those who would risk a fight over postwar peace objectives before the battle was won. He argued that any attempt to be more specific in the resolution could "split a part our Allied Unity before the war is won," and concluded that "our first job is to win the war and get our boys back home."⁴⁶

Finally, the Senator argued that to go beyond a general statement of postwar aims would put "the cart before the horse." He provided an indirect reminder that the war was not yet won. "The war map is changing every day,"⁴⁷ he said. "Yesterday's enemy is today's ally." The appeal was obviously a logical one. He hoped his audience would agree that one should not blueprint a house until he knows the territory upon which it is to be built. Admitting that the resolution was vague, he argued that this gave it strength. "It is not a strait jacket which otherwise might burst asunder."⁴⁸

He concluded with a final appeal for acceptance of the resolution as stated. Recognizing that some objected to the resolution because it failed to say more and others because it did not say less, the Michigan Senator argued that

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 8666.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 8667.

was its virtue. "When we stand at such a point, we stand on common ground. It is foolish and futile to stand at any other."⁴⁹

Interpretation of the Speech

Indications of a new position.--The Connally Resolution was clothed in such vague terms that even a strong isolationist could have supported it without pledging himself to any marked departure of traditional American attitudes toward world affairs. But Vandenberg went beyond mere support of the proposition. He gave several indications that his thinking had changed regarding the road to peace and security for America. Vandenberg, for example, inferred that the United States could no longer hope to escape war because of its geographical position. He was now ready to cooperate in establishing an international organization for the maintenance of peace and security.

Vandenberg also indicated that he was ready to seek this security through international law rather than neutrality legislation. In 1939, Vandenberg cast aside Roosevelt's suggestion that America withdraw the arms embargo and rely on international law to keep the peace. The Senator had argued: "It certainly was the precise law under which we got into the World War in 1917." In reference to the neutrality law, he had declared that "we established a great

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 8668.

new dynamic principle in healthier and safer international relationships,"⁵⁰ in contrast with international law. Four years later, he told the Senate that he favored the Connally Resolution because "my own deep interest is in the pursuit of international law on effective foundations," for "it is inevitably included within the boundaries of international authority to preserve the peace of the world,"⁵¹ along with other instrumentalities. To Vandenberg, the old order had failed; he was willing to try a new direction. The details of the new policy were omitted, but he clearly was willing "to join with free and sovereign nations in the establishment and maintenance of international authority with power to prevent aggressions and to preserve peace in the world."⁵²

A third indication of his broadening outlook was shown by his rising interest in peace for other nations as well as America. Before Pearl Harbor, his speeches exemplified his sympathy for other democracies, but he also made clear that America must be kept separated from the rest of the world. Scattered comments throughout his 1943 speech showed his increased concern for justice for all nations. He admitted, for example, that other Allies would have "quite

⁵⁰Record, 76th Cong., 2d Sess., 1939, LXXV, Part 1, 99.

⁵¹Record, 78th Cong., 1st Sess., 1943, LXXIX, Part 7, 8668.

⁵²Ibid., p. 8666.

as much to say" about peace plans as America for "this business is not our monopoly." He referred to the newly proposed organization as "solid ground" upon which the "United Nations can begin to build a better world."⁵³ In essence, his concept of national interest had become world interest. His reinterpretation of the national interest took on a greater concern for peace and justice for all men.

Continuing concepts.--Vandenberg's October, 1943 address did more, however, than put him publicly on record as having abandoned "isolationism."⁵⁴ The Michigan Senator also hinted at those aspects of his prewar thinking which he would carry into the postwar era. America must go into the postwar organization with her "essential sovereignty and independence."⁵⁵ He regarded the inclusion of the word "sovereignty" as American disapproval of a "world government" or "world state." He was now willing for America to cooperate with other nations, but "certainly," said Vandenberg, "sovereigns do not cease to be sovereigns when they . . . voluntarily cooperate."⁵⁶

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Papers, p. 41. Vandenberg notes in his diary on March 24, 1943: "It was my position that the United States obviously must be a far greater international co-operator after this war than ever before."

⁵⁵Record, 78th Cong., 1st Sess., 1943, LXXIX, Part 7, 8665.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 8667.

The speech also reflects Vandenberg's continued suspicion of an executive who might enter into international treaties without approval by the Senate. His fight against concentration of governmental powers in the hands of the President continued. He noted in his diary that the phrase, "by due Constitutional Process," eliminated "the Roosevelt habit and desire to bypass Congress in these respects."⁵⁷ He had carried the same distrust through the isolationist era. The Michigan Senator was serving notice on the White House that Congress must not be ignored in America's post-war plans. More important, however, was the implied announcement that if "due Constitutional Process" was observed the administration could depend upon Vandenberg's support for international cooperation.

The middle-of-the-road.--If newspaper commentary is an accurate barometer of public sentiment, Vandenberg's announced "change" on October 23, 1943, from isolationism to international cooperation made no pronounced impression on the American people. One obvious explanation is the fact that the war naturally held the attention of the nation at large. Casualty lists from the battlefield figured more prominently in the headlines than did the thinking of a Senator on postwar international organization. But the speech itself offers another explanation. The Senator was

⁵⁷Papers, p. 54.

rather vague on the type of international organization he would support. Such language may have invited many to believe that the Senator would resort to his prewar position after victory was achieved. The middle position, however, was justifiable in view of the dangers of prolonged Senate debate.

It should be noted that Vandenberg may have been in 1943 a true "middle-of-the-roader." The speech under consideration made it quite clear that he opposed the concept of a "super state." It was also equally clear that he would not return to his postwar isolationist attitudes. But just where he would go from this point was not made evident in his public or private remarks. While conceding the necessity for international organization, it is quite possible that he did not know just how far he would go down the road toward collective security.

Neither does the speech reflect Vandenberg's reasons for moving in a new direction on the matter of America's role in world affairs. He used the word "obvious"⁵⁸ in his diary in March of 1943 to justify the change and the phrase, "it is inevitably included,"⁵⁹ in October.

Vandenberg, perhaps, was adapting his views to the thinking of the times. "In the winter of 1943-44," writes

⁵⁸Papers, p. 41.

⁵⁹Record, 78th Cong., 1st Sess., 1943, LXXIX, Part 7, 8665.

Dulles, "there was every evidence that a large majority of the people believed that the United States should actively participate in world organization for peace."⁶⁰ The Michigan Senator showed an awareness of this fact on October 25, 1943, when he said: "The people have spoken, in very recent months, through several different official and semi-official media."⁶¹ It can thus be claimed that Vandenberg was moving with the tide; it can further be argued that he did not elaborate on his specific plans for America's postwar role because he wanted to wait and see where that tide would take him. The desire not to interrupt the war effort with American boys in battle was a strong reason, however, for not risking a Senate fight over a specific plan even if he had one in mind. With the war map changing the world daily, perhaps, the wise move was to await the ultimate climax of the war before attempting to deal specifically with the plans for peace. Finally, he may have been very sincere, and more important, quite correct, in saying that the President, rather than Congress, should speak first on the "blueprints" for peace.

In short, Vandenberg's support of the Connally Resolution pledged his approval of United States' participation in a postwar organization to preserve peace, provided

⁶⁰Foster Rhea Dulles, op. cit., p. 212.

⁶¹Record, 78th Cong., 1st Sess., 1943, LXXIX Part 7, 8667.

that participation was based on the sovereign equality of member nations and received the ultimate approval of the Senate. His speech offers few clues as to why he switched from the concept of isolationism in late 1941 to that of collective security in 1943. The speech, however, indicates that his view of America's national interest had switched from "peace" for America in 1941 to "peace" with justice for the entire world in 1943. His role as leader of the Republican party on foreign policy was beginning to be generally acknowledged, and his role in the construction of bipartisan policy had also begun.

The Address on American Foreign Policy

By early 1945, World War II appeared to be nearing a successful conclusion for the Allies. Another Big Three meeting was about to take place at Yalta. President Roosevelt had been silent on foreign policy since the 1944 election. Vandenberg thought it time for the President to make it clear that the United States would not support an unjust peace. In short, he wanted Roosevelt to warn England, France, and Russia that the United States would repudiate any attempt at the peace table which did not provide justice for all nations. The Senator issued the challenge to Roosevelt on the eve of the President's departure for Yalta. For an understanding of the Senator's famous January 10, 1945 address to the Senate, it is first necessary to examine the sequence of events which accompanied it..

The Context of the Speech

Vandenberg's new role.--During the 1943 Mackinac Conference and the debates over the postwar resolutions, Vandenberg emerged as a conciliator. He displayed wisdom in bringing together divergent points of view and in working out compromises favorable to all camps. Members of both parties were beginning to take note of this. "Certainly you are entitled to warm personal congratulations on a great job of conciliating the divergent views not only of your committee but of the whole Council,"⁶² Dewey wrote to Vandenberg after the conference at Mackinac. Senator Connally told the Senate following the passage of the resolution on America's postwar policy that Vandenberg "gave the committee wholeheartedly of his talents and leadership in achieving agreement and unity on the resolution. He deserves high credit for his services."⁶³

Vandenberg was also active during 1943 and 1944 in helping to establish his concept of bipartisan foreign policy on a systematic basis. He stressed that "it would be a final tragedy if partisan politics, as such, were to enter into any phase of the postwar planning."⁶⁴ To promote this

⁶²Papers, p. 59.

⁶³Ibid., p. 64.

⁶⁴Record, 78th Cong., 2d Sess., 1944, XC, Part 4, 5747.

goal, he continued his search for a liaison with the executive branch. "I am pessimistic," said Vandenberg on March 11, 1944 "because of the total lack of Congressional information in respect to the commitments which are being made on our account in all these various international conferences." He concluded that there "must be a new candor between the White House and the Capitol."⁶⁵

Committee of Eight.--The "new candor" which Vandenberg had so earnestly sought since the beginning of the war was soon to develop. President Roosevelt and Secretary of State Hull had learned from Wilson's mistakes in 1918. They were determined that a conflict over domestic affairs must not disrupt collective security as it had done in the case of the League of Nations. As early as 1942, Roosevelt had created an Advisory Committee on postwar foreign policy. When this group reported to the President that a major factor in the League of Nations' failure in the United States was a lack of liaison between Wilson and Congressional leaders, the Roosevelt administration took steps to avoid this mistake. On March 22, 1944, Secretary Hull requested the Senate to appoint a small committee to confer with the State Department on postwar planning.⁶⁶ Vandenberg was

⁶⁵Papers, p. 92.

⁶⁶Cordell Hull, The Memoirs of Cordell Hull, II (New York: Macmillan Company, 1948), 1658.

selected as a member to serve with Senators Connally, Barkley, George, Gillette, LaFollette, White, and Austin.

Vandenberg's influence on the group was noted immediately. At one of the early meetings, Secretary Hull presented the administration's blueprint for a United Nations organization. He requested a written endorsement of the plan so that he could present proof of a united America when he took the plan to Churchill and Stalin. While Vandenberg thought it to be a "good plan," inasmuch as it "protects the independent authority of the United States," he found it impossible to endorse the "plan by specific reference."⁶⁷ The Committee agreed with Vandenberg. The group wrote Hull that "there can be no commitments in advance of specific proposals developed in the light of general peace considerations."⁶⁸ Vandenberg made the same contention in defense of the Connally Resolution in 1943. Hull was not happy with the decision, but was pleased that the "Senators were in agreement on the necessity for an international organization to keep the peace. . . ."⁶⁹

Dumbarton Oaks.--In August, 1944, representatives of the United States, Great Britain, Soviet Russia, and China met at Dumbarton Oaks to make specific plans for a United

⁶⁷Papers, p. 99.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Hull, op. cit., p. 1669.

Nations Charter. Again the Roosevelt administration avoided Wilson's mistakes. Hull went to the conference only after his "exchange of views with Senators" had "achieved satisfactory results."⁷⁰

When Secretary Hull called the Committee of Eight together for a briefing on the conference, the question of "cooperative force" was the major issue discussed. Vandenberg stressed to Hull that he would never vote to empower the delegates to the United Nations with the authority to commit the United States into military operations without a vote of Congress. He admitted, however, that the Constitution permits the President to use the armed forces without the consent of Congress in case of emergencies. While agreeing that he couldn't make the fine distinction between situations in which the President can act alone and when he can act only with consent of Congress, he was of the opinion that regional defense might be possible without Congressional declaration of war.⁷¹ He was thus moving closer to the administration's position on postwar organization.

The Presidential election of 1944.--By the end of the Dumbarton Oaks Conference, Americans were engaged in the 1944 Presidential election. Important as was the

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 1671.

⁷¹Papers, p. 117.

Roosevelt administration's attempt to work with the leadership of both parties in planning for the postwar world, the Michigan Senator was still fearful of the re-election of Roosevelt. Vandenberg admitted that the United States should play an important internationalistic role, but "I do not believe that Mr. Roosevelt's idea of 'protecting American interests' would square with mine for an instant."⁷² He was forever disturbed that Roosevelt may have made personal commitments with Stalin and Churchill of which the Committee of Eight had not been kept informed.⁷³ For this reason, he urged General MacArthur to run as the Republican nominee. When he refused, Vandenberg hoped for a Dewey victory.

During the campaign, he worked closely with Dewey and his foreign policy adviser, John Foster Dulles. He insisted that they keep the proposed postwar world organization out of politics. General agreement was also reached between Dulles and Secretary Hull that the foreign policy issues of the campaign would be kept on a nonpartisan basis. Both party platforms pledged a stand on international cooperation. But Roosevelt questioned the sincerity of the isolationist Republicans. After calling the names of Joseph Martin, Hamilton Fish, Gerald Nye, and Hiram Johnson, Roosevelt asked: "Can anyone really suppose that these

⁷²Ibid., p. 92.

⁷³Ibid.

isolationists have changed their minds about world affairs," adding "I don't think they are reliable custodians of the future of America."⁷⁴ Vandenberg retorted: "His [Roosevelt] other proposals to 'keep us out of war' were opposed by many . . . because we were perfectly sure they could not and would not 'keep us out of war,' . . . and they didn't."⁷⁵ But in spite of such political bickering, there was much agreement on foreign policy. Dulles notes that "the significance of the campaign for the nation was the added emphasis placed upon the importance of the new course on which the United States had embarked."⁷⁶

After Roosevelt's re-election in 1944, Vandenberg became concerned with the possibility that the nonpartisan approach to foreign policy might be dropped. At this time, plans had already been completed for the Yalta Conference and preparations were being made for the conference to write the United Nations Charter. Vandenberg feared that Roosevelt might commit the country to an unjust peace. He decided on "a challenge to the . . . President,"⁷⁷ and presented it in a speech on January 10, 1945. The event proved to be more

⁷⁴Rosenman, Working With Roosevelt, p. 484-85.

⁷⁵Papers, p. 123.

⁷⁶Foster Rhea Dulles, op. cit., p. 215.

⁷⁷Ibid.

than a challenge for Roosevelt. It also became the clear-cut public announcement of Vandenberg's conversion to internationalism.

Report of the Speech

As previously suggested, Vandenberg's purpose was to set forth his attitudes on America's place in the post-war world. Many of the sentiments voiced in this speech were sounded by Vandenberg months before on the floor of the Senate. But the setting for this address, perhaps, was more dramatic. The war was nearing an end. America was ready for a new look at collective security. Vandenberg offered his view in a forceful fashion which let the world know that he had fully abandoned isolationism.

The Senator presented two major contentions. He argued, first, that it was time for America to let the world know her postwar peace objectives. He then proceeded to outline what he thought American attitudes should be in regard to these objectives.

The need for "honest candor."--He argued, first, that it was time for America to come forth with "honest candor" and tell the world just what she is "fighting for." He asserted that there has been no hesitation in London or Moscow to express war and peace aims. Washington, on the other hand, "has not spoken out . . . to our own people or to our Allies . . . in such specific fashion as have

the others."⁷⁸ Aware that some would think it too soon to voice American peace aims, he attempted to "turn the tables." He admitted that many believe such expressions "will contribute to international dissension and thus encourage the very thing we all need to cure." In contrast, he argued, "our silence has multiplied confusion at home and abroad . . . this confusion threatens our unity." Recognizing that Americans would not accept any proposal which might disrupt the war effort, he insisted that unity was already being disrupted by American silence. He turned to the metaphor. Such unity, he warned, was comparable to that which "Jonah enjoyed when he was swallowed by the whale."⁷⁹ His logical proof was a statement of Churchill's which affirmed that America had not made her postwar aims known.

The Senator's first contention was a direct challenge to the White House. His distrust of President Roosevelt was implicit. He was obviously alarmed at the possibility that the President might leave for Yalta without first expressing the White House attitudes on peace aims. He said: "I venture to repeat, with all the earnestness of my command, that a new rule of honest candor in Washington--as a substitute for mystifying silence or for classical generalities--is the greatest contribution we can make."⁸⁰

⁷⁸Record, 79th Cong., 1st Sess., 1945, XCI, Part 1, 165.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid.

In spite of his membership on the Committee of Eight, he still felt that he was on the outside looking in. He wanted the President to speak up on his plans for Yalta.

Vandenberg's call for an immediate clarification of United States' peace aims, however, must not be ascribed solely to a basic distrust of President Roosevelt's diplomacy. The address also registered a fear that the country might become so involved in winning the war that it would lose the peace. "We not only have two wars to win, we also have yet to achieve such a peace as will justify this appalling cost . . . otherwise . . . we shall be able to look forward only to the curse of World War III."⁸¹ He assumed that although victory was uppermost in the minds and hearts of Americans there was also a strong desire to achieve a lasting peace. America's contribution to that end, he asserted, was for the administration to answer the question, "What are we fighting for?"⁸² A brief reference to "Mr. Stalin's proposed partition of Poland" served as a warning that the country must brace itself for a decisive political struggle. It further implied that the United States would either have to assert itself on such issues or be willing to sacrifice justice for unity.

The nature of postwar aims.--Having called for an expression of "honest candor," Vandenberg turned to the

⁸¹Ibid., p. 165.

⁸²Ibid.

business of specifying what America should say to the world. "What shall we say," he asked, "that we have not already said?"⁸³ He answered his own question. He had outlined the problem. He was ready to present his solution.

Vandenberg wanted America to reassure the world that she had not abandoned the principles of the Atlantic Charter. It was clear that he thought no nation doubted America's intention of staying in the war until the end. But what about the role of the United States after victory? The memory of 1919-1941 was fresh in the minds of millions of people throughout the world. The Senator seemed to be insisting that the world must be reassured that the American people would not turn their backs upon their friends at the end of the war and again seek isolation.

But there appears to be another basic reason why Vandenberg made reference at this point to the Atlantic Charter. He was not willing to sacrifice "justice for force among free men."⁸⁴ Neither did he think Americans were willing to take such a risk in spite of the fact that winning the war and creating a system of collective security was uppermost in their minds. He appealed to the American's love of justice. "We still propose to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them."⁸⁵ Only harm, he inferred, can

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 166.

come from a policy which purchases collective security at the price of justice. He issued a subtle warning to Americans that such was possible, and again he returned to the Atlantic Charter. That document had promised disarmament of belligerents, self-determination of peoples, and the four freedoms--freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want, and freedom from fear.

The Michigan Senator apparently had more in mind than simply to remind his countrymen of that for which they were fighting. He made an implicit plea for public opinion to remind President Roosevelt of the Atlantic Charter when he got to Yalta. He asserted: "I am sure that the President did not anticipate the shocking results of his recent almost jocular, and even cynical, dismissal of the Atlantic Charter as a mere collection of fragmentary notes."⁸⁶ Here was an implicit fear that Roosevelt would compromise the promises of the Atlantic Charter at the peace table. He knew that the President, like his fellow Americans, was eager for the destruction by force of those who made the war a reality. But the Senator warned that Americans should not become so zealous in that effort as to sacrifice postwar objectives. He concluded:

These basic pledges cannot now be dismissed as a mere nautical nimbus. They march with our armies. They sail with our fleets. They fly with

⁸⁶Ibid.

our eagles. They sleep with our martyred dead.
The first requisite of honest candor, Mr. President,
. . . is to relight this torch.⁸⁷

The second answer to his question, "What shall we say?" is often said to embrace his "confession." He called on the Allies to decide whether each shall "look out for himself," or join in concerted action "in which we undertake to look out for each other." He left no doubt about his choice. He admitted that "the first way is the old way which has twice taken us to Europe's interminable battlefields within a quarter of a century."⁸⁸ The Senator thus made an overt admission that isolationism had failed. The concept of neutrality had finally passed. Japan's attack had shattered the myths of invulnerability and the illusion of continentalism.

Obviously fearful that some might question his sincerity in the new role of internationalist, Vandenberg proceeded to a more dramatic emphasis of his changed opinion. He was fully aware that it had been only four years since he pleaded with Americans to retreat into isolationism. It is true that he had been stressing since 1943 America's new role in international cooperation, but he was concerned with the possibility that some might still identify him with the isolationists. He was, perhaps, over-sensitive about Roosevelt's recent attempt to charge many of the

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Ibid.

Republican internationalists with insincerity. Vandenberg wanted to answer Roosevelt's charge in such a straightforward manner that no one could accuse him of hedging. His reply was charged with feeling:

I hasten to make my own personal viewpoint clear. I have always been frankly one of those who has believed in our own self-reliance. I still believe that we can never again--regardless of collaborations--allow our national defense to deteriorate to anything like a point of impotence. But I do not believe that any nation hereafter can immunize itself by its own exclusive action. . . . I want maximum American cooperation consistent with legitimate American self-interest, with constitutional process and with collateral events which warrant it.⁸⁹

After professing his complete conversion to collective security, Vandenberg looked for a means of giving his new philosophy a pragmatic test. The result was his "startling proposal that the major Allies should at once conclude 'a hard and fast treaty' to guarantee the permanent disarmament of the Axis powers."⁹⁰ For a pre-Pearl Harbor isolationist, a proposal which could involve America in foreign wars through power treaties was indeed a revolutionary step. But his reasoning was evident. "I am not so impractical as to expect any country to act on any final motive other than self-interest,"⁹¹ he said. But he warned against short-sighted self-interest as exemplified by Russia's insistence

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Foster Rhea Dulles, op. cit., p. 215.

⁹¹Record, 79th Cong., 1st Sess., 1945, XCI, Part 1, 166.

of the formulation of a unilateral plan for a circle of buffer states around Germany.

Vandenberg's proposed target for action, perhaps, was no random selection. Russia's attitude toward the small states of Eastern Europe was of grave concern to the Senator.⁹² He began with a reference to Russia's contemplated absorption of several surrounding buffer states--an action "contrary to our conception of what we thought we were fighting for in respect to the rights of small nations. . . ." He said: "Fear of reborn German aggression is the reason assigned to the proposed partition of Poland." The Senator offered Russia an alternative. He proposed an immediate treaty with the war Allies designed to keep Germany and Japan permanently disarmed. "When we deal with Europe's fear--her justified fear--of another rebirth of German military tyranny, . . . we are at the heart of the immediate problem. . . ."⁹³ The President, argued Vandenberg, should have the authority to use American troops to enforce such a treaty even without the consent of Congress. The treaty, furthermore, need not wait for the postwar peace table, he insisted, because "this menace stands a part by itself."⁹⁴ Under this proposal the

⁹²Papers, p. 122. Vandenberg noted in his diary on November 24, 1944, that Poland seemed "destined to be the victim rather than the beneficiary of the much bruised Atlantic Charter."

⁹³Record, 79th Cong., 1st Sess., 1945, XCI, Part 1, 166.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 167.

Nazis were to become powerless, and Russia's claims to buffer states denied.

Vandenberg wanted the world to know that America's new internationalism had its limits. His was a practical idealism. In other words, he was willing for America to cooperate in the building of an international society, but he made it clear that this decision was fostered by a desire for self-survival. Any organization, furthermore, which America joined would have to adhere to the concept of sovereignty and independence. The Michigan Senator was so confident that the American people accepted this point of view that he offered no proof for his position. He simply asked: "Where does real self-interest lie?"

For the present, Vandenberg made it evident that American self-interest lay in the protection of small countries. He also insisted that any agreements reached at Yalta or other conferences should be considered in the light of war demands and thus should be subjected to final review by the proposed international organization. He insisted that America should not be asked to "put a blank-check warrant behind a future status quo, which is unknown to us and which we might be unwilling to defend."⁹⁵ Actually, the Senator was urging Americans not to become so over zealous in their desire to end the war that they sow the seeds of another conflict. He

⁹⁵Ibid.

wanted them to recall Hitler's massive moves against Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland as the beginnings of World War III. It had become clear by January, 1945, that there would be some permanent territorial changes in regard to Polish and Prussian provinces. The Michigan Senator simply wanted to make sure that any such arrangements would be subject to review by the new organization. That, he thought, was American self-interest.

Having suggested the direction that America's "honest candor" should take, Vandenberg then made a final appeal for a continuation of bipartisan foreign policy. "I realize," said Vandenberg, "how much easier it is to be critical than to be correct. I do not wish to meddle. I want only to help." The Senator obviously thought that some might interpret his proposals as a contribution to interrupting the war effort. For that reason, he insisted that his honest candor would produce a "realistic unity which would swiftly bring our victorious sons back home."⁹⁶

Interpretation of the Speech

Reactions to the speech.--The Senator's speech was truly "heard around the world."⁹⁷ It was not his proposal for an Allied treaty assuring the disarmament of Germany

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Papers, p. 126.

and Japan, however, which received wide attention. It was, instead, Vandenberg's dramatic pledge of support for collective security. The New York Herald Tribune probably captured the sentiment of the nation with the observation that Vandenberg's speech was "an indication that honest minds, to whatever party they may belong . . . can, if they are willing to face the facts, come together upon a firm and common ground." The Tribune concluded that "it might be argued that a main reason why the President had confined himself to vague and generalized utterances had been the fear of just that isolationist sentiment . . . if so, that is water over the dam. . . ." ⁹⁸ And so it was. But the water had been running over the dam for more than two years through the Senator's numerous public utterances. For this reason, it is surprising that such an experienced newspaperman as James B. Reston of the New York Times would refer to the speech as Vandenberg's "change." Says Reston: "He made a tentative public confession in the speech of January 10, 1945, and the American people, by their response to the speech, changed him." ⁹⁹ Vandenberg's hindsight is probably more accurate. He said in 1948: "The world changed--the

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 140.

⁹⁹James B. Reston, "Case for Vandenberg," Life, XXIV (May 24, 1948), 101.

factors of time and space changed--with World War II, and I changed with them."¹⁰⁰

"I confess that I was completely surprised by the nation-wide attention which the speech precipitated,"¹⁰¹ said Vandenberg. But there is every reason to conclude that America's response to the speech had a tremendous effect on the Senator. He saw evidence that the public wholeheartedly accepted his new course. The reception given his address may have encouraged him to go forward with his new approach to America's security. "It cannot be said of many speakers that they affect the course of events," said Walter Lippmann. "But this may be well said of Senator Vandenberg's speech."¹⁰² The Cleveland Plain Dealer called it a "shot heard around the world," and the Boston Herald acclaimed the address as "the most important to come from the Senate Chamber in the last 80 years."¹⁰³ A Vandenberg press release summarized the response to the speech:

The electric effect of the speech was instantaneous. It was printed in full by all the metropolitan press. The Office of War Information promptly beamed it by radio to all our fighting forces . . . the Gallop poll reported American public sentiment to be overwhelmingly in line with the Michigan Senator's ideas. . . . It is interesting to note . . . that the Communists immediately took

¹⁰⁰Papers, p. 139.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 141.

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 142.

alarm when they saw the nation rising almost as one man behind Senator Vandenberg's leadership. . . . The United Press interpreted this assault as rising from the belief that "it is his purpose to prevent the Communization of Europe."¹⁰⁴

It must be emphasized that the response was not made in reply to a vast new set of concepts proposed by Vandenberg. The evidence indicates that the American people were highly in favor of American participation in collective security long before January 10, 1945. The response was probably to the speaker and the occasion. A leading non-interventionist had dramatically promised that America would not be cheated of her second chance at collective security. The time was ripe for such a promise. Victory was already in sight in Europe, and Americans were waiting for a permanent peace. Vandenberg gave expression to this hope.

Vandenberg's new direction.--Before January 10, 1945, Vandenberg had insisted both publicly and privately that a strict policy of neutrality might have kept America out of the war. But now in a dramatic admission, he acknowledged that America's attempts to look out for herself had twice involved her in Europe's battles. He now insisted that America must join in "concerted efforts" with other nations for her self-interest. What changed Vandenberg's concept of American security? One can argue that it was his recognition that the principal body of American public opinion

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p. 145.

was now solidly on the side of internationalism.¹⁰⁵ But Vandenberg's speech offers another explanation. Public opinion, perhaps, was influenced by the same incidents which had changed Vandenberg's point of view. "Since Pearl Harbor," said Vandenberg, "World War II has put the gory science of mass murder into new and sinister perspective. Our oceans have ceased to be moats which . . . protect our ramparts."¹⁰⁶ To Vandenberg and most Americans, perhaps, the only road now to follow was the hard, but clearly indicated path of international cooperation.

The Senator's words were spoken without equivocation. He seemed to realize that many Americans would find it difficult to believe that a leader of the isolationist movement in the pre-Pearl Harbor days had now embraced a new international doctrine. Clearly, Vandenberg's desire was to show the world that he had framed a new concept of American responsibilities. He had professed this new concept in supporting the Connally Resolution in 1943. But that move was not sensational. The world remembered that Vandenberg voted against the arms embargo repeal in 1939; that he opposed Lend-Lease when it was first proposed; that he voted against the first selective service bill; that he even opposed the arming of American merchant ships. To be sure,

¹⁰⁵Foster Rhea Dulles, op. cit., p. 212.

¹⁰⁶Record, 79th Cong., 1st Sess., 1945, XCI, Part 1, 166.

the Republican platform in 1944 promised "responsible participation by the United States in postwar cooperative organization among sovereign nations."¹⁰⁷ But Harding's platform had promised to exercise influence and leadership to prevent war. Yet the world waited for evidence from Harding that America was willing to play a responsible role in preserving the peace of the world. In the minds of many Americans, Vandenberg still stood in the company of such staunch isolationists as Hiram Johnson of California, and Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota, men who talked about internationalism, but were in reality isolationists.

The beginning of the fear of Russia.--In the light of his past association, Vandenberg apparently felt the necessity of going beyond a clear reaffirmation of his support for world cooperation. He needed a concrete plan of action that would prove to Americans that the same post-war disillusionment and inaction would not follow World War II that had dominated America in the twenties. The result was his proposal for an immediate Allied treaty to insure that Germany would not rearm after the war.

Having lessened the fears of his countrymen that he was planning a revision of isolationism, Vandenberg was also calling the Russian bluff. With American boys still fighting on two fronts, the Senator would not dare, even if he desired, to

¹⁰⁷"The Republican Platform," Nation, CLIX (July 8, 1944), 32.

question the sincerity of a major ally. But he was on safe ground in urging a proposal to prevent the rearming of Germany and Japan. Americans certainly did not want to run the risk of having to fight Germany a third time. His proposal was geared to this realization. Given such assurances, said the Senator, Russia would have no reason to lay claim on the smaller states of Europe. This was the Senator's real objective. He probably had no great fear that ample provisions would not be made to prevent the rearmament of Germany. But he had grave fears that a system of buffer states and bilateral military allinaces would spring up for the disguised purpose of guarding against a remilitarized Germany long before a peace treaty could be signed.

Vandenberg had shown how the United States could immediately seize the initiative in international politics. Such a bold move at that hour of history was obviously motivated by more than a desire to make his change to internationalism a reality. Here was an obvious concern about what was to happen to the small nations of Europe. Alarm was expressed that President Roosevelt might deal too freely with Russian territorial claims. He wanted America allied on the side of those who supported the principle of self-determination. He thought most Americans championed the cause of the weaker state, and his appeal was to this belief. The public must let Roosevelt know before he left for Yalta that the idea of equality of

nations, both large and small, and the promise of self-government were not outmoded ideas.

But why did Vandenberg, as a great champion of "Constitutional Processes," submit a suggestion which would have given the President vast discretion in the use of American armed forces to keep the Allied enemies disarmed? "Regardless of what our later decision shall be in respect to the power that shall be delegated to the President," said Vandenberg, "there should be no limitation when it comes to keeping the Axis out of piracy for keeps."¹⁰⁸ Aware that the American people were willing to go the limit to achieve this objective, he wanted this provision separated from the United Nations Organization. He also obviously thought that this was the one issue upon which the Allies could agree. This being true, he wanted this decision made before discussion began on other matters. American diplomats, thought Vandenberg, then would not have to compromise any American ideals in regard to the status of the weaker nations. In short, an immediate assurance from the United States that she could be counted upon to help prevent a rearmed Germany would separate this issue from the discussions concerning the United Nations Organization. President Roosevelt would not have to agree to turn Poland, for example, into a buffer

¹⁰⁸Record, 79th Cong., 1st Sess., 1945, XCI, Part 1, 167.

state in order to assure the success of the San Francisco Conference. Vandenberg's suggestion would place the disarmament of Germany in a category by itself. To achieve this, the Michigan Senator was willing to give the President a free hand. The rewards in his opinion would be a disarmed Germany and a separation of the issue from power politics.

The Michigan Senator's growing distrust of Soviet peace objectives was thus made clear in this speech. He talked openly about Russian actions as being "contrary to our conception of what we thought we were fighting for."¹⁰⁹ But to say bluntly that the Soviet's claims on much of Europe were for selfish gain would have struck at the heart of Allied unanimity. In January of 1945, Americans hoped not just for victory. There was a strong desire for peace--not just a personal peace--but a strong desire that the sacrifice would mean something. Dumbarton Oaks helped to lay the basis of the plan for peace by blueprinting an organization in which America and Russia would actively work together in peace as they had done in war. Vandenberg--the politician or the statesman--knew the hopes that the people of the world had placed in the success of this organization. He certainly did not want to kill the hope that the terrible waste of the war would achieve something positive. For this reason--not just because he was afraid of public reaction but because he too had hopes--Vandenberg

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 166.

was willing to give Russia the benefit of any doubts. He credited her behavior in recent allied discussions to fear of a rearmed Germany.¹¹⁰ His proposal, however, would force a showdown.

Vandenberg's proposition that the Allies come to an immediate agreement over the plans for postwar control of Germany and Japan received little attention from the public. Walter Lippmann viewed it as a proposal which would "end the policy of postponement and thus restore American influence in the settlement of Europe. . . . He has seen what so many of our anguished idealists have not seen, that what our Allies are seeking is first of all security against the revival of German militarism. . . ."¹¹¹ It is questionable that Vandenberg really thought this was the basis of Russian advances in regard to territorial claims. Such statements as "I am not prepared to guarantee permanently the spoils of an unjust peace," and the necessity for respecting the "rights of small nations,"¹¹² would indicate that Vandenberg questioned the sincerity of the Russians. If this were true,

¹¹⁰Although he hoped that this was the case, in private, he had voiced serious misgivings about Russia. See Papers, p. 96. The Senator wrote in his diary on May 11, 1944, for example: "We are all disturbed by Russia's unilateral announcements from time to time as to what she intends to do, for example, with Poland and the other Baltic States."

¹¹¹Papers, p. 141.

¹¹²Record, 79th Cong., 1st Sess., 1945, XCI, Part 1, 166-67.

it is probably obvious why American statesmen paid little heed to Vandenberg's proposal. The executive branch may have sensed the fact that pressing the Russians for a showdown on Poland, for example, would both disrupt the war effort and block plans for the San Francisco Conference. If this had happened, Americans probably would not have regarded the cost of a prolonged war worth all the effort on behalf of the buffer state.

As late as 1948, Vandenberg still insisted that if his proposal for a military pact had been pursued at Yalta, it would have changed the postwar world. He declared that it would have "deprived the Soviet Union of the major reasons . . . for the so-called 'protective expansionism' which has since become the curse of the world."¹¹³ This raises the whole controversy over the wisdom of America's decisions at Yalta, and this issue is beyond the scope of this study. It will suffice to point out that American insistence for Vandenberg's proposals could have driven a wedge in Allied unity. This fear may have prompted Senator Connally's immediate reply to Vandenberg on the Senate floor. "It seems to me inevitable," said Connally, "that most of these issues cannot be settled at the moment but must wait the definitive treaty of peace."¹¹⁴ Connally asked that

¹¹³Papers, p. 145.

¹¹⁴Record, 79th Cong., 1st Sess., 1945, XCI, Part 1, 168.

discussion on such matters be withheld until after the Yalta Conference.

One must turn to conjecture to evaluate the possible effects had the United States insisted on the adoption of the Vandenberg proposal. Would his plan have guaranteed a free Poland? It must be kept in mind, perhaps, that Russia viewed much of Poland as rightfully hers, and that she had a right to have it back. If Roosevelt had insisted upon a broader concession on Poland, it might have weakened the bond between the United States and Russia. That tie, of course, was broken by the cold war. It can be argued that America would have been better off in the long run to have called the Soviet bluff at that time. But those who take this position must meet the possibility that such action could have had a devastating effect on the war. In February, 1945, Germany had not surrendered. The battle in the Pacific had barely begun. The atomic bomb was not a reality. Roosevelt and Churchill either had to take Russia in good faith, or exert pressures which Russia did not have to accept. They tried the latter. Churchill later explained: "Our hopeful assumptions were to be falsified. Still they were the only ones possible at the time."¹¹⁵ Many historians agree with Churchill. "The compromises agreed upon at Yalta," writes Dulles, "were what made it possible to call the meeting at

¹¹⁵Winston S. Churchill, The Second World War, Vol. VI: Triumph and Tragedy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1953), 402.

San Francisco."¹¹⁶ Roosevelt was willing to compromise in order to give the world another chance at collective security. In years to come, Vandenberg, too, proved that his belief in collective security was strong enough to grant concessions.

The Atlantic Charter.--With apparent inconsistency, Vandenberg called for the observance of the Atlantic Charter at the same time he was calling for collective security. Still it must be remembered that the Atlantic Charter was essentially an agreement between two major Anglo-Saxon powers. Great Britain and the United States, in effect, had pledged themselves to a restoration of the sovereign rights of the invaded countries of Europe. Such a policy, if pursued, would have left many other peoples out of consideration. At the same time, Vandenberg talked about a world-wide system of collective security. In criticizing the President for his recent statement that the Atlantic Charter was simply a group of general principles, Vandenberg failed to recognize that Roosevelt was trying to make room for other Allies to join in the system of collective security. Vandenberg's suggestion would have had England and the United States policing the world while at the same time a system of collective security was being established for the same purpose.

¹¹⁶Foster Rhea Dulles, op. cit., p. 218.

Unrestricted national sovereignty.--There is no indication that American public opinion disapproved of Vandenberg's inherent assumption that the new organization for collective security would rest on unrestricted national sovereignty. The Senator proceeded on this theory. America was to go into the new organization for "self-interest." Further, she was not going to give up any of her authority to achieve this interest. At the same time, this new government with no control over the policies of the individual nations except by force was to keep the peace. Responsibility for settlement of disputes was to rest upon the powers who defeated the Nazis. How this power might be used depended upon the willingness of the great powers to exercise their responsibility collectively. With each nation acting on no "motive other than self-interest," it is difficult to perceive just how the Senator arrived at the conclusion that the "self-interests" of these powers would not overlap. Obviously, when such conflicts would arise, the new organization would be powerless to act short of war. His mention, in fact, of Russia's claims in Poland showed that the Senator knew these difficulties would unfold. Yet, he hoped that the Russians would keep their pledges to cooperate in maintaining the peace. If Vandenberg is blamed for naivete on this matter, the rest of the free world must share the guilt. Harry Hopkins, for example, one of Roosevelt's chief aids at Yalta, said: "We really believed

in our hearts that this was the dawn of the new day we had all been praying for and talking about for so many years. We were absolutely certain that we had won the first great victory of the peace--and by 'we' I mean all of us, the whole civilized human race."¹¹⁷

In summary, Senator Vandenberg dramatically announced that American "self-interest" was geared to the peace of the world. This analysis of the national interest constituted a radical change from his pre-Pearl Harbor position. His major goal was still "self-interest." Isolationism as "means," however, was dropped for collective security. The speech shows that his concept of "self-interest" embraced a strong concern for the buffer states of Europe; he had not abandoned all ideological hopes for a European peace. In short, he completely embraced collective security, but he previewed many of the problems that were to come in the postwar world.

The Address on the United Nations Charter

It may be that Senator Vandenberg's speech on January 10, 1945, did not constitute the reversal in his thinking which so many people thought, but it certainly constituted a turning point in his career. On February 13, 1945 the State Department announced that the Michigan Senator had been named as a delegate to the San Francisco Conference.

¹¹⁷Robert E. Sherwood, Roosevelt and Hopkins (New York: Harper & Bros., 1948), p. 870.

From that date on until illness forced his departure from the Senate in 1949, Vandenberg was to play a major role in all subsequent important foreign policy decisions. This part of the study is devoted to a discussion of the first of his diplomatic efforts on behalf of collective security--the United Nations Conference at San Francisco in May of 1945.

Context of the Speech

The Yalta Conference.--The three war-leaders, Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt, held a meeting at Yalta in February of 1945 which paved the way for the meeting at San Francisco to write the United Nations Charter. In a give-and-take atmosphere several decisions were made which later proved difficult to defend. One of these was President Roosevelt's concession that the Ukraine and White Russia should have full representation in the General Assembly of the new body. Another was the agreement that Russia could keep full control of Polish territory east of the Curzon Line. "All that the United States could persuade the Russians to concede in return," writes Perkins, "was a pledge that a democratic government would be set up in Poland at the end of the war."¹¹⁸ It was also agreed that the United States and Russia would

¹¹⁸Dexter Perkins, The Evolution of Foreign Policy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 163.

each get three votes in the General Assembly. Stalin, supposedly, demanded six votes to equalize the six votes of the British Empire as represented by the United Kingdom, but had settled for three.

Vandenberg's appointment.--Roosevelt's invitation to Vandenberg to attend the San Francisco Conference as a delegate reached him at the same time news came from Yalta of the decision on the Polish issue. David Lawrence noted the predicament into which this put the Michigan Senator. "It was announced that President Roosevelt had agreed . . . to the exact opposite regarding Poland of that which the Michigan Senator had urged," said Lawrence. "Now . . . Roosevelt has asked Senator Vandenberg . . . to underwrite the very kind of thing against which Mr. Vandenberg inveighed in his speech."¹¹⁹ The Senator accepted, however, after the President assured him that "I expect you freely to present your views to your American colleagues in respect to all problems at San Francisco."¹²⁰ In accepting, Vandenberg quickly assured the American people that he had not changed his attitudes toward Poland, but thought he could more effectively work for her interests at the conference. "I may accomplish nothing," he said, "but I shall relentlessly try."¹²¹

¹¹⁹Papers, p. 147.

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 153.

¹²¹Ibid., p. 156.

Vandenberg's suggestions.--At the first meeting of the San Francisco delegation Vandenberg suggested that John Foster Dulles be invited to the conference as a senior adviser. Although President Roosevelt objected because of Dulles' close association with Governor Dewey, through the efforts of Senator Vandenberg and Secretary Stettinius, the President "came to see it the same way"¹²² and named Dulles an adviser.

Vandenberg also recommended several amendments to the Dumbarton Oaks agreement. Among other changes, he wanted the word "justice" inserted into Chapter One of the Charter. He asserted that "permanent peace is impossible if the new league is a strait jacket which attempts to freeze the status quo."¹²³ He also objected to that part of the Dumbarton Oaks agreement which suggested that the "General Assembly would not on its own initiative make recommendations on any matter relating to the maintenance of international peace and security." The Senator argued that while the Security Council should have the sole power to act when peace is threatened, this prerogative should not keep the General Assembly from initiating studies and recommending any action that it so desired.¹²⁴

¹²²John Foster Dulles, War or Peace (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950), p. 126.

¹²³The New York Times, April 2, 1945, p. 11.

¹²⁴Ibid.

The Yalta controversy.--At the first meeting of the delegates with President Roosevelt for purposes of being briefed on the Yalta Conference, the group learned of the General Assembly voting formula agreed upon at the Big-Three session. The President's announcement shocked the delegation. "This will raise hell," wrote Vandenberg. "Why is this news being held back, when presumably the country was told all about the 'Yalta compromise' on voting." The Senator's fear was that the country would object because Britain had six, adding that "if it were important enough to cause Stalin to demand three, we will be asked . . . why we stopped at three."¹²⁵ He also thought such an agreement was unfair to the small states. He agreed, however, that "the President has made a commitment which has to be validated."¹²⁶

In the middle of the Yalta controversy, President Roosevelt died at Warm Springs, Georgia on April 12, 1945. "Thus a truly great and gallant spirit, despite all his flaws, was gathered to his fathers," said Vandenberg. "The gravest question in every American heart is about Truman. Can he swing the job? Despite his limited capacities, I believe he can."¹²⁷ The following day, Vandenberg noted in his diary that while Roosevelt's death washed "the slate

¹²⁵Papers, p. 159.

¹²⁶Ibid., p. 164.

¹²⁷Ibid., p. 165.

clean of whatever undisclosed commitments F. D. R. has made to Stalin or Churchill," the United States may have lost "the strongest voice through which we could hope to argue Russia out of some of the mistakes which it seems determined to make."¹²⁸

While he had many misgivings concerning the Yalta decisions, he was realist enough to admit that "we confront a condition, not a theory." True, he was unhappy over the decisions in regard to Poland, but he admitted that abandoning the San Francisco Conference for this reason "would simply leave Russia in possession of everything she wants. . . . There would be no hope left for justice."¹²⁹ He was now willing to put into action his January 10, 1945, sentiments in regard to collective security. San Francisco offered him that opportunity. The attitude with which he approached the meeting is best summarized by Vandenberg's own comment on the Senate floor as he departed for the West Coast.

I have no illusions that the . . . conference can chart the millennium. Please do not expect it of us. . . . But I have faith that we may perfect this charter of peace and justice so that reasonable men of good will shall find in it so much good . . . that all lesser doubts and disagreements may be resolved in its favor.¹³⁰

¹²⁸Ibid., p. 167.

¹²⁹Ibid., p. 156.

¹³⁰Ibid., p. 171.

Vandenberg's role at San Francisco.--The role of any one individual at a conference would be difficult to assess. Vandenberg was active in all the deliberations. His own version of his contributions, perhaps, would be a proper estimate. He said: "I modestly claim credit for these four utterly indispensable features of the Charter."¹³¹ His enumeration referred to the inclusion of the word "justice" in the preamble of the United Nations Charter, the provision which enabled the General Assembly to recommend the changing of postwar peace settlements, the provision in the Charter which assured that the General Assembly could recommend measures of peaceful adjustment in any situation in which that body concluded that the peace of the world would be threatened, and finally, Article 51, which made regional security measures possible. Secretary Welles summarized Vandenberg's role in the following manner:

The role played by the United States was negative save for the individual achievements of representatives . . . the admirable work of Commander Stassen in drawing the provisions over the International Trusteeship, and in the invaluable support given by Senator Vandenberg in defense of the rights of the smaller nation.¹³²

A significant contribution of Vandenberg's may have been his very presence at the conference. His membership

¹³¹Beverly Smith, "Russia's Pet Whipping Boy," Saturday Evening Post, CCXIX (April 5, 1947), 102.

¹³²Sumner Welles, Where Are We Heading (New York: Harper & Bros., 1946), p. 41.

in the Republican party helped to assure the world that the United States delegation spoke with authority. His participation was of "special importance," notes Pratt, because he was "a trusted Republican leader," who was "an outspoken critic of Roosevelt."¹³³ Vandenberg's attendance at the meeting may have thus eliminated doubts that Congress would ratify the Charter.

Only a few hours after signing the Charter, Vandenberg returned to the Senate along with Senator Connally. Their joint role now was to steer the approval of the Charter through the Congress. After a few brief hearings, the Charter reached the Senate floor where Vandenberg and Connally urged its adoption. There apparently was no significant opposition. With the mass media almost unanimously favoring American participation along with the impact of polls which showed Americans favoring the move by wide majorities,¹³⁴ the Senate gave quick approval to the step. The final vote was 89-2.¹³⁵

¹³³Julius W. Pratt, A History of United States Foreign Policy (New York: Prentice Hall, 1955), p. 699. Also see James F. Byrnes, Speaking Frankly (New York: Harper & Bros., 1947), p. 235. He recalled: "Because Senator Vandenberg represented the political party opposed to the administration and because he enjoyed the confidence of the overwhelming majority of his party, his support enabled us to speak of our foreign policy as the American policy."

¹³⁴Foster Rhea Dulles, op. cit., p. 219.

¹³⁵Ibid.

Report of the Speech

Vandenberg's major Senate speech in support of the Charter was delivered on June 29, 1945.¹³⁶ The address was presented in the form of an official report concerning his two-months absence to attend the San Francisco Conference. In urging his colleagues to accept America's membership in the new organization, Vandenberg attempted to show: (1) that the Charter was a "this-or-nothing" proposal; (2) that the Charter represented several improvements over the Dumbarton Oaks agreement; (3) that the future peace of the world depended mostly upon the action of the major powers and that the Charter recognized this reality; and finally, (4) that the structure of the organization was adequate to meet the demands placed on it.

Before proceeding to his reasons for supporting the Charter, Vandenberg made a strong bid for the Senate's approval with a detailed reference to the high degree of bipartisanship which had prevailed at the conference. He praised Secretary Stettinius, Jr., as "an able and inspiring leader," and expressed deep appreciation of Senator Connally, who made "it constantly possible for each one of us, representing the minority, to play our full role in the deliberations."¹³⁷

¹³⁶Record, 79th Cong., 1st Sess., 1945, XCI, Part 5, 6981.

¹³⁷Ibid.

He made a strong appeal to his Republican friends to support the measure as a product of bipartisanship. Implicitly, of course, Vandenberg was giving assurance that there need be no such partisan conflict as had arisen over the Treaty of Versailles. At San Francisco, the minority was represented. The Senator assured his colleagues that the same bipartisan approach that had been used by the Committee of Eight in plans for Dumbarton Oaks and Bretton Woods was continued at San Francisco.

The Senator then announced his reasons for supporting the Charter. His partition served the function of laying before his audience his own attitudes toward the new organization:

I shall support the ratification of this Charter with all the resources at my command. I shall do this in the deep conviction that the alternative is physical and moral chaos in many weary places of the earth. I shall do it because there must be no default in our often pledged purpose to outlaw aggression so far as lies within our human power. I shall do it because this plan, regardless of infirmities, holds great promise that the United Nations may collaborate for peace as effectively as they have made common cause for war. I shall do it because peace must not be cheated out of its only collective chance.¹³⁸

Defense of the Charter as a "this-or-nothing"
proposal.--Vandenberg's first main argument in support of the Charter was a simple assertion that he preferred this

¹³⁸Ibid.

Charter to none at all. A desire on the part of Americans to participate in a new world organization for peace was taken for granted. Aware that this basic assumption rested in the minds of most Americans, Vandenberg viewed his task as being that of simply proving that this Charter was the only one possible. For this proof, he turned to a comparison of this situation with the one facing the colonies in 1789. He referred to Franklin's statement that he supported the "Constitution because I expect no better and because I am not sure it is not the best."¹³⁹ He also quoted Franklin as saying that "when you assemble a number of men . . . you inevitably assemble with those men all their prejudices, their passions, their errors of opinions." If this were the case with the colonial states, said Vandenberg, "how much more true is it when . . . 50 nations, . . . separated from each other by race, language, and tradition . . . and dealing with a problem which spans the globe. . . . The wonder is that we can approve so much." He ended this point with the obvious conclusion that "I prefer the chance rather than no chance at all."¹⁴⁰

One might inquire as to why Vandenberg failed to employ more logical proof to develop his "this-or-nothing" argument. In the first place, he probably thought that

¹³⁹Ibid.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p. 6982.

Americans were prepared to "buy the package" from San Francisco. "There was little popular realization," writes Dulles, "of the stresses and strains to which collective security might be subject, and the sacrifices it might entail."¹⁴¹ Vandenberg probably knew this and thus had no fear of offering a "this-or-nothing" pitch. In the second place, the Senator may have really been trying to lead the people at this point by reminding them of the aged maxim of government which alleges that politics, in the final analysis, is often the art of the possible. His plea was to those who realized that absolute justice in the realm of human affairs is a myth. Vandenberg was admitting that America compromised with awareness of reality. But such action is necessary at some point. He was prepared to show that America did that compromising at the right time.

Vandenberg, in effect, asked Americans to consider the possible alternatives to accepting this compromise. Rejection would be a return to international anarchy, much worse since Pearl Harbor because "World War II has put the cruel science of mass murder into new and sinister perspective."¹⁴² Furthermore, Vandenberg uttered what most Americans knew. Rejecting this Charter meant a course of action repulsive to all civilized men. The organization represented a chance to

¹⁴¹Foster Rhea Dulles, op. cit., p. 219.

¹⁴²Record, 79th Cong., 1st Sess., 1945, XCI, Part 5, 6982.

avoid an armaments race, and the whole business of untrammelled power politics and its many dangers. With war still going on in the Pacific, Americans did not wish to think of another war--especially one that might begin where the last one ended. Vandenberg knew, as did his audience, that the Charter then before the Senate might be the world's last chance. That is probably why his proof was simply a now or never assertion: "We dare not fail to try."¹⁴³

Behind his words, however, was the realization of the cynicism with which many regarded the results of the San Francisco Conference. He wondered with his countrymen just what the Soviet Union was seeking. The imponderable of Russia's claims in Poland, her attitude toward free discussion in the Security Council, her many blunt demands, were beginning to create a great deal of uncertainty. "You may tell me," said Vandenberg, "that some of the signatories to this Charter practice the precise opposite of what they preach even as they sign."¹⁴⁴ Vandenberg had been a part of the experienced difficulties of dealing with Russia in many situations. But, the Senator had an answer for those who doubted. It probably echoed the sentiments of America. He said: "I reply that the nearer right you may be in any such gloomy indictment, the greater is the need for the new pattern which promises at least to stem these evil tides."¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³Ibid.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

At this point, Vandenberg was still willing to give Russia the benefit of the doubt. The organization was founded on the assumption that the war-time alliance of the United Nations would continue to work in harmony for mutual purposes. His speech showed that he was aware that doubts had begun to develop in many quarters. He shared those doubts. But he was not willing to discard the possibility that the alliance might continue. He conceded, however, that the new plan for international security might never get beyond the talking stage. The new organization might not succeed, but it was certain to fail without the participation of the United States. "If the effort fails," said Vandenberg, "we can at least face the consequence with clean hands."¹⁴⁶

Defense of the structure of the Charter.--Vandenberg next turned to a discussion of the structure of the new organization. He made it plain that in his mind the United Nations projected use of force was not the major means of preserving the peace, but rather he clearly looked upon the provisions for the "pacific settlement of disputes before they ever reach the fighting stage,"¹⁴⁷ as the most significant means of maintaining international peace and security. The Senator indicated that even more important than this, perhaps, was the fact that the new organization would enable the spiritual forces of nations to mount against

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

an aggressor. This "mighty oracle"--not the war-time alliance--was where Vandenberg was placing his main hopes for peace.

The Michigan Senator next turned to a summary of the improvements which the conference had attempted to make over the Dumbarton Oaks agreements. His emphasis at this point primarily concerned those portions in which he had played a major role. For example, he emphasized that the "Charter names justice as the prime criterion of peace."¹⁴⁸ He was emphasizing the importance of this one word. He said: "Here is the heart and core of humanity's hope for tomorrow." This statement referred to the hope that justice would be carried out since: (1) the general assembly would be in a position to discuss any issue; and (2) since that same body could "recommend measures for the peaceful adjustment of any situation--regardless of origin."¹⁴⁹ The implication was that the new organization could review and even modify war-time political decisions made by the chief leaders. He was probably trying to offer hope to those who were unhappy over the decision to permit Russia to have control over Polish territory east of the Curzon Line. Perhaps, he was justifying his own support of the organization in the face of this famous Yalta decision. His plea was that Americans should give the organization a chance to undo the damage.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., p. 6983.

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

Refutation of objections.--The main essentials of Vandenberg's case for collective security came when he attempted to refute the arguments of those who were skeptical of the new organization. In reality much of the opposition to the proposal was a "straw man" phenomenon. Scant opposition was noted during the hearings before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Majority opinion was clearly on the side of the new organization.¹⁵⁰ Vandenberg must have known this, but he probably wanted to justify his position. He had his reservations, and he wanted to make them known.

First, Vandenberg attempted to answer those who argued that "we should know the pattern of the final peace before we undertake to create the mechanism that shall sustain it."¹⁵¹ His answer was rather evasive. He admitted that the argument had merit before San Francisco. In fact, he had once shared anxieties about the same problem, but now insisted that the situation had changed because the General Assembly had been placed in a position to "recommend measures for the peaceful adjustment of any situation, regardless of origin, which it deems likely to impair the general welfare."¹⁵² This was Vandenberg's way of saying that he did not endorse all the Yalta and Dumbarton Oaks decisions, but he could

¹⁵⁰Foster Rhea Dulles, op. cit., p. 219.

¹⁵¹Record, 79th Cong., 1st Sess., 1945, XCI, Part 5, 6983.

¹⁵²Ibid.

vote for the Charter, because it offered hope of correcting these abuses. This was probably his answer to prewar isolationists who were looking to Vandenberg for direction. Many were, perhaps, eager to find such a rationale for action on the Charter, because they had not forgotten that some who opposed the League in 1919 did so on the grounds that the peace treaty should be written first. Few, including the isolationists, had the courage in 1945 to deny collective security a second chance.

The essential of the new organization was that it would utilize a maximum agreement among the large powers of the world, and that these powers would in some way get down to the business of settling disagreements short of war. Many critics voiced opposition to this plan. Most serious of all opposition was that raised to the voting procedure in the Security Council as finally agreed upon at Yalta. This was the next major objection to the proposal which Vandenberg attempted to meet. He admitted that he did not like the plan which in effect permitted each of the five powers to enjoy a "veto" but asserted that "I cannot understand the critic who permits his disappointment upon this one score to sweep him into total opposition to the entire enterprise. . . ."¹⁵³ The Senator thus defended "veto" in spite of the limitations.

¹⁵³Ibid., p. 6984.

He alleged, first, that the "veto substantially reflects the world's realities." He turned to one of his favorite phrases to explain his point. "The truth of the matter is," said Vandenberg, "that we confront a condition, not a theory."¹⁵⁴ In this case, the Senator made use of the American assumption that the war-time alliance would be preserved to keep the peace. "Britain, Russia, and America control the dominating force factors of the earth, and are calculated to thus continue for the foreseeable years ahead."¹⁵⁵ To ignore this fact, asserted the Senator, would be to turn aside the one thing that the world was depending upon to keep the peace, i.e., the military might which had so successfully defeated the Axis. He was simply insisting that if the organization was to utilize this unanimity for peace, those nations must be given the power to use what they already possessed. The Senator probably echoed the sentiments of the nation. All he really said was that certain conditions did not come up to American expectations, but the overall goal was to try to make the alliance a workable one. Certain nations had the power, and they would use it whether the organization granted it or not. The veto helped to assure that Security Council decisions would bear some relation to reality. The Senator proposed to try to utilize this strength on the side of peace.

¹⁵⁴Ibid.

¹⁵⁵Ibid.

Vandenberg said, secondly, that no alternative existed to the "veto" formula. He reminded Americans that Roosevelt agreed to this plan at Yalta. His appeal was to the American respect for a recognized promise. Said Vandenberg: "We Americans have a habit of keeping our country's word."¹⁵⁶ This was the Senator's answer to those who asked why the American delegation did not assume the leadership and push for a renunciation of the veto formula. From many quarters, particularly from small powers, had come demands for change. Vandenberg rejected this as did the other American delegates. He now defended this decision on the grounds that to have repudiated the word of an American President "would have been to kill the conference before it got underway," adding that this "is the choice which . . . Congress and the country now confront."¹⁵⁷ It could also be true that the Senator was once again pointing to something that Roosevelt designed which the country must swallow whether it liked it or not. He was both a salesman and a politician. Such may have been the political implication of this point.

In approving the veto formula, Vandenberg was forced to admit that the concept of equality of states was discarded by the San Francisco agreement. The new organization was

¹⁵⁶Record, 79th Cong., 1st Sess., 1945, XCI, Part 5, 6984.

¹⁵⁷Ibid.

dominated by the great powers. Without being hypocritical, Vandenberg wanted to show the small countries that the United States respected their sovereignty and independence. For that reason, he stressed that the General Assembly, where small powers dominate, can "recommend measures for the peaceful adjustment of any situation, . . . which it deems likely to impair the general welfare."¹⁵⁸ The San Francisco Conference further enhanced this provision by avoiding "an extreme interpretation which would have permitted the use of the veto against full hearing and discussion of any threats to peace."¹⁵⁹ Although it, perhaps, offered little solace to those who thought the small countries had been coerced,

¹⁵⁸Ibid., p. 6983. Also see Pratt, op. cit., p. 700. He writes: "The original proposals had lodged almost all power in the Security Council, which would be dominated by the Big Five. . . . Senator Vandenberg, believing that in the long run moral force--mobilized world opinion--might count more than material force, led a movement to make the General Assembly 'a town meeting of the world,' by giving it unrestricted freedom to debate." He notes "that the American delegation achieved this objective at the risk of nearly breaking up the Conference."

¹⁵⁹Record, 79th Cong., 1st Sess., 1945, XCI, Part 5, 6984. Also see Papers, p. 208. Vandenberg apparently felt that the victory over unrestricted debate in the Security Council reflected another gain in dealing with the Russians. He wrote in his diary on June 7, 1945: "I think everyone is convinced that the blunt, unconditional message which Stettinius sent to Moscow turned the trick. . . . At any rate, we have discovered (I hope) that we can get along with Russia if and when we can convince Russia that we mean what we say." He added that the victory restored "a sinking American prestige at home and abroad; that it gives the new Peace League a chance; and that it recommends an American Foreign Policy which stands up for our viewpoints, our ideals, and our purposes."

it offered some hope to those who felt that the use of an arbitrary veto could defeat the will of the other members.

In speaking of America's fight for free discussion in the Security Council, Vandenberg, perhaps, was also saying that the United States had not abandoned its interest in the small powers. He was telling the world that America had run the risk of breaking up the conference in holding out for the principle of free speech in the Security Council. He hoped that the small countries would realize that the United States would fight for American principles, one of which had always been a belief in the right of self-determination of all nations. While it is true, he implied, that the great powers would have to assume the leading political role in making a framework for peace, America would champion the rights of small countries in all other activities. In short, he was telling the small countries to be thankful that America too had a veto; with it, implied Vandenberg, she could use that veto to help those who would seek liberation.

The Senator's third defense of the veto formula might also be regarded as an answer to those small nations which attacked the unanimity requirements as a discriminatory measure. "The great powers," said Vandenberg, "must assume special and particular responsibilities."¹⁶⁰ In other words,

¹⁶⁰Record, 79th Cong., 1st Sess., 1945, XCI, Part 5, 6984.

the unanimity rule not only granted a privilege, but it also affirmed that responsibility must go with power. While the major powers were to make the main decisions in regard to the use of force, this same group had promised to respect the sovereign equality of states and to use its influence on the side of law and justice. All nations, implied Vandenberg, should profit from this arrangement. It put power in a position of protecting the equality of nations. In essence, he was calling on the small powers and their supporters to be realists. The great powers would dominate the world whether in or out of the new organization. All nations are not equal in power and influence. The small states recognized this at San Francisco by putting the burden of proof on the big powers to keep the peace. Vandenberg wanted his countrymen to recognize this fact of life.

Vandenberg's fourth major defense of the veto formula represented the sine qua non of the American rationale for joining the organization. "Let it never for an instant be forgotten that this veto granted to the five great powers includes a veto for our own United States."¹⁶¹ His other three arguments in favor of joining the organization with the veto provision had been directed to a minority of internationalists and peoples in small countries who felt

¹⁶¹Ibid.

that the organization placed too much power in the hands of the great powers; now he speaks to the great majority--those "many millions of our citizens" who require it "as the indispensable price of our adherence to this treaty." His use of emotional evidence indicates that he thought he spoke to an agreeing audience. Such statements as "we remain the captains of our souls," and "it is the complete answer to any rational fears that we may be subordinating our destiny,"¹⁶² serve to illustrate his attempts to prove his point. He had obviously concluded that the "veto" was essential to American acceptance, and thus continued his long standing view of sovereignty. Many historians agree that the Senator had effectively analyzed his audience.¹⁶³

Vandenberg's defense of the Yalta voting formula was thus pitched on a "this-or-nothing" theme. He never gave the formula complete endorsement, but at the same time, he was quick to say that the veto should not constitute a rejection of the Charter. But his insistence that the Charter preserved the "sovereignty" of America indicated

¹⁶²Ibid.

¹⁶³William Reitzel, Morton A. Kaplan, and Constance G. Coblenz, United States Foreign Policy, 1945-1955 (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1956), pp. 36-37. They write: "In addition, and jointly with the other major powers, the United States firmly adhered to the concept of a privileged position, including the right of veto." See Pratt, op. cit., p. 698. He writes: "The price of securing the adherence of the Soviet Union, and of insuring a favorable vote by the United States Senate was thus a veto provision."

that he joined those who could not commit America to an enforcement action against her will. He would not accept, and he apparently had concluded that Americans would not accept, membership in an organization in which they did not have a final say about the use of American resources to keep the peace. Any other voting formula could mean that America might be outvoted. At this point, he was not convinced that his country should give up that privilege. He did want to show, however, that the veto would be used by America on the side of justice.

Defense of American position in the organization.

Vandenberg's final argument in support of the Charter came in a positive assertion that America was not giving up any "essential American sovereignty," in joining the organization, but on the other hand, was "exercising intelligent self-interest." It is, of course, not surprising that Vandenberg would have an answer for those who were afraid that the United States was giving up her sovereignty. The Senator turned to three specific instances to prove his belief that all America was doing by joining the organization was "exercising intelligent self-interest."¹⁶⁴

His first example pointed with pride to the fact that the organization made provisions for regional arrangements. Vandenberg gave special stress to this aspect of the Charter

¹⁶⁴Record, 79th Cong., 1st Sess., 1945, XCI, Part 5, 6984.

because of its bearing on the Monroe Doctrine. Alarm was expressed by some at San Francisco that the new organization might void the Act of Chapultepec, signed on March 3, 1945, in which the nations of the Western Hemisphere agreed to combine military power to defend the American continents from aggressors, both local and foreign.¹⁶⁵ The provisions of the act clearly aimed at the preservation of the Monroe Doctrine, or the principle of non-intervention in the affairs of the West. Senator Vandenberg was an enthusiastic supporter of Article 51 which alleged that "nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs. . . ."¹⁶⁶ This, he asserted, not only preserved the Monroe Doctrine intact, but actually gave it new life in that the Act of Chapultepec was said to constitute a regional arrangement under Article 51 of the Charter.

The Senator also emphasized that the new organization "exempt all essentially domestic matters from the jurisdiction"¹⁶⁷ of the new government. In other words, "national interest" was to take preference over peace. He was emphasizing what

¹⁶⁵Pratt, op. cit., p. 765. "In its most important contribution, the Act of Chapultepec declared that until the end of the war, any act or threat of aggression against an American state would be considered an act or threat against all, and would be dealt with by whatever measures proved necessary."

¹⁶⁶Papers, p. 193.

¹⁶⁷Record, 79th Cong., 1st Sess., 1945, XCI, Part 5, 6985.

his countrymen already knew. The new organization could not force America or any nation to disarm, to remove trade barriers, or to stabilize currency without her consent. Each country must be willing to submit to those processes or no action could be taken. America was to play her cards for international cooperation, but she was to decide where, when, and how those cards were to be exposed. This policy favored collective security, as a principle, but it made little sacrifice of self-interest for the greater interest of the rest of the world. America was not prepared to go further, and Vandenberg felt no compulsion to support the argument with evidence--not even explanation. As historians indicate, however, the United States did not stand alone in this matter, for most nations "rejected any concept of intervention in matters essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state."¹⁶⁸

His final arguments were also mentioned without explanation. In one of them he stressed that America preserved the right of self-defense, assuring Americans that collective defense did not impair this right. In the other, he obviously had in mind those people who were concerned about the status of certain Pacific Islands in that he made reference to the fact that the matter of trusteeships would be settled at later conferences with each participating nation having freedom of action.

¹⁶⁸Reitzel, Kaplan, and Coblenz, op. cit., p. 36.

Conclusion.--Vandenberg's conclusion constituted a restatement of the positions which he had attempted to defend in the body of the speech. Although he made no specific reference to them, he had in mind two groups. For the internationalists who wanted a higher degree of collective government, the Senator reiterated that it was "this-or-nothing"--the only "plan available for international cooperation"; for the isolationists who feared American participation in any type of international organization, Vandenberg reminded them of the hope which Americans were placing in this venture, and of the protection from loss of sovereignty. His reference to a recent statement by General Eisenhower that "the blackness of the grief of those who mourn can be relieved only by the faith that this shall not happen again,"¹⁶⁹ was a reminder to the Senate that Americans would not tolerate a rejection of the proposal.

Interpretation of the Speech

The role of the United Nations.--When one ponders the inherent weaknesses of an organization predicated on the assumption that the unanimity of the war-time powers would continue after military victory, it is difficult to see how Vandenberg could place much faith in the organization. The address shows that he had grave doubts about Russia's

¹⁶⁹Record, 79th Cong., 1st Sess., 1945, XCI, Part 6, 6985.

desire for peace. The speech does not really hide the fact that Vandenberg was not placing much faith in the ability of the Security Council to use force to keep the peace. Instead, he placed his hope in the moral force of the United Nations--in its ability to focus world attention on an aggressor. But he also wanted America to maintain her own resources for defense, to encourage regional arrangements for defense of the Western Hemisphere, and to take definite steps to keep the defeated aggressors under control. He hoped, of course, that the war powers might continue to work together in peace as they had in war.

Still Vandenberg's thinking at this point is somewhat inconsistent. First, he implied that the new organization could keep the peace by enforcing moral commitments. Through a long process involving negotiation, inquiry, mediation, conciliation, judicial settlement, and others,¹⁷⁰ offenders were bound to be suppressed. In fact, said Vandenberg, "it is inconceivable that this routine would not succeed."¹⁷¹ At the same time, he admitted that the organization granted a privileged position to the five great powers, each able to keep moral commitments by governments from being enforced.

¹⁷⁰Article 33 of the Charter provides that each member shall first "seek a solution by negotiation, inquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice."

¹⁷¹Record, 79th Cong., 1st Sess., 1945, XCI, Part 5, 6983.

Unless the war-time alliance continued, and clearly Vandenberg was skeptical, then moral commitments could not be enforced. The only route left open was to rely on the influence of public opinion to act in the place of enforcement. Even the Briand-Kellogg Pact proved that declarations of moral purpose can be violated. "So long as opinion is nationalistic," says Wright, "nations will risk wars in pursuance of nationalistic aims even at the expense of international obligations."¹⁷² Yet Vandenberg insisted that the greater strengths of the United Nations in settling threats to the peace are found in those means to be employed before the dispute is given to the Security Council. He had thus registered another doubt that the unanimity of the five permanent members of the Security Council could be relied upon to keep the peace.

Vandenberg clearly set forth a lesser role for the United Nations in world affairs than many people had hoped it would have. He was prepared to see the discontinuation of big-power unanimity, but still hoped that the organization could influence the course of nations in the search for peace. This strength came, thought Vandenberg, through a community of nations banded together morally against a common enemy. In view of this conclusion, it is difficult to understand just why Vandenberg did not stress the importance

¹⁷²Quincy Wright, "Making the United Nations Work," Review of Politics, VIII (October, 1946), 529.

of universality of membership. It was difficult to envision just how this organization was to function as a true instrument for peace unless universality was encouraged. Recognition of this fact led John Foster Dulles to declare: "The United Nations will best serve the cause of peace if its assembly is representative of what the world actually is, and not merely representative of the parts which we like."¹⁷³

Since Vandenberg had apparently lost faith in the ability of the organization to use force in the settlement of disputes, one could question his wisdom of approving of an organization for justice without provisions of securing that justice. The League of Nations was of the same design, and it failed to keep the peace. In the first place, he and his countrymen wanted a chance at collective security; this, asserted Vandenberg, was the only one they had. Americans would not surrender traditional rights, and indeed, most of them saw no necessity for it. As historians note: "At no time did official statements give the public any reason to question Soviet cooperation in the postwar era."¹⁷⁴ Secondly, Vandenberg, perhaps, thought that although the organization might not prevent those wars provoked by powerful nations, it might greatly help in assessing the blame and in

¹⁷³John Foster Dulles, War or Peace (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950), p. 190.

¹⁷⁴Reitzel, Kaplan, and Coblenz, op. cit., p. 85.

gathering support outside of the official body. There was also the possibility that it might help to stop those wars not deliberately designed by a great power. Thirdly, the speech shows that he viewed the United Nations as a channel for communication in which independent states with different objectives could meet to compromise points of view. Without any pretense that the organization could solve all problems, he had high regard for its possibilities as a forum where differences could be aired. Such were the organization's "preponderant advantages" which in Vandenberg's mind deserved a "faithful trial."¹⁷⁵

It can also be argued at this point that Vandenberg had drifted into some of Wilson's idealism. How was justice to prevail among a community of nations in which there was no common purpose? If there was a common purpose, it was the desire for peace--not justice. Vandenberg had signed a document in which national interest took preference over world justice or even peace. He had backed himself into a corner, but neither he nor his countrymen could admit it. He wanted to preserve American sovereignty, but at the same time he sought international morality. Where sovereign nations are concerned, "if there is a choice between moral and immoral means, the moral ones can be chosen only if

¹⁷⁵Record, 79th Cong., 1st Sess., 1945, XCI, Part 5, 6983.

they promise equal success,"¹⁷⁶ states Werner Levi. Such was the grave consequence of national sovereignty to which Vandenberg subscribed. He hoped, without any logical proof to substantiate his claim, however, that the fatal results of this adherence to national sovereignty would give way to international justice when it came before the "town meeting of the world."¹⁷⁷ He knew the truth, however, as he signed it at San Francisco. Any Big Five member of the Security Council can exercise its veto to keep any matter from being investigated. This left the main hope in the power of the General Assembly to recommend with the added hope that justice, not self-interest, would prevail. Nations on many occasions have been known to ignore recommendations concerned with justice--including those of the League of Nations.

To be sure, one could argue with Vandenberg's conclusion that the new Charter would help to insure a better peace than would a pre-San Francisco agreement. But the Senator knew the realities of life. There was hidden meaning behind his assertion that "we would desert our own ideals if we should permit our desire for the unattainable to blind us to the wisdom of embracing the boom which is at hand."¹⁷⁸ He was aware that popular desire for international

¹⁷⁶Werner Levi, Fundamentals of World Organization (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1950), p. 13.

¹⁷⁷Record, 79th Cong., 1st Sess., 1945, XCI, Part 5, 6983.

¹⁷⁸Ibid.

organization was at a peak during the height of war. He obviously thought that the world must adopt the new plan before the horrors of war had faded from their memories. "When the crisis is over and the time for the era arrives," writes Levi, "conditions appear very different from those anticipated, and the plan for a new world appears impracticable."¹⁷⁹

The Senator, in addition, was at San Francisco. He recalled the struggle over such seemingly minor incidents as the inclusion of the word "justice" in the Charter. He could envision what could happen to the world's hopes for an international organization if it had to wait on final agreement over such questions as what to do with Germany after her defeat. He wanted an international organization. The world hoped for the same thing. The Senator had learned that waiting for an organization which assured absolute justice would result in a repeat of 1918. To avoid this, he compromised principle and accepted a historical reality. Levi argues that such action is not unusual. "The new organization is usually only nominally a fulfillment of government promises during wartime," he asserts, "a fulfillment designed to appease the few surviving idealists."¹⁸⁰ Vandenberg, perhaps, was among those for whom the flame had not yet died.

¹⁷⁹Levi, op. cit., pp. 201-02.

¹⁸⁰Ibid., p. 203.

The united front.--Vandenberg's task in this speech was to avoid a partisan split in the United States Senate. He hoped that he would neither alienate those who wished to go farther down the road to internationalism, nor those who did not wish to go as far as the Charter proposed. It is clear that he spoke persuasively to both groups. Above all, he wanted to avoid a bitter debate which might create doubts among America's Allies about America's interest in international security. To accomplish this objective, he relied chiefly upon the emotional proof that "it is the only plan available for international cooperation,"¹⁸¹ along with the implication that the American people were demanding an attempt at collective security. The speaker had the advantage of one who had been in on the construction, as well as his great "speaker credibility" appeal as a member of the opposition party.

With the sentiment of a nation so strong in favor of the Charter, Vandenberg could have easily claimed more benefits from the organization than it offered. He could, for example, very easily have exaggerated the positive aim of the venture. While he hoped that long-term economic and social reconstruction would come from the United Nations, he made no such claims. He hoped, instead, that the organization would make a contribution to peace by providing instruments

¹⁸¹Record, 79th Cong., 1st Sess., 1945, XCI, Part 5, 6985.

and practices which would enable the peoples of the world to realize their collective will to avoid a third world war. This was all he promised. He was, in fact, very honest with his audience in implying that signs already pointed to the fact that the Grand Alliance of the war might fold. He was equally persuasive in his appeal that if this should come to pass, there was even greater reason to join the organization. The value of the United Nations in this case, implied Vandenberg, would be its capacity to clarify thinking on matters of international law and to stimulate public opinion on the side of justice. If the organization offered nothing more than a moral sense of direction, humanity would have won a victory in its search for peace based on justice and morality.

The Defense of Collective Security

This chapter is concerned with the second of the phases of American foreign policy being considered in this study, the period of war and collective security, 1941 to 1946. Three of Arthur Vandenberg's speeches are examined to represent the changing ideas which reflect America's policies in the postwar world, projected peace aims, and the nature of the postwar world organization.

Pattern of the Speeches

The shift of ideas.---When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, Senator Vandenberg's concept of

American foreign policy embodied one basic interest--the security of the United States. Along with other Americans, he found this security in two policies. The first was that of isolation, the policy of George Washington in his final message upon leaving the White House. The second was a belief in the principles of the Monroe Doctrine designed for the defense of the Western Hemisphere. By 1943, Senator Vandenberg had publicly abandoned isolationism for collective security. By 1945, he had dramatized that new direction for the world, and by June of that year, he had endorsed the United Nations Charter as a blueprint to achieve the new objective. But his one basic interest for America had not changed. He was still, first of all, interested in the security of the United States.

Ideas for change.--In supporting the Connally Resolution in 1943, Senator Vandenberg announced to the world that isolationism had failed. Pearl Harbor, he said, had destroyed his belief that the two great oceans could protect the country from foreign wars. He also implied that America could no longer stand alone in the face of world aggression; World War II convinced him that Allies are needed to help wage modern war. He proposed, in place of isolationism and neutrality, that America join in collective efforts for peace.

With war holding popular attention, he refrained from spelling out the directions that the new policy should take.

It was made clear, however, that any attempt at collective security must not challenge American sovereignty, and that any moves into a postwar organization for peace must be subject to the approval of the Congress. He implied, in addition, that the base of the new organization would be built upon the unanimity of the war-time alliance of countries. Rather than run the risk of disrupting the war efforts with disagreements over postwar policies, he was content to let the matter drop without further elaboration.

By 1945, however, the war in Europe was nearing an end. Vandenberg became deeply concerned about the peace aims of America's Allies. In his January 10, 1945, address, he made a dramatic profession of faith in collective security by advocating that America enter an immediate alliance to guarantee that the defeated Axis powers would never again assault the world. This proposal was a radical departure for a prewar believer in isolationism and a follower of "non-entangling" alliances. But he also announced to the world that America should not pay for an international organization at the expense of peace without justice at Yalta or elsewhere.

Vandenberg accepted the United Nations as the best possible means for implementing his belief in collective security. He was not satisfied with many phases of the United Nations agreement, but he was prepared to buy the package on a "this-or-nothing" theme. He viewed the General

Assembly as the strength of the organization. He believed that in this "town meeting of the world," the moral force of civilization could be brought to bear on any potential aggressor. He hoped that the alliance of large powers on which the organization was based would hold, but he was not over-optimistic. His concern for the small countries of the world led him to question the wisdom of granting so much power to the Big Five. But he bought the idea because in his mind that arrangement fitted the realities of the world as they existed in 1945.

Vandenberg's goal of American security thus continued through the collective security period. The main implementation for this goal was peace. But his concept of peace had taken on a wider base than it had in the period of isolationism. He was now concerned with peace with justice for all nations. Vandenberg had come to believe that a threat to democracy anywhere in the world was a threat to freedom everywhere. This is not to suggest that he had been indifferent to tyranny in the thirties. But it is to say that at that time he thought that there was very little that America could or should do about aggression in other parts of the world. By 1943, he decided that the only thing to do about it was concerted action with other nations. He remained firm in his conviction, however, that any collectivist efforts for peace must not disrupt American sovereignty, and that American participation must be subjected to the wisdom of the Congress not only for final approval, but also in formulation.

Vandenberg's new concept of America's role in world affairs moved along with public opinion. But he may have moved ahead of the public in his suspicions that the members of the Grand Alliance might not work as well together in peace as in war. In this, he may have grasped the dangers in collective security well ahead of the public while moving with them in evaluating its advantages.

Reason for change.---Vandenberg's change from isolationism to collective security was slow but definite. The change cannot be ascribed solely to the fact that Pearl Harbor taught him a lesson. An answer can also be found in what is revealed in his speeches in the light of the alternatives available to him.

First, he could have returned to a policy of isolationism after the war. He professed at various times both publicly and privately from 1943 to 1945 that "obviously" such a course was impossible. His speeches show that the Pearl Harbor attack convinced him that "neither time nor space any longer promises to shield the victims of treacherous attack."¹⁸² The explanation can be questioned on the grounds that the administration had warned the country that the attack at Pearl Harbor was possible as early as 1937. His speeches show, however, that he was convinced that America

¹⁸²Ibid., p. 6982.

could defend herself against any aggressor without the assistance of other nations. World War II crushed these assumptions.

Neither was Vandenberg oblivious to the determination of the American people to win the war and carry that same spirit into the organization for peace. Both geographical remoteness and neutrality legislation failed to keep America out of war. To most Americans, the only road to follow after Pearl Harbor was that of international cooperation. In Vandenberg's speaking from 1943 to 1945, he hinged many of his leading arguments on the fact that Americans would not tolerate a return to isolationism. From 1943 on, the nature of the proofs used in Vandenberg's speeches showed that he anticipated an agreeing audience when he proposed that America should take a continuing and permanent interest in insuring the maintenance of international peace by cooperating in an organization with other nations.

It is, of course, possible that Vandenberg was highly influenced in his decision to drop isolationism and support collective security by the fact that several Republican prewar isolationists met defeat at the polls in 1942 and 1944.¹⁸³ But it should be kept in mind that Vandenberg

¹⁸³Edward A. Harris, "Confession Is Good For The Soul," New Republic, CXVI (January 20, 1947), 32. Harris said: "Vandenberg, it is known, was profoundly disturbed by the popular uprising, and a few days after the 1944 election closely 're-examined' his whole approach to the question

was not alone among those who, prior to 1941, had believed that American security depended upon a policy of retreat from internationalism. It is important to keep in mind that twenty-nine other Senators joined Vandenberg in voting against the arms embargo repeal in 1939, and as late as 1941, thirty-seven Senators still opposed further changes in the neutrality act. There were, in fact, Senators so opposed to intervention that President Roosevelt "was constantly careful to avoid what Tolstoy called 'the irrevocable act.'" ¹⁸⁴ Sherwood added: "The truth was that as the world situation became more desperately critical, . . . isolationist sentiment became even more strident in expression." ¹⁸⁵ But by 1943, Congress had passed the Fullbright and Connally Resolutions by large majorities. Polls revealed that a large majority of Americans favored this action.

Vandenberg's second alternative was to encourage a strong national defense in America and hope for a return to balance of power politics to avoid attacks on the Western Hemisphere. The idea behind this technique is of course

of One World." Also see Tom Connally, My Name Is Tom Connally (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1954), p. 269. He believed that Vandenberg's "reversal was a sort of 'here is where I get on the bandwagon before it turns the corner and leaves me behind.'"

¹⁸⁴Robert E. Sherwood, Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History (New York: Harper & Bros., 1948), p. 132.

¹⁸⁵Ibid., pp. 382-83.

that no single state shall attain a preponderance of power. Many Americans had long relied upon this concept as a defensive measure, hoping that European nations would be more or less equal in strength and would be so busy defending themselves from each other that they would forget the Western Hemisphere. America became concerned when Germany challenged this balance of power in 1918 and again in 1939. Vandenberg's postwar speaking showed that he was well aware that this balance could no longer exist even with the defeat of Germany. His expressed concern for the actions of the Soviets indicates his knowledge that Russia would come out of the war as the strongest European power. "The basic conditions for the use of the balance of power technique no longer existed," state Reitzel, Kaplan and Coblenz. "The most that the non-Communist states could aspire to was to seek a massive global equilibrium of power."¹⁸⁶ This same reasoning led Vandenberg to his third alternative--that of international collective security.

It is possible that in electing collective security, Vandenberg had in mind a balance of power in a new form. Perhaps, he envisioned an organization in which peace-loving nations could be aligned against an aggressor. The rhetoric of the United Nations speech shows that he was already beginning to doubt the feasibility of retaining war-time

¹⁸⁶Reitzel, Kaplan and Coblenz, op. cit., p. 329.

unanimity and thus keeping the peace. He accepted an organization based on this principle only because it was that or nothing. But he saw in that organization the possibility of the balance of power concept maintained to some extent by a different method. The new approach did not entail a system in which the United States would try to encourage two rival camps and then throw its weight in one direction or the other in an attempt to dominate world politics, but an organization in which the great majority of opinion would be aligned against any country that would break the peace. For this reason, he told his countrymen on June 29, 1945: "I have signed the Charter with no illusions regarding its imperfections . . . but with no doubts that it proposes an experiment which must be bravely undertaken in behalf of peace."¹⁸⁷

While Vandenberg's speeches hint that he would have preferred an organization founded on a broader base than one in which the power was channeled into the hands of the five big powers, there is every evidence that he would have vigorously opposed any attempt to make the new organization for collective security into a world government with the ability to pass laws directly affecting the individual. He made it quite clear that America must not relinquish any "sovereignty," and that he would oppose any attempt to create

¹⁸⁷Record, 79th Cong., 1st Sess., 1945, XCI, Part 5, 6982.

a "super" state. Even if one admits that the world can not have world peace without world government, it would be difficult to criticize Senator Vandenberg for not advocating it in 1945. At best, one can say that Vandenberg should have given some recognition to the fact that a stronger organization than the United Nations was needed to preserve the peace. Such an organization, however, might have been an ultimate objective, but at that moment, the world faced complex problems which could not wait for the ideal plan. If Vandenberg had insisted upon a far-reaching scheme, he would have run the risk of final rejection both at home and abroad. His own thinking, furthermore, had emerged from the shadow of isolationism, but the traditional aspects of nationalism were still part of his objectives. He was not alone in this respect.¹⁸⁸

The Changing Pattern of Political Leadership

The role of the party leader.--Once convinced that America had a new role to play in world affairs, Vandenberg assumed the task of placing his party on record for the new order that was in the making. He thought it important that the country know that the Republican party would not block plans for a postwar organization as it had succeeded in doing in 1918. Again, he found himself in the role of

¹⁸⁸Welles, op. cit., p. 46.

mediator. One element of the party, led by Wendell Willkie, proposed postwar organization that hinted at sovereignty infringements on member nations. Another camp, led by the prewar isolationists, hinted at a return to the position of the 1930's. Vandenberg proposed a middle course as a means of bringing these two groups together, hence, his support for collective security without a loss of sovereignty. Once he accomplished that task at the Mackinac planning conference with Republican leaders, he went before the Senate with party backing for the new position on collective security.

Role of the opposition party.--Vandenberg also put the administration on guard that if it expected Congressional approval for postwar plans, then it must work through the Republican leadership in planning the new organization. Vandenberg made himself available by announcing early support for the new concept of collective security. He was a logical choice for the administration. He represented the isolationist element, but at the same time, had never overtly attacked the character and integrity of the administration as had many of the isolationists. It was thus easy to bring him into the planning stages of postwar organization. Once in a position of leadership as a member of the Committee of Eight and a delegate to the San Francisco Conference, he supported positions which he believed his party could accept. This, perhaps, explains his constant

insistence that Congress be kept informed on plans for the role of the United States after the war. He was seeking a basis of trust.

The bipartisan leader.--By the end of the period, Vandenberg was emerging as the bipartisan leader. He had begun to broaden his role from that of mediator between elements within his party to that of mediator between the two parties. He made overt attempts to secure the respect of the opposition as well as the Republicans. He viewed his job in terms of offering a united front for America and the world. The task of finding a position that both parties could agree upon became paramount to him. For that reason, he pressed Roosevelt for a statement on America's plans for the postwar world before the President went to Yalta. Vandenberg was afraid that commitments would be made that would be difficult to defend. He wanted collective security, but at the same time, he did not wish to be in the position of having to accept agreements that were not a part of his value system.

The United Nations statesman.--His role at San Francisco was particularly important. As a respected isolationist, he was in a position to tell the Senate that America had not been sold down the river; certainly, few would have suspected Vandenberg of taking extreme positions. For the internationalists who expected more, his was the logical voice to report that it was "this or nothing."

When he stood in the Senate and not only accepted the Charter, but placed high praise on the Democrat leaders who had helped in writing the document, he was, in his mind, telling the world that there were no partisan differences on this project. He had begun to rise above party to the stature of the true statesman.

CHAPTER V

THE RHETORIC OF CONTAINMENT POLICIES

Introduction

In the nineteenth century, Alexis de Tocqueville observed that Russia and the United States were "marked by the will of heaven to sway the destinies of half the globe."¹ His historic prophecy was to reach full realization a century later. It came to pass in the form of a "cold war" which ironically followed in the wake of a signed pledge by these two great powers in which they agreed to work together to keep the peace as they had done in defeating the Axis powers during World War II. Mankind's hope, in fact, of avoiding World War III was largely based on the plan agreed upon at San Francisco in 1945 in which the great powers of the world were to cooperate in the United Nations not only to keep the peace, but to maintain justice in international relations.

Senator Arthur Vandenberg helped to write the San Francisco document. He further urged the Senate of the

¹Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, I (2d ed. rev.; New York: A. A. Knopf, 1945), 434.

United States to ratify it on the rationale that it was the world's best hope for peace. When it became evident that the Charter's foundation--the unanimity of the great powers--had been shattered by a rift over postwar problems, the Michigan Senator was among the first of American statesmen to call for a reinterpretation of Soviet peace aims. What followed was a slow process by which the United States gradually shifted its emphasis away from the United Nations as its hope for peace and security and turned, instead, to bilateral policies and regional agreements to meet the Soviet expansionist policies.

This chapter examines Vandenberg's speeches during the period in which his thinking shifted from faith in the United Nations as the best protectorate of American interest to that of cooperative policies designed to contain the Soviet Union. Four of his speeches serve to represent his attitudes on America's role in world affairs between 1946 and 1949. These four speeches, selected for report and interpretation, are as follows:

1. The Address on the First United Nations General Assembly Meeting. This speech, often entitled "What is Russia Up to Now?" was given in the United States Senate on February 17, 1946.
2. The Address on Postwar American Foreign Policy. This speech was presented before the Cleveland Forum on January 11, 1947. The Michigan Senator expressed his attitudes on various aspects of American foreign policy.
3. The Address on the Marshall Plan. Senator Vandenberg presented this speech to the United

States Senate on March 1, 1948, in support of the European Recovery Program.

4. The Address on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In one of his last major speeches before the Senate, Vandenberg supported the North Atlantic Treaty Organization on July 6, 1949.

As in the two preceding chapters, the pattern of criticism consists of an examination of the context in which each speech was given, followed by a report and an interpretation of the speech. The chapter concludes with a summary of Vandenberg's defense of containment, developed and expressed between 1946 and 1949.

The Address on the First United Nations General Assembly Meeting

The smoke had barely cleared from the dropping of the atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki when the "cold war" broke out around the diplomatic tables. The American people had faith in the ability of the United Nations to preserve the peace; they counted on the continuation of the war-time harmony of the Big Five. Even before the completion of the Charter, however, disputes over European boundaries and Russia's attitude toward Poland made it evident that unity among the great powers was not certain. Few Americans in government positions through the year of 1945 openly questioned the Soviet Union's conduct. On February 16, 1946, Senator Vandenberg voiced the opinion that it was time for the United States to explore possible

new directions for American relations with the Soviet Union.² For a proper understanding of that speech, it is first necessary to examine the context of events.

Context of the Speech

Postwar America.--The United States emerged from World War II with a total economic and political power exceeding that of any other nation. The country's mobilized military strength was second to none. The country's war-time economic capacity defied the Marxian theory that capitalism would collapse under the necessity of enormous productive demands. In addition, the United States had taken steps through its alignment with numerous political organizations to exert political influence on the rest of the world.

America faced the postwar years with hopes for economic prosperity at home and peace and security in their relations with the rest of the world. "Its fundamental economic structure," notes Dulles, "appeared to be more stable than ever before."³ By 1946, national income had risen to its highest peak, and unemployment was at the lowest in any peace-time year. Total production was fifty percent higher than in any year before World War II. The

²U. S. Congressional Record, 79th Cong., 2d Sess., 1946, XCII, Part 2, 1692. Hereinafter referred to as Record.

³Foster Rhea Dulles, America's Rise to World Power, 1898 to 1954 (New York: Harper & Bros., 1954), p. 222.

country appeared ready to face any economic demands that the future might place upon it; a postwar depression seemed to have been averted.

As the war ended, there was every evidence that America would give the United Nations experiment its wholehearted endorsement. Senate hearings and debate over the Charter proved to be only a formality. The Senate approved the Charter by a vote of 89 to 2 on July 28, 1945.⁴ The American people placed great faith in the harmonious operation of the new political system. The Second World War had ended the debate on whether America should isolate herself from the rest of the world. The new order called for constant cooperation through a world organization.

Few Americans probably realized the responsibilities which this new international role involved. The public desire for a peaceful world was matched by an equally strong desire to demobilize the armed forces, reconvert industry to its peace-time role, and settle the problems of inflation and housing shortage. The military responded to this frame of mind by cutting the size of the army from eight million to two million between the middle of 1945 and July, 1946; the navy from three million to one and one-half million; and the air force from 218 combat air groups in 1945 to only

⁴Arthur H. Vandenberg, Jr. (ed.), The Private Papers of Senator Vandenberg (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1952), p. 218. Hereinafter referred to as Papers.

two by 1947.⁵ In accepting the United Nations, the American people optimistically looked to this agency to keep the peace, but there were warnings. Secretary of the Navy Forrestal insisted that the "means to wage war must be in the hands of those who hate war."⁶ But the public continued to demand a release from war-time controls. The result was that "a real disparity became apparent between the intentions of the United States and its capability in respect to the military element of national power."⁷

Americans, on the other hand, assumed the new role as a world power against a background of specific objectives. The American dream of a peaceful world was one in which each nation governed itself free from external restraints, but at the same time was willing to settle its disputes with other nations in a peaceful manner. The machinery of the new international organization must be based on a system of sovereign states organized for the purpose of promoting peace and justice in the world. The new world organization must not interfere with a nation's right to regional defense including such cherished policies as the Monroe Doctrine. The country looked to programs which encouraged international

⁵William Reitzel, Morton A. Kaplan, and Constance G. Coblenz, United States Foreign Policy, 1945-1955 (Washington, D. C.: The Brookings Institution, 1956), p. 49.

⁶Walter Millis (ed.), Forrestal Diaries (New York: The Viking Press, 1951), p. 97.

⁷Reitzel, Kaplan, and Coblenz, op. cit., p. 56.

trade, exchange stability, and relief programs that would help war-devastated peoples. On the other hand, Americans expected each country to choose its own political and economic destiny without the interference of other countries. While Americans as a whole probably had little knowledge of the sacrifices ahead of them to achieve these objectives, most subscribed to international programs as means to that end.

Shifting attitudes toward the Soviet Union.--It is difficult to ascertain the exact time at which the American people began to doubt the sincerity of the Soviet Union. Even with the knowledge that two antagonistic political philosophies existed between the governments in Washington and Moscow, the assumption was held that the war-time alliance would continue after the defeat of the common enemy. "A will for peace on the part of every great power," states Dulles, "was taken for granted, once the aggressor nations were shorn of their strength."⁸ Optimism thus filled the air as war ended in victory, and the Charter of the United Nations was formulated at San Francisco. "It was in this hopeful spirit that they [American people]," notes Dulles, "were at long last prepared to reject isolationism and accept the obligations and responsibilities of collective security."⁹

⁸Foster Rhea Dulles, op. cit., p. 219.

⁹Ibid., p. 220.

Informed opinion including certain administrative officials, however, did not share the optimism of the public. America's ambassador to Moscow, Averill Harriman, told Secretary of the Navy Forrestal before the San Francisco Conference opened in April of 1945, that the "outward thrust of Communism" might be "as vigorous and dangerous as Fascism or Nazism."¹⁰ The Acting Secretary of State, Joseph C. Grew, noted in the midst of the United Nations meeting that "as a war to end war, the war will have been futile . . . for the . . . Soviet Union . . . will constitute in the future as grave a danger to us as did the Axis."¹¹ Historians note, in fact, that many in administration quarters observed the Soviet Union throughout the war "with suspicion," and that events in the year of 1945 created grave doubts about the continued success of great power unity.¹² Even Roosevelt at the time of his death had begun to form certain disillusionments about Soviet objectives.¹³ But such sentiments were rarely voiced to the public. "The American people," says Dulles, "still placed their faith in the new order that they believed was in the making."¹⁴

¹⁰ Millis, op. cit., p. 47.

¹¹ Joseph C. Grew, Turbulent Era, II (2 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1952), p. 1445.

¹² Reitzel, Kaplan and Coblenz, op. cit., p. 84.

¹³ Julius W. Pratt, A History of United States Foreign Policy (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955), p. 710.

¹⁴ Foster Rhea Dulles, op. cit., p. 220.

The shattering of American hopes for a peaceful world was a gradual process. Optimism still surrounded the meetings of the Big Three at the Potsdam Conference in the summer of 1945.¹⁵ The American people were so absorbed, in fact, with the problems of demobilization that many failed to detect the "rifts" which unfolded at the meetings of the Council of Foreign Ministers in London from September to October, 1945, and in Moscow in December of 1945, and the first meeting of the General Assembly in London in January and February of 1946.

Vandenberg's reaction to the Soviet threat.--Senator Vandenberg's experiences with the Russians at San Francisco convinced him that the road ahead was a rugged one. He became increasingly concerned over Russia's attitude toward Poland. In a letter to Joseph C. Grew, Acting Secretary of State, in July, 1945, he expressed concern that the Yalta agreement for "free elections" in Poland might be ignored by Russia, thus denying Poland "the final opportunity of untrammelled self-determination."¹⁶

The Senator also became convinced that the United States must not immediately share its atomic secrets with its war Allies. He concluded that he favored the sharing of atomic secrets with other countries, but he was a firm

¹⁵Ibid., p. 223.

¹⁶Record, 79th Cong., 1st Sess., 1945, XCI, Part 6, 7743.

believer that such a policy must be preceded by a world-wide inspection and control system.¹⁷ A squabble developed in November of 1945 between Vandenberg and Secretary of State Byrnes when Congress was informed of an agreement which the administration had reached with Great Britain and Canada in regard to the use of atomic energy.¹⁸ Vandenberg objected to the by-passing of Congress on the matter. The explosion really hit in December when a message reached Washington that Byrnes, Prime Minister Bevin and Prime Minister Molotov had reached an agreement for a proposed United Nations Atomic Energy Control Commission.¹⁹

The communique implied that information would first be shared before adequate safeguards and inspection systems had been provided to protect against those who violated the agreements. In protest, Vandenberg threatened to resign as a delegate to the first meeting of the General Assembly. But he changed his mind after the President assured him that "each stage of disclosure would be accompanied by adequate arrangements for security,"²⁰ and after Byrnes stated that any final decision reached on atomic energy would be submitted to Congress for approval.²¹

¹⁷Papers, p. 234.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 226.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 232.

²⁰Ibid., p. 234.

²¹Ibid., p. 235.

The London meeting.--The Senator's growing distrust of the Russians was increased by events at the first session of the General Assembly to which Vandenberg was a delegate in January, 1945. His official assignment was to represent the United States on the Assembly's Administrative and Budgetary Committee.²² But he was included in American discussions regarding Russia's increasingly obstructive policies over Poland, Iran, Hungary and other liberated countries in addition to her attitudes toward plans for disarmament and control of atomic energy.

It is not necessary here to review the many controversies which developed over these issues. Historians have noted the problems.²³ It will suffice to point out that Senator Vandenberg was among the American officials to whom it became obvious that the Soviet Union was more interested in selfish gain than in promoting the cause of world peace. He was further convinced that the immediate outcome of the rift seemed to show an advantage for the Soviet Union. While the American delegates pursued the agreements made at Yalta, the Soviet Union used every opportunity to gain political advantages for itself. Vandenberg decided that

²²Ibid., p. 238.

²³Foster Rhea Dulles, op. cit., p. 229. He notes: "The hoped-for cordiality in Soviet-American relations, as the key to international cooperation, had given away to a grim contest that was at first centered on German policy, and then spread gradually to other parts of the world."

appeasement must end.²⁴ In his mind, the time had come for America to "get tough" with Russia.

Report of the Speech

Purposes of the speech.--The Michigan Senator made public his new attitude toward the Soviet Union in an address before the United States Senate in February of 1946.²⁵ The speech was given as a report of his trip to the General Assembly of the United Nations Organization in London. It was in essence a summary of Vandenberg's impressions of the meeting followed by an expression of what he thought America's attitude toward Russia should be in foreign affairs.

Both before and after Pearl Harbor, Senator Vandenberg's basic interest for his country was characterized by the concept of security. He looked for this security before December 7, 1941, in Western Hemisphere defense. As early as 1943, he had broadened his aim to international collective security. His speaking in support of the United Nations Charter revealed that he hoped that organization would provide the type of collective security which he thought his country needed. He expressed the same hope in the speech considered here.

This speech, however, registered Vandenberg's concern about various actions taken by Russia. The attitudes of the

²⁴Papers, p. 245.

²⁵Record, 79th Cong., 2d Sess., 1946, XCII, Part 2, 1692.

Russians in regard to the smaller powers continued to be of great concern to him. He had questioned her behavior in this regard on a limited scale in his famous January 10, 1945, address. He excused it then on the grounds that Russia feared a rearmed Germany. The Russians had promised to leave Manchuria but were still there, and that excuse had been removed. Further, they refused to get out of Iran, thus breaking a Big Three agreement for evacuation; they rejected all attempts to unify Germany; they refused to withdraw from Austria; and they continued to dominate Poland and other neighboring countries. Vandenberg sought an answer to this perplexing problem as he asked, "What is Russia up to now?"

The Senator's speech divides into two main parts. The first section deals with his analysis of the United Nations meeting including its credits and its debits. The second section treats the tough problem of Soviet-American relations, followed by the Senator's recommendations on how best to meet the new threat to American security.

Introduction.--Vandenberg introduced the speech by praising the work of Senator Connally at the conference. It was significant to note, however, that no compliments were showered on the leadership of Secretary Byrnes. This was in direct contrast to his report following the San Francisco Conference. In that instance, he praised the work of all American representatives. For the discerning

listener, this failure to mention Byrnes may have been an indication that a criticism of the administration's foreign policy was in the offing.

The positive achievements of the first meeting.--The Senator first turned to the task of reporting the positive accomplishments of the meeting. He obviously hoped to ward off the slowly encroaching American attitude that the United Nations was not capable of meeting the great tasks which it had assumed. "I can share your anxieties over some of the disturbing trends," admitted Vandenberg, "but I cannot--and I do not--share the melancholy pessimism. . . ."26 The speaker proceeded in his efforts to restore faith in those for whom San Francisco had become a disappointment.

In the first place, he argued that the United Nations "must be made to succeed if we are to avoid unspeakable catastrophe in this atomic age," adding that if this organization has problems "any more ambitious project would obviously multiply these obstacles."27 For those who would despair of ultimate cooperation, he turned to a reminder of the explosions at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He was, in effect, warning his countrymen that these technological developments not only made world organization desirable but also mandatory. For those who were ready to abandon the United Nations, he

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid., p. 1693.

presented the blunt reality that the atomic bomb was in the world to stay. The choice was clear. Either the United States must assume the task of working through the only existing instrument at hand, or face the possibility of ultimate annihilation of the world's civilization. His failure to present extensive elaboration on this point might indicate his awareness that Americans were tired of war and were still optimistically hoping that the United Nations would prevent World War III.

This point carried a second implicit warning to Americans. The Senator was telling his countrymen that they must learn to live with people whom they do not especially like. Aware that the war-time image of the Soviet Union as a heroic nation fighting for peace was fading in the light of world realities, the Michigan Senator hoped to ward off the oncoming concept of Russia as a power with whom war was inevitable. He did not deny that there were ideological differences between the two powers. But he did challenge the belief that the world was not big enough for people with different views and governments with varying economic and political systems. A knowledge of those differences made it imperative that the United States avail itself of the Charter in an effort to make the necessary adjustments for peace.

The Senator then directed attention to the accomplishments of the General Assembly at its first meeting. He first

noted certain organizational decisions, including an agreement on a permanent site and a plan for financing the organization. "On January 10, we had a scrap of paper," said the Senator. "In 37 days we gave it life." He recalled for his audience the disagreements which even those decisions provoked, but his subtle reminder to his countrymen was that America was not afraid of differing points of view. "There was a healthy rivalry,"²⁸ said Vandenberg.

Vandenberg's enumeration of the actions of the Assembly makes it obvious that the Senator thought it offered the best hope for maintenance of international peace. He called attention to the fact that the Assembly had initiated studies to find the best means of international control of atomic energy, had offered a resolution encouraging self-government for all peoples, had encouraged a free press at all General Assembly sessions, and had refused to sanction the involuntary repatriation of war refugees. While admitting that "action must follow words," the Senator made it clear, however, that even such resolutions were steps toward peace. He feared that America might not notice such contributions toward peace in its concern over the disagreements in the Security Council. Such moves by the General Assembly, he thought, organized "the conscience of the world against any aggressor who defies these precepts."²⁹

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

The next phase of Vandenberg's report on the London meeting was undoubtedly painful. Fully aware of the worldwide attention that the Security Council had been attracting, he quickly admitted that the Council had failed to take action on the major controversies brought before it. These involved the question of protest over the presence of Soviet troops in Iran, and British troops in Greece, Indonesia, Lebanon and Syria.

The fact that the Council left the controversies "to further negotiations between the nations in direct concern,"³⁰ was of no alarm to the Senator. The significant aspect of the problem was that each measure had a "full hearing." It should be recalled that from the moment of its inception, Senator Vandenberg had regarded the "open hearing" aspect of the organization as its greatest potential contribution toward world peace. He used it now to defend the results of the Council meeting. He geared his argument to the traditional values which Americans placed on the existence of a conference table. There was also an appeal to the American belief that each controversy had a right to its day in court. "Here, words which would have been fighting words in other days," said the Senator, "were the substitutes for guns and swords. . . . It was open diplomacy openly arrived at." He asserted:

³⁰Ibid.

But here the contestants were not meeting on a battlefield. They were meeting at the council table, in the white light of full publicity, in the presence of their peers, under searching eyes of a watching world and under the impulse of a solemn pledge to keep the peace. . . . Here the frankest imaginable discussions were taking place. . . . Here the contestants shook hands at the termination of the jousts. . . . It was an epoch in the hopes of humankind. Let us put that on the credit ledger.³¹

The Senator again resorted to "turning the tables" against those who looked upon the Council's failure to act as an indication of its inadequacy to cope with the situation. What was important, asserted the Senator, was not that each nation in the controversy be subjected to sanctions, but that the Council air the difficulty before the world. In this manner, implied Vandenberg, the democratic process had been advanced. What was significant was that the Council set in motion all of the possibilities short of direct action. Each nation, in addition, shared in the process and "these negotiations will proceed in the presence of the necessity for an ultimate accounting not only to the Security Council but also to the critical opinions of mankind."³² With pride he then pointed to the fact that Russia was renegotiating with Iran over the presence of Russian troops on the latter's territory. He hoped this would relax the growing concern in America over the pressure which the Soviet Union had been

³¹Ibid., pp. 1693-94.

³²Ibid., p. 1694.

bringing to bear on Iran. He put this accomplishment on the "credit ledger."

The failures of the first meeting.--Vandenberg thus used the first division of his speech to assure the world that the United States still looked to the United Nations as the best hope for peace. He was now ready to recognize what he considered the greatest stumbling block to the attainment of that goal--the expansionist activities of the Soviet Union. For the transition between the two divisions, he turned to an incident in the Security Council which showed both the value of the United Nations and its greatest limitation.

One of the early appeals to the Security Council came from Lebanon and Syria, who called for the withdrawal of French and British troops from their borders. Vandenberg related in detail how both Britain and France agreed to honor this request, the fact that the American delegation offered a resolution "asserting the Council's belief that there should be no unwanted troops on foreign soil in peacetime, and remanding the case to the parties directly concerned for direct negotiation and settlement,"³³ and finally how the Soviet Union moved to block the action by offering offensive amendments to Britain and France. He said:

. . . Vishinsky intervened. He wanted no such easy peace. He was not satisfied, he said, thus to let the matter rest. Long and bitterly he indicted the

³³Ibid.

action of France particularly in Lebanon and Syria. Instead of being closed, the incident blazed into two more days of intense and futile debate. He offered amendments to the American resolution which both France and Britain--and most of the council--interpreted as stinging and unwarranted rebukes.³⁴

Vandenberg explained that Russia's amendment lost, followed by a vote in which the American proposal gained the required seven affirmative votes. But there was a catch, Russia's negative vote vetoed the proposal. But in the Senator's mind, right triumphed because both England and France announced that they would honor the terms of the resolution.

The Michigan Senator was both pleased and dejected by this incident. "I confess," said the Senator, "that I was proud of Western democracy that night." He called it the "triumph of an ideal,"³⁵ for Lebanon and Syria had come before the great powers of the world with their case and won a victory. Such proceedings substantiated Vandenberg's faith in the future of the United Nations. But the story had a dark side. Why had the Soviet delegate who was supposed to be supporting great power unity seemed "less interested in peace at this point that he was in friction?" The Senator used this episode as a prime example of his major question, "What is Russia up to now?" This question, implied Vandenberg, is not academic, but "it is, of course,

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

the supreme conundrum of our time." An enumeration followed:

We ask it in Manchuria. We ask it in Eastern Europe and the Dardanelles. We ask it in Italy. . . . We ask it in Iran. We ask it in Tripolitania. We ask it in the Baltic and the Balkans. We ask it in Poland. We ask it in Canada. We ask it in Japan. We ask it sometimes even in connection with events in our own United States. "What is Russia up to now?"³⁶

Vandenberg's recommendations to meet the threat.--The Senator had forcefully laid the issue before the American people. The time had come, according to Vandenberg, to find an answer to this baffling question. He did not claim to have the answer, but he suggested the path down which America must travel in order to meet the issue.

Vandenberg, first, recognized the ideological differences between the two powers. He was obviously aware that some people had reached the point where they thought these differences made it impossible for the two countries to work together. This position was rejected by the Senator. He held to the hope that the United Nations still offered the best hope for peace. The inevitability of conflict theory was not accepted.

Neither would the Senator agree that the United States must drastically alter her postwar objectives in order to deal with the Soviet Union. What was really needed, asserted Vandenberg, was for America to take a firm stand in all her

³⁶Ibid.

dealings with Russia. "I assert my own belief," said Vandenberg, "that we can live together in reasonable harmony if the United States speaks as plainly upon all occasions as Russia does."³⁷ He offered, in effect, a firmness with patience policy. The chief problem seemed to lie, he thought, in the fact that Americans were afraid to "get tough" with Russia out of fear that they would endanger the peace. Such "vacillation" said Vandenberg would breed inevitable conflict.

While he advocated a "get-tough" policy, Vandenberg obviously did not want to leave the impression that he was for creating an anti-Soviet bloc. He wanted the American people to realize that he believed there is room in the world for both the Soviet Union and the United States. So determined, in fact, that he must not leave the impression that he was proposing to shut the door on negotiations, the Senator repeated his January 10, 1945, promise to help create a treaty of mutual defense to ward off possible future Axis aggression. He tried to avoid giving the Soviets further ground to intensify their aggressive pursuits. He did warn, nevertheless, that Russia would cooperate in the United Nations only if America came forth as aggressively for the principles for which she negotiated, as did the Soviet Union.

³⁷Ibid., p. 1695.

Closely akin to the warning that America must set a limit on "compromise" was the call he made for Americans to return to the "moral leadership which we have too frequently allowed to lapse," adding that the United States must "act in its traditional character for liberty and justice, and not to lapse, as I fear we may have done on some occasions."³⁸ The Senator did not bother to specify the incidents. He could have been referring to certain decisions made at Yalta, or to the fact that the United States had not made a loud protest over Russia's unilateral action in Iran, Manchuria and Eastern Europe. It is unlikely he was referring to the failure to join in a "quarantine" of European aggressors in the late 1930's. His explicit reference, however, indicated that he probably had in mind all the recent Soviet obstructive policies to which America had not given unrelenting opposition. In any event, he wanted America to continue her long history of speaking up for the advancement of civil liberties, belief in self-governments, and respect for law and justice. It is possible that he meant to infer that if America didn't speak up for these ideals at the conference table, the time would soon come when she would have to fight for them in World War III. For the moment, at least, he was content to insist that America must throw her influence on the side of decency and humanity.

³⁸Ibid.

As noted in his speech in defense of the Charter, he seemed to think that the great strength of the United Nations as an instrument in keeping the peace lay in its moral influence rather than in the unity of the Big-Five war powers. He wanted the world to know that America could not sanction actions opposed to America's declarations of moral purpose. He was thus concerned that "in this first meeting of the United Nations I missed the uplifting and sustaining zeal for a great, crusading, moral cause which seemed to imbue the earlier Charter sessions at San Francisco."³⁹ He was serving notice that America had not forgotten the fundamental principles espoused there.

His plea for a return to morality was also embedded in his assertion that he found a tendency at the London meeting among some nations "to use the United Nations as a self-serving tribune rather than as a tribunal."⁴⁰ Names were not called, but it was obvious that he was thinking primarily of the Soviet Union. This was his own implied answer to the question, "What is Russia up to now?" His example of the case involving Lebanon and Syria clearly indicated the Soviet techniques of creating dissention by arguing issues not pertinent with the hope of causing a breakdown in negotiations. He might have added that the

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

Soviets' purpose was to advance the communist world conquest. But he was content to let his audience draw their own conclusions. He did call, however, for a firm hand in dealing with the Russians which would not sacrifice morality for unanimity.

Conclusion.--"We need but one rule," said the Senator. "What is right? Where is Justice? There let America take her stand."⁴¹ That "stand" meant a strong assertion of American ideals. The speech thus ended on the same note with which it began. He simply repeated his plea for a continued trust in the United Nations. This new "frankness," he contended, in American negotiations "does not detract for an instant from the notably loyal and richly helpful record which the United States has made to the foundations of the United Nations." For this reason, in spite of the many problems in American-Soviet relations, he insisted "that the credits utterly preponderate with a heavy, a significant, a wholesome and an encouraging balance."⁴²

Interpretation of the Speech

The essence of Vandenberg's report on the General Assembly meeting was simply that the organization made progress at its first meeting. Still, one can logically wonder why

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid.

Vandenberg claimed so much for a conference which did little more than pass resolutions. It is easy to see that a vote of confidence did not alleviate the hunger of millions of peoples, and neither did an expression of sympathy for war refugees bring them any closer to freedom. Vandenberg, in fact, may have evaded the real issue on these matters by failing to disclose the fact that Big Five disagreement on practically every facet of these problems made any real progress toward solutions an impossibility. To have exposed the many disagreements unnecessarily, however, would have defeated his objective of building confidence in the organization. It can be argued that it would have been better for the Senator to have made a frank and candid examination of the limits and capacities of the United Nations. For such a chore, the Senator was well qualified. But such frankness in his speech might have simply earned him the label of "isolationist" again and greatly have weakened his future contributions to world peace.

The "get-tough" policy.--Again with hindsight of several years to direct one's thinking, hardly anyone would quarrel with Vandenberg's thesis that America in 1946 should be firm in her dealings with the Communists. There was, of course, the implication in this argument that the Soviet Union's behavior was not according to American standards, and he called for a firm stand to bring her to a more favorable position. What he presented was a middle course between those

who would force a complete showdown with Russia on the grounds that she was seeking world domination, and those who would play a "soft" role on the theory that Russia's actions were a result of the fears she possessed over the atom bomb in American hands. An investigation of Vandenberg's speech shows that he thought each such dispute should be met on its own merit.

Foreign policy implications.--The speech also revealed several directions for American foreign policy. In the first place, it was an indirect criticism of the administration's policy toward the Russians. He was calling on Secretary Byrnes to recognize the realities of life; America could not continue giving a favorable interpretation to Soviet actions as had been the case during World War II. While he did not become specific, it was obvious that he had in mind such Soviet acts as the broken Yalta promise not to interfere with free elections in Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Rumania. He thought that it was time for the State Department to recognize such acts as definite expansionist policies by the Soviet Union. He wanted the United States to lift its voice against Russia in any action in which international agreements had been broken. He insisted that the United States should sustain "its own purposes and its ideals upon all occasions as Russia does."⁴³

⁴³Ibid.

A second implication was a direct warning to the American people that there must be a line beyond which the United States would not go in compromising with the Russians. Fully aware that "the American public was not yet--in 1945-46--very much aroused"⁴⁴ over the American-Soviet relations, the Senator hoped to awaken the country to this new threat. He gave a strong warning that American freedom and security were being jeopardized by a new appeasement. The solution he offered to the problem was not simply to quit dealing with the Russians, but instead, he indirectly called upon America to tell the world what she stood for and implement that announcement with action. He thought that American frankness would "win Soviet respect and Soviet trust."⁴⁵ The words "get tough" were never used in the speech, but the implication was clear.

He admitted that during the war America could afford, perhaps, to give in to Soviet demands, but added that "we cannot cross it (the line) again."⁴⁶ He did not elaborate. He could have illustrated Russia's imperialistic intentions by pointing to the many broken promises which were made at Yalta and Potsdam. He could have cited numerous examples that would have indicated that Russia was on a mission of

⁴⁴Foster Rhea Dulles, op. cit., p. 227.

⁴⁵Record, 79th Cong., 2d Sess., 1946, XCII, Part 2, 1695.

⁴⁶Ibid.

world conquest. He could have pointed directly to the Lebanon-Syria situation as an example of Russia's refusal to settle except on her terms. He could have said, in fact, that democratic compromise works only when the nations involved are willing to use it for the security of all nations, but not when one or more of them seize it as a device to achieve territorial and political ambition for themselves. He could have said all this and more. But his purpose was to salvage the ideals of the United Nations if at all possible. Few could quarrel with his restraint. He simply asked that America be as aggressive in pursuit of her goals as was the Soviet Union.

Looking back, it was certainly to Vandenberg's credit that he was willing to stand before his countrymen in 1946 and ask them to face the realities of life. This is substantially what he did in the speech under consideration. While he voiced what men in an official governmental capacity had not been willing to do, there was nothing radical about his proposal. There was no implication that Vandenberg thought America should by-pass the United Nations in dealing with the Russians. Neither was there any mention of changing the structure of the United Nations including the veto power. There was, of course, no criticism of the Soviet Union for speaking her mind in the United Nations meetings. There was simply an assertion that in the future, America must make her policies concrete while at the same time drawing

upon her willingness to compromise within the limits of morality. The Senator hoped that the American people would buy a proposal which promised to seek American security within the framework of the United Nations while at the same time American diplomats stood up for American ideals. He asked for no more.

It must be admitted that even a middle ground position as proposed by Vandenberg was an improvement over the naivete with which American officials negotiated with the Russians at the end of World War II. The weakness of his proposal, however, was in his obvious failure to encourage the American people to back up this new policy with adequate defense measures. He failed to explain how an aggressive attitude by America was going to impress the Russians when demobilization was fast dissipating American power. The Senator, in fact, made no overt effort to stem the tide. Neither did he explain how moral commitments would be respected without the power to enforce them.

Vandenberg, perhaps, moved ahead of the people in calling on Americans to halt the expansionist demands of the Communists. But it was also necessary to warn Americans that facing up to the demands of the hour meant a new conception of their world responsibilities; i.e., a recognition that a workable cooperative effort in the United Nations and the full assumption of American moral attitudes toward the nations of the world demanded a strong American military force.

It is difficult to imagine that the Senator thought the safety of the United States could be insured in the face of a "get-tough" policy when the current rate of demobilization was fast destroying an adequate military defense. With this realization, it would appear that he owed it to his audience to emphasize that the world must be convinced of the military strength of the United States if America was to have a sound relationship with the rest of the world. He, perhaps, fell into line with others of his time. Historians note: "The greater number of those who advocated the "toughest" line showed no eagerness to pay the monetary and human costs of following their own advice," while emphasizing that "the United States was without the military capacity to pursue a bold diplomatic course."⁴⁷

Neither did Vandenberg's analysis come to grips with the whole problem. Even if one admits that a "tough policy" at diplomatic tables was desirable, and it was, Vandenberg should have recognized that the real problem was outside the council room in key areas in Europe and Asia. He pointed to those when he mentioned Yugoslavia and Manchuria. But he implied that a franker policy would solve the problem. The audience was never told just how this new diplomacy would deal with the political and economic techniques which the Soviets were using to infiltrate many countries. Did

⁴⁷Reitzel, Kaplan, and Coblenz, op. cit., p. 92.

his "get-tough" policy mean that he was ready for America to meet the economic challenge that Communist infiltration had presented? If so, this should have been made explicit.

In this speech, the Senator called for a new approach to American dealings with the Communists at the conference table. His policy fell short of a declaration of the "cold war" in that he did not propose a drastic change in safeguarding American security outside the council chambers of the United Nations. But he pointed to a new direction in calling for an end to American toleration of Russian expansion.

The Address on Postwar American Foreign Policy

The Republican Party captured control of both houses of Congress in the 1946 election. Senator Vandenberg, leading Republican advocate of the nonpartisan concept in foreign affairs and new chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, used the occasion of an address before the Cleveland Forum on January 11, 1947⁴⁸ to dispell any fears that the Republicans would attempt any serious changes in foreign policy. The significance of this pronouncement on foreign policy can best be grasped by examining the context of world events in which the speech was delivered.

The Context of the Speech

⁴⁸The text of the address is reprinted in the U. S. Congressional Record, 80th Cong., 1st Sess., 1947, XCIII, Part 1, pp. 272-44.

Reactions to Vandenberg's 1946 "firmness with patience" policy.--The American press rushed to support the "get tough" with the Russians policy which the Senator advocated in his February 27, 1946, address. The Detroit Free Press, for example, noted that the speech "left you with a sense of history going on here now." The Omaha World-Herald looked upon the speech as the "voice that America has been longing to hear."⁴⁹ Arthur Krock of The New York Times viewed the address as a serious condemnation of the administration's foreign policy and insisted that the speech was "much milder than its implications."⁵⁰ Time magazine went even further in saying that the speech was "a challenge"⁵¹ to Secretary of State Byrnes to adopt a firmer tone in American-Soviet relations.

Secretary Byrnes accepted Vandenberg's challenge in an address before the Overseas Press Club of New York City on February 28, 1946. "If we are going to be a great power," said Byrnes, "we must act as a great power, not only in order to insure our own security but in order to preserve the peace of the world." The Secretary reflected the "get-tough" spirit when he asserted that while the United States "had approved many adjustments in" Russia's favor, in the future

⁴⁹Papers, p. 250.

⁵⁰The New York Times, March 1, 1946, p. 20.

⁵¹"National Affairs," Time, XLVII (March 11, 1946), 19.

the United States "intends to defend the Charter," because such action is in "the interest of world peace and in the interest of our common and traditional friendship."⁵²

Byrnes also emphasized as Vandenberg had on the preceding day that the United States must continue to work through the United Nations for peace. But the Secretary went beyond Vandenberg in noting that more than a change in attitude toward Russia at the diplomatic table was necessary to keep the peace. He stressed that "we cannot allow our military establishment to be reduced below the point required to maintain a position commensurate with our responsibilities."⁵³

The new policy in operation.--The firmer tone advocated by Vandenberg and Byrnes was reflected for the remainder of 1946 in American negotiations with the Russians. The new attitude did not completely adhere to the position Sir Winston Churchill advanced at Fulton, Missouri in March of 1946. He asserted that the United States and Great Britain should join in an anti-Soviet alliance for survival. While clinging to the hope that great power unity could be preserved, the new middle position of American diplomats simply tried to preserve long-term American goals.

⁵²The New York Times, March 1, 1946, p. 10.

⁵³Ibid.

The first application of the new policy was at the Big Four Foreign Ministers meeting in Paris, April, 1946. Senators Connally and Vandenberg accompanied Byrnes. The purpose was to negotiate peace treaties for Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Italy. The firmness policy was especially applied when discussions began on the Italian peace treaty. Russia insisted that Yugoslavia should get Trieste, but the Western nations argued for the establishment of a trusteeship. Vandenberg gave a flat "No" reply when asked by Byrnes if he were prepared to trade Trieste for progress on other problems.⁵⁴ The conference reached a stalemate and recessed until June 15, 1946.

When the Foreign Ministers' Conference resumed in June, Vandenberg was again in attendance. He agreed with Connally and Byrnes that America should seek an early showdown with Russia. After several days of delaying action, the Russians sprang several agreements on the Western powers. The conference agreed on an internationalization plan for Trieste. Vandenberg prepared a "free territory" draft which Russia finally accepted.

Vandenberg's report to the Senate reflected the philosophy of the new firmness attitude in operation. While admitting that the United States did not have things all its way at Paris, he insisted that American ideals were never

⁵⁴Papers, p. 252.

sacrificed. The compromising spirit is noted in the remark: "Trieste should have gone to Italy," but at the same time, there must be no "breakdown in peace."⁵⁵ He also displayed a new confidence in Secretary Byrnes. "I do not know how any representatives of America could have been more faithful to the human rights and fundamental freedoms. . . ."⁵⁶

The new firmness policy was also carried into the Paris Peace Conference in July, 1946. Vandenberg and Connally went to the meeting in response to Byrnes' plea that they were needed to help "defend the United States against the criticism now being directed against us by the satellites as well as the Soviet Union."⁵⁷ The German treaty was the major issue of the conference. Byrnes suggested a four-power treaty similar to the one proposed by Vandenberg on January 10, 1945, as a move to calm Russian fears that the United States was returning to a policy of isolation.⁵⁸ When Russia rejected the proposal, the administration issued a statement on the German situation designed to clarify the American position. Accompanied by Vandenberg and Connally, the Secretary went to Stuttgart on September 6, 1946, to make the

⁵⁵Record, 79th Cong., 2d Sess., 1946, XCII, Part 7, 9062.

⁵⁶Record, 79th Cong., 2d Sess., 1946, XCII, Part 8, 10534.

⁵⁷James Byrnes, Speaking Frankly (New York: Harper & Bros., 1946), p. 140.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 171.

pronouncement that the United States would occupy Germany as long as was needed to keep her from becoming "a pawn or a partner in the military struggle for power between the East and the West."⁵⁹

A minority in the United States thought Byrnes was going too far in replying to the Russians. Secretary of Commerce Wallace charged that Byrnes' "get tough with Russia" policy was leading America into World War III. He contended that "the tougher we get, the tougher the Russians will get."⁶⁰ Speaking before an audience at Madison Square Garden in New York, he said: "We must not let the reactionary leadership of the Republican party . . . and the British balance of power manipulations determine whether and when the United States gets into war."⁶¹

Wallace's remarks confused diplomats at the Paris Peace Conference.⁶² Would the United States be expected to follow the "get-tough" policy of Byrnes, Vandenberg, and Connally, or the "go-easy" policy of Wallace? Reports reached Paris that Truman had approved the Wallace speech in advance

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 189.

⁶⁰The New York Times, September 13, 1946, p. 1.

⁶¹Ibid., September 13, 1945, p. 4.

⁶²John C. Campbell (ed.), The United States In World Affairs, 1945-1946 (New York: Harper & Bros., 1947, for the Council on Foreign Relations), p. 448.

of its presentation.⁶³ Vandenberg retorted: "We can only cooperate with one Secretary of State at a time."⁶⁴ Byrnes wired Truman: "The world today is in doubt not only as to American foreign policy, but as to your foreign policy," insisting "the administration itself is divided. . . . It cannot hope to convince the world that the American people have a foreign policy."⁶⁵ Truman called for Wallace's resignation. The press reaction indicated that the public stood firmly behind Byrnes' policy.⁶⁶ The Vandenberg "firmness with patience" policy passed its first major challenge on the home front.

The 1946 election.--Vandenberg decided that his campaign for re-election to the Senate in 1946 must not interfere with his diplomatic work. "I am not going to let my work for peace get bogged down into politics," he said. "Politics are important; but peace is indispensable."⁶⁷ Instead of returning to Michigan to campaign, therefore, Vandenberg accepted the administration's invitation to participate in the second meeting of the General Assembly in New York City on October 23, 1946.

⁶³Papers, p. 300. Truman had not read the speech, but had only heard portions which Wallace had read to him.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 301.

⁶⁵Byrnes, op. cit., p. 241.

⁶⁶The New York Times, September 21, 1946, p. 14.

⁶⁷Papers, p. 304.

Vandenberg set the tone for the elections. Politics stopped at the "water's edge." The returns sent the Republicans to Washington with landslide majorities in both houses of Congress. Senator Vandenberg shared in the victory with a vote majority of 567,674.⁶⁸ Some thought the Republican victory marked the end of bipartisan policy. Senator John Fullbright even called on President Truman to appoint "a Republican Secretary of State and then resign the Presidency to be succeeded by that appointee."⁶⁹ But Senator Vandenberg assured the country on December 18, 1946, that he would "cooperate in maintaining the united American foreign policy . . . in respect to the peace settlements in Europe, and in establishing collective security and justice through the United Nations." Such a policy, said Vandenberg, was "vital to our own national interest."⁷⁰

Vandenberg's new role.--Vandenberg emerged as one of the outstanding personalities of the Eightieth Congress. He served not only as Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations but also President Pro-Tempore of the Senate. His influence was felt early in the session when he rushed through the nomination of General George C. Marshall to replace Byrnes as Secretary of State. In spite of much

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 315.

⁶⁹The New York Times, November 7, 1946, p. 1.

⁷⁰Ibid., December 18, 1946, p. 3.

criticism of Marshall's work in China in 1945, Vandenberg secured the approval of the Foreign Relations Committee on the same day in which hearings were held.

He also moved early in the session to outline the foreign policy the world could expect from the new Republican Congress. He found the occasion at the January 11, 1947, 21st Annual Cleveland Council on World Affairs. Both Vandenberg and Byrnes addressed the closing session to an estimated audience of 12,000 spectators. Byrnes used the occasion to deliver his final foreign policy address as Secretary of State. "From the same platform Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg," said Time, "redefined U. S. foreign policy for the first time since becoming head of the U. S. Senate's Foreign Relations Committee."⁷¹

Report of the Speech

Vandenberg's Cleveland Forum address was delivered in the atmosphere of a world becoming increasingly aware of the "cold war." His major purpose was to establish the fact that America would not retreat from her "firmness with patience" role in the struggle. The speech differs from the Senator's other addresses in that he sought to advance no specific proposal. Vandenberg had in mind the whole world for his audience. He made it plain, of course, that

⁷¹"Report from the World," Time, XLIX (January 20, 1947), pp. 53-54.

he could not speak for the Senate. He further admitted that major party decisions are made by the President. He simply wanted to set forth the long-range goals for which the Republican leadership in the Senate would strive.

The speech divides into five parts. Each division is an expression of Vandenberg's attitude on selected phases of American foreign policy. In the first part, he pledged continued support for the bipartisan concept in foreign affairs. His objective was to define the concept along with an analysis of its use and abuse. He next assured the world that America would continue to support the concept of collective security. In the third part he revealed his attitudes toward the United Nations and its problems including the abuse of the veto provision in the Security Council, fiscal failures of the organization, and the breakdown of plans for disarmament. He used the fourth division to discuss America's role in the economic aspects of the world's peace. The fifth part, labelled "a few swift overtones,"⁷² consisted of a brief mention of the need for peace treaties, a program for Latin America, and problems in the Far East.

Introduction.--The introduction was apparently designed to stress both American faith in collective security and American bipartisanship in foreign affairs. He compared the

⁷²Record, 80th Cong., 1st Sess., 1947, XCIII, Part 1, 273.

meeting in Cleveland with the General Assembly of the United Nations. The "town meeting of the air," he asserted, gives the world hope that "reason is calculated to outweigh force."⁷³ His praise for retiring Secretary of State Byrnes and his successor, George Marshall, was evidence that he had no quarrel with the administration's foreign policy. Byrnes, he insisted, "has relentlessly defended American ideals in crises," while noting that Marshall "has always enjoyed the total confidence of Congress and of all his military and civilian colleagues at home and abroad."⁷⁴ Then he moved to his thesis sentence. "Tonight, according to your program, the United States replies to the world."⁷⁵

Bipartisan foreign policy.--The Senator first assured the world that he would continue to support a bipartisan foreign policy. "Partisan politics, for most of us," said Vandenberg, "stopped at the water's edge. I hope they stay stopped--for the sake of America--regardless of what party is in power." He emphasized that he had in mind a "permanent American foreign policy, in basic essentials, which serves all America and deserves the approval of all American-minded parties at all times." The goal of this policy, he said, was an America which could "enjoy abroad the enhanced authority

⁷³Ibid., p. 272.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid.

of a substantially united front." He was happy to report that "despite some distressing domestic interludes, it has born rich fruits."⁷⁶

While conceding that the President is the final judge on foreign policy, he hinted that the White House could expect criticism for any action not arrived at by bipartisan means. He criticized foreign policy decisions only in areas in which cooperative consultation with the opposition party had not been the case. When he referred to problems facing the country in regard to collective security and peace treaties, he was careful to leave the impression that the country faced these problems with solidarity. Having participated, for example, in the negotiations at the Paris Peace Conference he was aware that many aspects of the agreements were unsatisfactory. But he supported the administration in defending them. "These five treaties are far from satisfactory in many aspects," he said. "But they bear no remote resemblance to the greater dissatisfactions which we have prevented."⁷⁷ Collaboration with the opposition appeared to be the price that the President must pay for unity in foreign affairs. Vandenberg freely admitted, of course, that the President had the right to decide whether he would pay that price or not.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 273.

He also served notice on the administration that he was unhappy over the fact that the United States did not have a unified policy towards Latin America, Far East, and Middle East. In each instance, there had been no extensive bipartisan efforts. Plainly, Vandenberg was unhappy because he had not been consulted on these matters as he had been on the development of the United Nations and the European peace treaties. He was critical of the delay in calling the Latin American Conference for purposes of negotiating a Western Hemispheric defense pact under the Act of Chapultepec. His criticism extended to the China policy where he implied that America should stop trying to unify the country. This outspoken criticism of administration policy clearly indicates that he regarded a bipartisan approach as one in which statesmen could disagree. It is clear, however, that he expected consultation between the two major parties as foreign policy issues arose.

Collective security.--Having firmly established his hope that a bipartisan foreign policy would continue in the American government, the Senator next assured the world that America would continue to support collective security. "I assume the world chiefly wants to know," said the Senator, "whether America will persist in its attitude toward collective peace and security." His answer was very explicit. America would "do everything within its power to sustain organized international defense against aggression . . . through

international cooperation."⁷⁸ Apparently aware that some might fear a return to isolationism now that the Republicans were back in control of Congress, he gave assurance that the world need have no worry. "Pearl Harbor ended that debate," he said. "We learned that the oceans are no longer moats around our ramparts."⁷⁹ Replying to those abroad who were in doubt about America's future role and to any possible isolationist tendencies that might spring up in the new Congress, he added:

. . . then we contributed the crowning proof ourselves. In the climax of this tragedy we ourselves devised the atom bomb--an appalling tribute to our illimitable genius--an equally appalling prophecy of civilization's suicide. . . . This produced the inevitable conviction that the jungle code of war must be repealed for keeps.⁸⁰

The United Nations.--Having assured the world that America would not retreat from its belief in collective security, the Michigan Senator emphasized that the United States still looked to the United Nations as the basis of that concept in operation. "We have embraced the United Nations as the heart and core of united, unpartisan American foreign policy," insisted the Senator, adding that "we shall be faithful to the letter and the spirit of these obligations."⁸¹

Vandenberg probably had more in mind at this point than simply to reassert America's intentions to remain in

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 272.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 273.

the United Nations. He may have been trying to restore faith in the organization. The world had just witnessed a breakdown in the unanimity of the Big-Five powers. The peoples of the world were just becoming aware of the split of the world into two power groupings, each with irreconcilable philosophies and basically different concepts of the political state. The struggle was made evident as the contest over Germany unfolded. The Senator promised that America would not abandon the organization. "This will be true," he said, "no matter what administration sits in Washington. . . ."82

But his reply to the world also included the admission that all was not well with the new organization. As examples of the hazards facing the United Nations, he pointed to the frequent use of the veto, the fiscal failures, and the lack of progress toward effective disarmament. He admitted that the much hoped for Soviet-American unanimity had given away to a fight that was slowly encompassing the globe. The very fact that the war allies had failed by concerted action to keep the peace would seem to indicate that the time had come for the United States to create the desired postwar conditions through other methods. He made no such admission. Instead, he proposed means of furthering the objectives of the Charter in the light of existing world conditions.

⁸²Ibid.

Vandenberg's plan for improvement appears superficial. He recognized the veto as a major weakness of the organization. To overcome this, he called for voluntary restraint in the use of this weapon. He implied that the basic weakness in the organization was not a fundamental structural fault but was, instead, in the spirit of the members who "make use of the veto as a stultifying checkmate." He was apparently cognizant of opinion in many quarters that abolition of the veto would transform the United Nations into a workable instrument for peace. Aware that such action was futile, he hoped for a miracle that would change the attitude of member nations. "We must not be impatient," he insisted. "It took five years to take the world a part. It would not be surprising if it took at least that long to put it together again."⁸³

Neither did Vandenberg offer a solution to the stalemate over disarmament. He made it clear that America would disarm, first, when other nations were prepared to follow through on an adequate renunciation of weapons, and second, when the United Nations demonstrated that it had the capacity to keep the peace. "It is our dearest dream," he asserted, "but we shall not dream ourselves into a nightmare."⁸⁴ Above all, he wanted the world to know that America would not be fooled by the mere promises of other nations that they would

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Ibid.

disarm. He asserted:

. . . we shall not disarm alone. We shall not trust to the persuasion of our example. We tried that once before. We shall take no sweetness and light for granted in a world in which there is too much iron curtain. We shall not trust alone to fickle words. Too many words at Yalta and Potsdam have been distorted out of all pretense of integrity. We shall not ignore reality. . . .⁸⁵

The Senator's position was simply that the United States would continue to work with the United Nations for peace. The country would place its major reliance, however, not in this cooperative undertaking, but in its own strength. "We do not intend to be at anybody's mercy; nor do we intend to emasculate our authority with those who may still think in terms of force."⁸⁶ The cornerstone of America's security would continue to be her own system of defense. Noting that America had a monopoly upon the "sinister secret" of the atomic bomb for some years to come, the Senator replied that the United States could develop for itself defensive power of adequate scope. He made it clear, however, that America was willing to join in effective atomic energy controls, but he gave the price of such cooperation. It was simply "an effective system of continuous inspection and control which makes certain that no international brigand shall hereafter break faith with us and with the world."⁸⁷ Notice was thus served on Russia that as long

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Ibid.

as she unrelentingly opposed effective instruments of armament controls, the United States would resist with deterrent power.

Economic aid.---The Senator's fourth announcement to the world concerned America's contributions toward economic aid for peace. It was not surprising that he supported United States aid through the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration designed to meet the urgent problem of direct relief for stricken postwar areas. He warned, however, that America would not support the program alone. "I am sure that Congress will make a liberal relief program," he said, "even though we never again contribute 72 percent of an international fund . . . which can be controlled and exploited by others."⁸⁸ America had firmly committed herself to this course of action. But Vandenberg recognized that the economic problems involved more than relief. He asserted that the United States should "continue the device of reciprocal trade agreements, in one form or another, to release and expand mutual trade."⁸⁹ This position was the exact opposite of the one advocated by the Senator during the 1930's. His attitude shows the influence of his new internationalistic thinking on his whole outlook toward foreign policy. He had apparently come to believe that America's prosperity as well as the prosperity of the rest

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Ibid.

of the world could best be served by the elimination of some of the artificial barriers to international trade.

Vandenberg's new position on trade should not be interpreted to mean that he had become a "free trader." He recognized the facts of life. America would have to buy where she sold goods, or she would soon find those markets closed to her. This called for a willingness on the part of the United States to recognize that significant tariff concessions would be necessary. He did not blurt out this simple truth. It could mean that he was not personally ready for drastic tariff revisions. It could also mean that he was trying to avoid raising Congressional objections at this early hour in the new session.

Other problems.--The Senator labeled this division of his speech "a few swift overtones." He gave brief mention to a number of foreign policy problems but made little effort to discuss them. He said he regarded the failure to reach peace treaties with Austria and Germany as the "heart of the European problem."⁹⁰ He showed particular concern for the fate of Germany. He simply reiterated the position which Secretary Byrnes had expressed in the speech at Stuttgart. He charged the Russians with violation of the Potsdam agreement which had promised that the German occupation zones would function as an economic unit. "We intend to remain in

⁹⁰Ibid.

occupation," said the Senator, "until this job is done."⁹¹ He made it clear that the purpose of occupation was not motivated by a desire to control the German people, but for the purpose of insuring a free Germany.

The Senator was realistic in his appraisal of the German situation. Germany was a symbol of a deeper conflict. The implication was clear that both Russia and the United States were concerned with the balance of power that a new Germany would create. Vandenberg gave no hint as to the way out of this stalemate. This was the beginning of America's policy of containment. He recognized the prolongation of the conflict. The next move was up to the Soviet Union. America would wait and react. The Senator offered no proof for the soundness of this position. He simply asserted it with the confidence of one who thought he spoke to an agreeing audience.

His next "swift overtone" was a brief assertion that it was time for the United States to call a conference of the Latin American Nations to work on a regional arrangement for security in the Western Hemisphere. Noting that the State Department promised this in 1945, he insisted that it was needed to "restore the warmth of the new world unity."⁹²

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Ibid., p. 274.

Finally, the Senator shifted his interest to the Far East. He said that it was time for America to encourage the regime of Chiang Kai-shek. Although he indicated that his suggestion was motivated out of respect for the Nationalists, it was clear that with this move he hoped to keep China out of the Soviet orbit. While the Senator failed to specify the type of encouragement he had in mind, it was obvious that he was thinking of financial help. That military assistance was not involved is evidenced by his assertion that "our marines, having finished their task, are coming home."⁹³ Whether he would have given Chiang gigantic support is not certain, but his apparent faith in that regime would indicate that he had no clear conception at this time of the impending collapse of the nationalist forces.

Conclusion.--The speech ended with a tribute to the United Nations. "The United Nations," said the Senator, "has raised the standard to which men of good will . . . can repair." In spite of his frequent references to American devices to build its own national power, he tried to save the appearance of collective security. "Fifty-five nations are committed to solemn covenant to help each other keep the peace . . . and it has already sped us on this God-blessed way. America will do her full part."⁹⁴

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid.

Interpretation of the Speech

The new Republican leadership.--Senator Vandenberg's speech before the Cleveland Forum furnished few, if any, new ideas for the conduct of American foreign relations. But he may have performed a more important function. What was needed, perhaps, was a voice that could tell the world exactly what it could expect from the leadership of the new Republican Congress.

Vandenberg's speech made it clear that the national interest was involved in the struggle of nations. The world could expect no withdrawal by America. Furthermore, Republicans and Democrats alike were united behind the concept of collective security, a desire to see the United Nations work, and a willingness to protect the political interests of small nations. The Communist nations were put on guard that America would not appease those who attempted the conquest of others. America was united in its determination to face the Soviet challenge with a firmness that did not purchase "unity at any price."⁹⁵

The Michigan Senator, perhaps, was the one man best qualified to present this message to the world. He was not only the foreign policy leader of his own party, but since 1945, he had earned a position of trust and strength within

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 272.

the circles of the opposition. His was an effective voice to let it be known that the full force of America would be used to head off any attempt to disrupt the major policies of United States diplomacy abroad. He further spelled out his concept of the tenets of American policy so that Allies and foes alike could see the similarities of his views to those of the administration. It is to his credit that he was willing to note instances in which his concepts differed from the State Department approach.

The great weakness of the Senator's address was his failure to offer anything specific to deal with the problems that he so vividly portrayed. He paraded the trouble spots of the world before his audience including the stalemates over the peace treaties, atomic energy, disarmament, the China situation, and failures in the United Nations. His only solution was simply that America would face each problem with a united front--firm in her determination to maintain ideals of freedom and human rights. In one instance, at least, in the case of China, he added to the ambiguity of the situation by inferring that America should adopt a policy that neither he nor his country was willing to back up with the sacrifices that would be involved. Vandenberg spoke in the midst of numerous appeals from European countries for help to save them from the Communists. Yet, he failed to demonstrate how a "get-tough" policy would help these people.

It can be argued, of course, that this was not the time or the place for Vandenberg to advance specific lines of action; that his purpose was not to offer a specific proposal but to make a position clear and evident. Yet, the most encouraging message he probably could have offered to the harassed peoples of Europe and Asia would have been a suggestion that the resources of America were going to be used to relieve the frustration that was stifling them. Vandenberg met the Communist challenge in this address; if he failed, it was in stipulating solutions.

Definition of bipartisan foreign policy.--His concept of bipartisan foreign policy meant that policy formation was made by both parties before major decisions were adopted. He admitted that the Constitution grants that power exclusively to the President, but he made it plain that without the approval of the Congress such a policy would not have authority abroad. He had called for this cooperative venture between the two parties soon after Pearl Harbor. He regarded it as the sine qua non of an effective foreign policy.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Senator Vandenberg continued to regard this aspect of bipartisanship as a basic requirement throughout his last term in office. Late in 1948, he defended his view of bipartisan foreign policy in a nationwide address. See Arthur H. Vandenberg, "Bipartisan Foreign Policy," Vital Speeches, XV, No. 1 (October 15, 1948), p. 13. He said: "Bipartisan foreign policy applies only where cooperative consultation and mutual decision exists from start to finish. Historically this has not been the case in China, Palestine or Japan. . . ."

Vandenberg also made it clear that the administration should provide the channels to make communication between the two branches of government a reality. He referred to himself as a "junior partner,"⁹⁷ thus making it apparent that in his mind the State Department was the agency to make the necessary contacts between the administration and the Senate. He also let the White House know that his office as Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman could be used as a channel of communication between the two major parties. The principle of bipartisanship need not wane just because the Republicans were now in control of Congress.

Even if one admits that Vandenberg's method of foreign policy decision making possessed more assets than liabilities, it would still appear that he should at least have overtly recognized the possible ill effects of bipartisan collaboration in foreign policy. First, there is always the possibility that the President will accept policies which he might think unwise in order to achieve unity. This raises the whole question of the relationship of Congress to the executive in foreign affairs. It is beyond the scope of this study to supply a definitive answer.⁹⁸ It

⁹⁷Record, 80th Cong., 1st Sess., 1947, XCII, Part 1, 272.

⁹⁸Cecil V. Crabb, Jr., Bipartisan Foreign Policy, Myth or Reality (Evanston: Row, Peterson and Company, 1957), p. 224.

will suffice to point out that Vandenberg owed it to his audience to recognize that the President might possibly sacrifice his authority in order to appease members of the opposition party.

Neither did Vandenberg appear bothered by the possibility that an overemphasis on bipartisanship in foreign affairs might mean less open discussion and debate. A united front might not always be worth the price. Arthur Krock noted during the period Vandenberg was leader of the Senate that members of his party were forced "to consider tax increases in which they do not believe"⁹⁹ in order to preserve the bipartisan principle. Even Vandenberg admitted that "it may shorten free debate. . . . A unanimous bipartisan Committee report creates an impetus which discourages partisan attack."¹⁰⁰ Ellis Arnall mentioned the effect on the executive. "Acceptance of reactionary participation in the making of foreign policy and the removal of foreign policy improperly from the sphere of public discussion . . . was forced on President Truman by well-meaning advisers in both parties."¹⁰¹ The absence of public debate might affect the value of the final decision.

⁹⁹The New York Times, November 11, 1949, p. 21.

¹⁰⁰Papers, p. 550.

¹⁰¹Ellis G. Arnall, "The Democrats Can Win," Atlantic Monthly, CLXXXII (October, 1948), 37.

Finally, Vandenberg seemed to assume that if partisanship were kept out of the decision-making, the government would be more likely to follow the path which best led to American security. It is true that excesses in partisanship have crossed the American scene. Such was the case in 1918 when a party fight kept the country out of the League of Nations. But this one example does not prove that it is wrong to have opposition in foreign policy. Neither does it disprove the theory that sounder decisions are reached where an opposition exists. Vandenberg simply assumed that it was desirable to avoid substantial disagreement between the major parties over foreign policy. The possibility that such a policy might leave the impression that all are in agreement when differences actually exist apparently did not bother him.

For all of this, it must be admitted that the Senator's strong belief that American statesmen should not attempt to make political gain out of foreign policy issues was noble in purpose. The same, perhaps, could be hoped for when politicians deal with any vital issue in American life.

America's role.--Vandenberg also emphasized that America would be the protector of the free world but would never be an aggressor. But he failed to discuss the military strength required to maintain such a position. The United States rate of demobilization did not insure the safety of the Western Hemisphere. As a member of the Senate

Foreign Relations Committee, he undoubtedly was aware of this reality. But he had to have the support of a Republican Senate that had promised to cut taxes and reduce the national debt. He probably felt that this was not the time to spring a proposal on the Congress which called for increased military spending.

Failure to stress a strong military force placed him in a dilemma over the means of achieving disarmament. He insisted, of course, that a way must be established to prevent a breach of international peace. Russia had rejected all United Nations suggestions for a controls system. His hope was obviously that American strength would force Russia into accepting international controls as a means of survival. But at the same time, he devoted little effort to the task of awakening the public from apathy toward military obligations.

The trade issue.--Vandenberg's position on the trade issue came at a crucial hour in the nation's history. The Republican leadership had long been opposed to the reciprocal trade agreements. He served notice that the administration's efforts to reduce trade barriers must continue. He left unanswered, however, the question of just how far he would go in lowering American tariff walls. The Senator probably hoped for an import balance so that foreign countries could pay their debts and continue to purchase from the United

States. But he made it clear that a "sane, healthy, mutual trade expansion is best for all concerned."¹⁰²

The Senator, perhaps, was also looking to an international trade system relatively free of uneconomic restrictions to help ward off increasing communist influence in countries where economic unrest was a breeding ground for Russian infiltration. "Peace and economics are inseparably kin,"¹⁰³ he said. He further admitted that the democracies of the world could not find an enduring structure of international peace until each country's standard of living utilized the maximum productivity of other nations. America is not self-sufficient because "our vastly expanded national economy and employment require"¹⁰⁴ maximum trade with others. But he also hoped that mutual trade programs would help get peace-time production going again in foreign lands. He failed, however, to point out where Europe was going to get the capital to buy American goods. A method was needed to relieve the scarcity of dollars. If the Michigan Senator had devised a means of accomplishing this need in January of 1947, he withheld it in his declarations of principles to the world.

¹⁰²Record, 80th Cong., 1st Sess., 1947, XCIII, Part 1, 273.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

The German situation.--One finds it difficult to criticize the Senator for his unwillingness to touch off a possible armed conflict by advocating a policy to force Russia out of Germany. But his implication that nothing could be done to relieve the economic plight of West Germany until the country was unified is open to question. He stressed that "the business of renewed, decentralized political autonomy . . . makes encouraging progress in the American zone."¹⁰⁵ What he failed to admit, however, was that an American economic policy in West Germany was virtually non-existent. The blame for this could not be placed entirely on the multiple zone system. America was in a position to offer a relief program. A desperate Germany was to be policed by an occupation army, but Vandenberg gave no hint that the American position could be enhanced by making the territory self-sustaining. Such a proposal would not have been original; occupation authorities had called for such help. Although Vandenberg seemed to sense the urgency of relief, he concluded the point without any reference to America's economic role in that area.

It was possible, of course, that Vandenberg thought it unwise to call for extensive economic aid to Germany until further groundwork had been laid. This did not excuse his failure to point out that there was little possibility

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

of developing democracy in a country in which most of the people were living on a low subsistence level; and more important, to recognize that America could do something about this deplorable condition in the Western sector with or without a unified Germany. The Senator, in short, simply failed to display an imaginative grasp of the total picture in Germany.

The China situation.--His brief reference to the cause of the Chinese Nationalists showed no apparent grasp of the impending doom for Kai-shek's forces. His call for help for the Nationalists could have meant little more than moral support. He wrote in his diary on February 10, 1947, that he did not consider the withdrawal of American troops as an abandonment of the "Chinese to the Communists," adding that what the Chinese Nationalists government needed was America's good will. He concluded, however, that "I have no illusions about China's future under any prospectus. It is the greatest speculation of the ages."¹⁰⁶ This statement seems to indicate that on January 11, 1947, he simply wanted the United States government to stop encouraging a united China, and instead, pay lip-service to the Nationalist cause.

In short, Vandenberg took a middle ground which pledged the United States to support the United Nations while at the same time making it clear that the United States would do

¹⁰⁶Papers, p. 523.

what must be done to contain the Communists. What was missing was a clear statement of a strategic concept of ways and means for America to maintain the reality of national power. His speech showed no clear grasp of the role America must play in the economic fight for containment; this was yet to come.

The Address on the Marshall Plan

A consensus was reached in 1947 that Soviet expansion must be stopped. The first move was the Truman Doctrine, a proposal which extended economic aid to the devastated states of Greece and Turkey. The next step was the initiation of the European Recovery Program, often called the Marshall Plan, which was begun in 1948 in an effort at long-range economic planning for Western Europe. Senator Vandenberg as leader of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate was instrumental in gaining support for these two programs. In the speech under consideration, he argued for the passage of the Marshall Plan. His speech in support of this measure can best be understood by an examination of the historical events which accompanied the speech and the ensuing legislative debate of which his speech was a significant phase.

The Context of the Speech

The end of the alliance.--By early 1947, American officials were ready to admit that the world community envisioned in the formation of the United Nations had not

emerged from the war-time alliance. Secretary of State Marshall took a proposed treaty for German disarmament to a conference of Foreign Ministers in Moscow in March, hoping as a result to end the stalemate. The offer was rejected. The West could not accept either the Soviet claim for partial control of the industrial sections of the Rhur or her demand for reparations amounting to ten billion dollars. The West also refused to accept the Soviet proposal for a strong central government for Germany. The conference ended in deadlock. "It ended whatever hope may still have survived," notes Pratt, "of friendly cooperation between the Communist and the non-Communist worlds."¹⁰⁷

After the Moscow Conference the administration subscribed to the viewpoint of George F. Kennan, who urged that the United States "regard the Soviet Union as a rival, not a partner, in the political arena." The Soviet Union was to be stopped at its present boundaries through a policy of containment. The United States would subscribe to policies "designed to confront the Russians with unalterable counter-force at every point when they show signs of encroaching upon the interests of a peaceful and stable world."¹⁰⁸ The American people backed the new policy which affirmed that the Kremlin's conduct had demonstrated that there was no

¹⁰⁷Pratt, op. cit., p. 719.

¹⁰⁸George F. Kennan, American Diplomacy, 1900-1950 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 126.

"community of aims between the Soviet Union and powers which are regarded as capitalism."¹⁰⁹ The war-time vision of "one world" changed to a concept of a world divided into two power groupings, each with irreconcilable philosophies.

The European economic situation constituted further awareness of the Soviet-American split. Unlike America, which emerged from the war with the greatest prosperity peak in its history, European countries faced poverty in the form of shortages of raw materials, a shortage of dollars, and a steadily declining production. Under these conditions, these countries faced the threat of ever increasing Communist infiltration. As a prostrate people, they turned to America for help. The United States, in an effort to utilize its own power, braced itself to aid these people as a means of containing the Communist.

The Truman Doctrine.--The British government's announcement that its military and economic aid to Greece and Turkey would end in March of 1947 provided the incentive for American action. It was clear that with British withdrawal from these areas, Soviet influence could spread all the way to the Eastern Mediterranean. This could mean many more converts to the Communist cause in countries which could not meet the economic needs of their people. The United States decided to accept the challenge. On March 12, 1947, President Truman

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 115.

asked Congress for four billion dollars in direct aid to these countries. "It must be the policy," said Truman, "of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures."¹¹⁰ The President made it clear that he was thinking primarily of economic support.

Senator Vandenberg supported the Truman Doctrine. He argued before Congress that Congressional failure to support the request would "give the green light to aggression everywhere."¹¹¹ But the Senator made a last minute effort to install a device aimed at saving the appearance of collective security. The President left the impression that the Truman Doctrine would have to be entirely outside the scope of the United Nations inasmuch as that body was "not in a position to extend help of the kind that is required."¹¹² Vandenberg insisted, however, on the insertion of a preamble to the bill which made it clear that the United Nations could terminate such aid when that body was in a position to take up the task. He believed this amendment brought the act within the framework of the United Nations.

¹¹⁰U. S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, A Decade of American Foreign Policy, Basic Documents, 1941-1949, Document No. 123, 81st Cong., 1st Sess., 1950, p. 1256.

¹¹¹Record, 80th Cong., 1st Sess., 1947, XCIII, Part 3, 3198.

¹¹²A Decade of American Foreign Policy, p. 1254.

With Vandenberg's guidance, the Republican controlled Congress passed its first test in bipartisan foreign policy. In spite of grave doubt on the part of many Americans as to the soundness of the move, the bill passed the House by a vote of 287 - 107 and the Senate by a vote of 67 - 23.¹¹³ Vandenberg's concept of the measure probably captured the sentiment of most of its supporters. He stressed that it was a question of choosing between "risks," and in his mind, approving the bill was less dangerous because it "indicates the United States will not be pushed around." On the other hand, he cautioned that "failure to act would give aggression the 'green light,'" while the "rest of the world, including America, gets the red."¹¹⁴

The Marshall Plan.--The Truman Doctrine proved to be the first step in improving the rapidly deteriorating economic conditions of Europe. It represented the country's first effort to stop the spread of communism with containment policies. But it was soon realized that this did nothing for other European countries whose war-torn economies made them particularly susceptible to political extremism. Secretary Marshall on June 5, 1947, promised European countries that if they would jointly plan a program of economic recovery American aid would probably be forthcoming. "The initiative,"

¹¹³Foster Rhea Dulles, op. cit., p. 232.

¹¹⁴Record, 80th Cong., 1st Sess., 1947, XCII, Part 3, 3198.

he said, "should come from Europe."¹¹⁵ While he insisted that "our policy is not directed against any country or doctrine but against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos,"¹¹⁶ the Soviet Union looked upon the proposal as a move against her and refused along with several satellites to accept the offer. Fourteen nations, however, joined in the effort and by the fall of 1947 had submitted their aid requests to the United States. President Truman submitted the assistance requests to Congress in December, 1947, with the appeal that the move was "essential to the maintenance of the civilization in which the American way of life is rooted."¹¹⁷

Early in January of 1948, U. S. News predicted that the kind of bill Congress approved in connection with the President's European Recovery request "depends largely upon Senator Vandenberg."¹¹⁸ He faced the task of getting the bill through a Republican-controlled Eightieth Congress that had promised to reduce taxes and balance the budget. Acheson, said Vandenberg, also had to overcome his own fears and those of other Republicans that the measure would not be used by

¹¹⁵The New York Times, June 6, 1947, p. 2.

¹¹⁶Ibid.

¹¹⁷A Decade of American Foreign Policy, p. 1285.

¹¹⁸"Senator Vandenberg as Chief Strategist for the Marshall Plan," U. S. News, XXIV (January 16, 1948), p. 65.

the administration to "decide the approaching election of 1948."¹¹⁹ This meant that he had to find areas of compromise between the State Department and Congress. The former wanted the measure administered by their own officials while many Senators thought that it should be handled by a congressional agency. To solve the problem, Vandenberg called in the Brookings Institution of Washington to make a private study. When this group recommended a separate agency designed to work with but independent of the State Department, he got the administration to accept the proposal.¹²⁰ Congress was promised a "watchdog" committee to observe the administration of the program.

Vandenberg also managed to satisfy those who were worried about the cost of the program. He cut the term of the appropriation, for example, without seriously damaging the proposal. With skillful handling of the measure, the Senator was able to conciliate the "discordant factions so skillfully that they thought they were winning."¹²¹ Senator Taft, for example, voiced objection to the proposal when it was first announced. But eventually Vandenberg persuaded him that the measure was essential to relieve the European

¹¹⁹Dean Acheson, "Journey Into Our Times," American Heritage, XI (February, 1960), p. 47.

¹²⁰Papers, p. 388.

¹²¹"Vandenberg Compromise," Newsweek, XXXI (February 23, 1948), p. 23.

situation.¹²² The result was a final passage of the measure by a vote of 69 to 17. The New York Times noted that Senator Vandenberg was in "complete control" of the bill as it was debated on the floors of Congress.¹²³

Report of the Speech

Senator Vandenberg reported the bill out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee by unanimous vote on March 1, 1948. In a long address, he presented the case for the proposal. He turned primarily to logical proof to develop his thesis that America must try to save the peoples of Europe from aggression or infiltration with a policy of containment. A program of economic assistance was to be used to enable the freedom-loving states of Europe to mobilize their capacities in behalf of United States' objectives. As the speech unfolds, it becomes clear that the Senator had moved from a "firmness with patience" position on the Soviet problem to the concept of containment by overt acts.

The speech divides clearly into three parts. The Senator first argued the case for aid to Europe. In the second part, he answered major objections to the proposal.

¹²²Papers, p. 380.

¹²³The New York Times, March 14, 1948, p. 1. Also see Harry S. Truman, Memoirs, Vol. II: Years of Trial and Hope (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1956), p. 172. He recalled: "Without the . . . brilliant, intelligent leadership of Senator Arthur Vandenberg, . . . the Marshall Plan, NATO, and other projects would have been hampered, if not blocked completely by the selfish Republican majority."

His third division, labeled "a few desultory comments,"¹²⁴ attempted to deal with the problems of administering the program, along with a message for the various parties concerned with the bill.

Introduction.--In an obvious attempt to demonstrate bipartisan support for the measure, Vandenberg introduced the bill as a unanimous choice of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He called for its passage "in the name of peace, stability, and freedom."¹²⁵ His announced thesis put the burden of proof primarily on those who objected to the bill.

The greatest nation on earth either justifies or surrenders its leadership. We must choose. There are no blueprints to guarantee the results. We are entirely surrounded by calculated risks. I profoundly believe that the pending program is the best of these risks. I have no quarrel with those who disagree, because we are dealing with imponderables. But I am bound to say to those who disagree that they have not escaped to safety by rejecting or subverting this plan. They have simply fled to other risks, and I fear far greater ones. For myself, I can only say that I prefer my choice of responsibilities.¹²⁶

Reasons for supporting the bill.--Vandenberg argued, first, that the Marshall Plan must be passed in order to save Europe from Communist infiltration. The argument was not stated explicitly, but can be deduced from his quotation

¹²⁴Record, 80th Cong., 2d Sess., 1948, XCIV, Part 2, 1915.

¹²⁵Ibid.

¹²⁶Ibid.

from the bill that it was "the policy of the United States to sustain . . . free institutions and genuine independence through assistance. . . ."127 The threat to Europe was pictured in the form of Communist advancements in countries where frustration, disorder, and want had followed in the wake of World War II. The American people, he implied, could not afford to let this continue. The United States must provide the means to help Europe secure the stability so vital in keeping the people from turning to the Communist philosophy. Without mentioning Russia as the offender, he turned for his prime example to a recent event. "Czechoslovakia where any semblance of democracy has just been gutted by subversive conquest, underscores this solemn thesis."128

The Senator made no prolonged attempt to prove that Europe was in serious economic trouble. The crisis, he said, was a "significant narrative which speaks for itself."129 He attempted to deal with the problem with a brief assertion that Europe was in "utter prostration . . . amid the ashes of its victory; the resultant tragedy of far-flung human want and suffering." It was clear Vandenberg believed the American people were fully aware that World War II left Europe physically devastated and her economy virtually paralyzed. In his mind, this situation required no proof,

127 Ibid.

128 Ibid.

129 Ibid.

only a reminder of its existence. "It is enough," he said, "for the present consideration, that the tragedies occurred, and that they still threaten the peace, stability, and security of this whole earth, the United States again emphatically included."¹³⁰

Neither did the Senator feel compelled to offer extensive proof that Europe would fall to the Communists unless efforts were made to prevent widespread starvation and economic collapse. He alluded to the current struggle in Finland as an example of the Communist determination to exploit economic and political dislocations as a means of advancing Communism. Involved in the conflict, he claimed, were 270,000,000 people of "the stock which has largely made America," who were "struggling against great and ominous odds, to regain their feet." Against this background, he argued for American aid to help these people recover. "The iron curtain," he insisted, "must not come to the rims of the Atlantic Charter either by aggression or by default."¹³¹ He proceeded on the assumption that in 1948 the American people had come to regard this statement as a fact of life.

Although Vandenberg stressed that the bill "proposes to help our friends to help themselves," he admitted that "the quest can mean as much to us as it does to them." It

¹³⁰Ibid., p. 1916.

¹³¹Ibid., p. 1915.

became clear that self-interest rather than charity was the major motivation. While he tried to give it a humanitarian flavor, he made it obvious that America had political motives. For those who might view it as another hand-out to Europe, he let it be known that the security of the United States was the prime objective. The Marshall Plan, stressed the Senator, "recognizes the grim truth--whether we like it or not--that American self-interest, national economy, and national security are inseparably linked" with the measure, adding that "this vast friendly segment of the earth must not collapse."¹³² The premise of his belief was that the Communist system would not prevail in a world that was free and prosperous. In essence, the Senator's argument that the bill should be passed to aid Europe was another way of saying it should be passed to protect the political security of the American people.

Vandenberg also argued that economic aid to Europe would have a favorable impact on the American economy. He stressed the importance of Western Europe to economics at home. Appealing to special interests groups, he said:

These are 26 percent of all the literates of the earth. Before the war they operated 68 percent of all the ships that sailed the sea. They grew 27 percent of all the world's cereals. They produced 37 percent of the world's steel. They sold 24 percent of the world's exports and bought 39 percent of the world's imports. The world--America emphatically included--needs them as both producers and consumers.
 . . .¹³³

¹³²Ibid.

¹³³Ibid.

It was not difficult for Americans to grasp the implication that European economies could not import machinery and equipment until they were able to acquire the needed funds. Neither was it difficult for them to see that if these countries should swing into the Soviet orbit, America might lose many of these markets forever. Under the Marshall Plan, the United States would provide the margin of capital to inaugurate the needed growth process. The appeal was directed to those who looked to Europe as an outlet for surpluses of American goods in the years to come. American aid was to help break a vicious circle.

Vandenberg's concluding argument in support of the proposal was also geared to the self-interest of the American people. He asserted that the United States had no effective alternative to the Marshall Plan. He noted that if America rejected the proposal either she had to withdraw all aid or continue the postwar relief measures. Neither step, he argued, would prove beneficial to America.

Speaking to the isolationist element, he admitted that the United States could withdraw all support. Such "dreams of isolated and prosperous peace," he argued, were luxuries which Americans could not afford in a "foreshortened, atomic world."¹³⁴ The speaker relied upon his countrymen's awareness of the gravity of the situation in Europe as a

¹³⁴Ibid.

motivation for rejecting this alternative. "This act may well become a welcome beacon in the world's dark night. If it is to be lighted at all, it had better be lighted before it is too late." He admonished: "We must take things as they are."¹³⁵ The "other risk" was a world economically and ideologically controlled by the Russians. The Senator admitted he could not prove the European Recovery Program would prevent such a tragedy. But he believed logic would support his position that it was better to do something than it was to attempt a withdrawal from a struggle that could not be escaped. In his favor was the audience's awareness of Communist infiltration in Iran, Western Europe, the Near East, and China which constituted overwhelming evidence that Russia would not hesitate to take what America rejected.

The other possible alternative to the Marshall Plan, said Vandenberg, was a continuation of the piecemeal aid which the United States had conducted since the close of the war. He noted that although the United States had spent billions on foreign relief the results in terms of basic economic improvement had proved to be unsatisfactory. True, the numerous aid programs which had been fed into foreign countries had relieved much human destitution resulting from the war. The process, however, had not

¹³⁵Ibid.

-- restored the markets and sources of raw materials which the war destroyed. Furthermore, argued Vandenberg, "Europe could not wait longer for real emancipation," and the United States could no longer "afford to underwrite futility."¹³⁶ The Senator offered the Marshall Plan as the only real alternative. The new proposal was conditional upon Western Europe's helping itself through a unified plan of American aid rather than a continuation of relief measures.

Refutation of major objections.--With the case for the proposal before his audience, the Senator turned to a refutation of the major objections to the proposition. He first directed his attention to Americans who looked upon the idea as an ideological war upon the Soviet Union. Critics had attacked the bill on the grounds that it abandoned any hope of reconciling differences with Russia. This forced the Senator to walk a tight rope. Fully aware that the bill's supporters were relying upon the American people to see the move as a strategic concept in confronting the Soviet Union, the Senator advanced the argument that the measure was needed to save Europe from Communist infiltration. At the same time, he wanted to assure his countrymen that this bill did not close the door to East-West cooperation. He reminded the world that the aid was applicable to all European countries, thus the door was left open

¹³⁶Ibid., p. 1916.

for the Soviet Union. "There is nothing in this plan," said Vandenberg, "which threatens the Soviet police empire with any sort of consequence which she does not herself choose voluntarily to invite, . . . Eastern Europe was invited in." For America to withdraw the aid simply because the Soviet satellites rejected the invitation would be appeasement. On the other hand, stressed Vandenberg, East-West tension "can be released whenever there is mutual East-West respect for the rights of free people to order their own lives."¹³⁷

Neither did the Senator want to harm the administration's attempts to assure Europe that the measure was more than a strategy to retard the growth of Communism. For this reason, Vandenberg stressed that the bill was designed to make Europe capable of supporting itself by her own efforts. The great virtue of the program was its emphasis upon cooperation, which required the people of Europe to assess their over-all needs in the light of their plans to make maximum efforts to meet their own problems. American aid was then to be used to fill in the gap, not as a "relief" measure but as a step in helping Europe make permanent recovery. The Senator stressed that sixteen European governments had conferred and submitted requests. "We did not dictate their ticket. They wrote it for themselves."

¹³⁷Ibid.

Europe's prompt and enthusiastic reply offered evidence that these countries looked upon the move as "the best chance for stable peace and for peaceful stability that there is on the earth today."¹³⁸

Another major objection to the proposal was that the bill might provoke a war with Russia. Vandenberg admitted Russia had attacked the bill as an anti-Soviet move. But he argued the United States must proceed with the program no matter how the Soviet Union reacted to it. He stressed that the alternative was to risk further Soviet expansion in areas vital to the defense of the free world. For America, said Vandenberg, to permit Russian intransigence to drive her into a sudden reversal on the issue would be appeasement of the kind before World War II. He geared his proposal to the vivid memories of another era. "But peace and appeasement are not on speaking terms," said the Senator, "and they have not been since Munich, after World War I, and Yalta in World War II."¹³⁹

When Vandenberg turned to the objection that the program was too costly for America, he faced his most difficult problem. He not only confronted those who viewed the move as a step toward other expensive foreign aid plans, but also members of his own party who had promised in the Congressional campaign of 1946 to reduce taxes. He

¹³⁸Ibid.

¹³⁹Ibid.

had to deal with the dilemma which faced the Republican Party. How could the majority party approve the aid program and at the same time provide a fiscal policy of reduced spending?

Vandenberg turned to logical proof to substantiate his claim that the United States could afford the project without a negative impact on the domestic economy. He cited the reports of the Committee on National Resources and Foreign Aid, the Committee on Foreign Aid, and the Council of Economic Advisers to the effect that America could safely support such a program. "All authorities agree," said Vandenberg, "that the plan can be managed to avoid serious interference with our domestic economy."¹⁴⁰ He stressed that the proposal reflected rigorous screening of European needs in light of the availabilities. He drew heavily upon the findings of the committees which insisted that the United States could support such a program both in terms of physical resources and in terms of financial capacity. He was quick to admit, however, that the program would involve some sacrifice on the part of the American people. But for those who feared this consequence, the Senator noted that the probable price of any other alternative would mean that much of Europe would be driven to the Communist camp.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p. 1918.

In developing his contention that the American people could afford the project, Vandenberg continued to stress that the interest of the United States could not be measured solely in economic terms. He made it plain that the real issue was political. As he viewed it, it was largely a matter of strategic significance. He warned those who opposed the measure because of the costs that "we cannot afford not to take the preferable chance."¹⁴¹

The Senator also had to meet the belief that this proposed program was simply another "hand-out" to Europe. He stressed that the plan demanded cooperation between Western Europe and the United States. He noted the plan required Western Europe to assess its over-all needs and come to the United States with its calculations. Countries would receive aid only if they demonstrated a strong effort to reach production goals. In this manner, it was hoped that the European economy would recover and Americans would not be forced to continue large outlays for foreign assistance.

Finally, Vandenberg faced the opposition of Republican dissatisfaction over the neglect of bipartisan efforts in planning the program. For the Michigan Senator, the choice was clear. He put the issue to his colleagues rather directly. Either they accepted the administration's proposal, or else they would run the risk of permitting the Communists to

¹⁴¹Ibid.

infiltrate Western Europe. "There is an alternative price," said Vandenberg. "The absence of some reasonable prospect for the stabilization of Western Europe will . . . urgently demand billions more for national defense . . . the alternative price in a Communist-dominated world."¹⁴² The choice was between cooperation or the possibility of economic and political disaster.

Final appeals.--The Senator devised a special label for the third division of his speech, called a "few desultory comments."¹⁴³ He grouped together a collection of several reminders directed to the administration, the foreign countries receiving aid, and the Congress of the United States.

One such reminder was directed to the President. "The choice of the administrator and his associates," said Vandenberg, "is one of the most solemn responsibilities that ever confronted a President of the United States."¹⁴⁴ Implicit in this statement was a warning for President Truman that his selection of an administrator would have to meet Vandenberg's approval. It also called attention to the dilemma in which the measure was placing the President. He must find a capable business executive who also thought as a diplomat. Vandenberg sensed the difficulty of such a

¹⁴²Ibid.

¹⁴³Ibid., p., 1920.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

chore. He noted on January 2, 1948, that the "business administration of ERP has to be a successful liaison with the Secretary of State and the President wherever foreign policy decisions are involved."¹⁴⁵

The final success of the program was also said to lie upon the shoulders of the countries involved. "Our collars cannot substitute," said Vandenberg, "for their own will to make common cause for the mutual defense of their own welfare."¹⁴⁶ This assertion called attention to the risk implicit in the program. Unless Europe was prepared to become an independent economy, the temporary help from America would fail. While Americans would not attempt to "dictate the formula"¹⁴⁷ for recovery, the Congress would expect to see a strong effort on the part of the countries to attain the cooperation, production, and stabilization agreed upon at the Paris meeting. The long-range value of the Marshall Plan, implied the Senator, depended upon those commitments becoming a reality.

The Michigan Senator's final "desultory comment" was directed toward the Senate. He reminded the Senate, first, that the bill had the support of the American people. "The act has the amazing unified support," said Vandenberg, "of

¹⁴⁵Papers, p. 393.

¹⁴⁶Record, 80th Cong., 2d Sess., 1948, XCIV, Part 2, 1920.

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

practically all spokesmen in our own land for organized labor, capital, agriculture and industry, women's organizations, American journalism . . . and the church."¹⁴⁸

Not written into this piece of evidence was the implicit warning to Congressmen that they must view this program in terms of the alternatives. Failure to help Europe could mean more starvation, more desolation, and more chaos. This pattern could open the door to Communism. The final result could be an America surrounded by a Communist world.

Vandenberg was aware that such thinking drove the American people to support the plan. He relied upon the Senate's knowledge of the same facts to secure passage of the act.

His last plea to the Senate was a call for prompt action. "Time is the essence in this battle for peace, even as it is in the battle for war."¹⁴⁹ He again pointed to Czechoslovakia. "Nine months ago, Czechoslovakia wanted to join Western Europe in this great enterprise for stability and peace . . . today Czechoslovakia joins only such enterprise as Moscow may direct."¹⁵⁰ This impelling pathetic appeal reminded the Senate that it must speak quickly if it were to use the resources of America to help save Europe.

Conclusion.--The Senator concluded: "It is the final product," he said, "of eight months of more intensive study

¹⁴⁸Ibid.

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

¹⁵⁰Ibid.

by more devoted minds than I have ever known to concentrate upon any one objective in all my 20 years in Congress," adding, "God grant this benediction upon this ultimate event."¹⁵¹

The Senator must have been gratified by the immediate response to the speech. In spite of Senate rules, "Senators and spectators sprang to their feet in unrestricted applause"¹⁵² when the Senator finished his hour presentation. "It was Arthur H. Vandenberg's show,"¹⁵³ said Newsweek. One newspaper observed that if the issue could have been decided "at the close of his address, there would have been few 'nays' cast against it."¹⁵⁴

Interpretation of the Speech

Economic assistance.--From the time that Vandenberg began to question the sincerity of the Russians in following through on their international pledges in 1945 until his advocacy of the Marshall Plan, he had proposed that America directly face the Soviet challenge. His main line of action, however, had been through political adjustments arrived at in negotiations. In the Marshall Plan address, he called for a new approach. Negotiated settlements were virtually

¹⁵¹Ibid.

¹⁵²The New York Times, March 2, 1948, p. 1.

¹⁵³"Soviet Timetable vs ERP," Newsweek, XXXI (March 15, 1948), 10.

¹⁵⁴The New York Times, March 2, 1948, p. 1.

abandoned in favor of a more aggressive policy designed to meet strength with strength. The national purpose was to be achieved through a build-up of power rather than the sole use of firmness at the conference table.

The means employed to achieve the new objective was economic assistance. The program was not Vandenberg's idea, but he gave it his endorsement. The speech shows that he had come to believe that America's enlightened self-interest must now be conceived in concrete economic terms. What followed was a change in his concept of the foreign economic policy for the United States. At the end of the war, Vandenberg subscribed to the long-range American goal of working toward international currency convertibility and elimination of restrictive commercial policies among nations. As his Cleveland Forum address denotes, by early 1947, he was supporting the reciprocal trade agreements which aimed at a lowering of tariff walls. In addition, he supported the policy of direct relief on a limited scale to the countries suffering from war dislocations. In the speech under consideration, Vandenberg supported the use of economic means to achieve a political end, i.e., the strengthening of Europe's economy to enable the Western powers to build a defense against Soviet aggression. To be sure, he recognized the economic value of the program for America's economy, but his major goal was to protect the nation's interest against the Soviet threat. He looked

upon the Marshall Plan as a means of immunizing Europe to internal subversion. Economic aid became a political weapon to achieve American goals in the cold war.

Vandenberg's conception of the Soviet Union had now become the very antithesis of that which guided American diplomats at Yalta and Potsdam. At that time, it was generally assumed that the Soviet Union would wish to liquidate "those who had violated the legal boundaries and had presumed to redraw the map of Europe to suit their own purpose."¹⁵⁵ Vandenberg's view of the Soviet Union as revealed in the Marshall Plan address is that of a country conspiring to extend its power through the democratic states by using the exploitation of social and economic unrest in the war-torn countries of Europe and Asia. "Aggressive communism threatens all freedom and all security,"¹⁵⁶ he insisted.

Leadership of free world.---The speech also shows that Vandenberg wanted America to accept the leadership of the free world, to act as a major power, and to assume the primary burden involved. He fully departed from the days before Pearl Harbor when he refused America any positive role in world affairs. At that time, he argued against a

¹⁵⁵John C. Campbell, "The Territorial Settlement," Foreign Affairs, XXVI (1947), 197.

¹⁵⁶Record, 80th Cong., 2d Sess., 1948, XCIV, Part 2, 1915.

policy that proposed to sell goods to a democracy threatened by an aggressor. After Pearl Harbor, he committed his country to a joint role in protecting the peace of the world. By 1948, he had moved to a position in which he viewed the national security in terms that required the United States to exercise its economic power against the threat of a new aggressor. In the Marshall Plan address, his conversion to internationalism took on a new dimension.

The hurdles involved.--In choosing his defense of the measure, Vandenberg had to work his way through a number of hurdles. He had to avoid presenting the program to Europeans simply as a means of containing the Communists; otherwise, they might fear possible Russian retaliation. Historians note that in 1947 "there was a definite tendency in these states to seek an adjustment and improve economic and political relations with the Soviet Union and its satellites."¹⁵⁷ As a result, Vandenberg stressed that all European countries were invited to share in the program, but Russia had refused.

On the other hand, he probably sensed that the American people might reject the program if he offered it as just another aid program for Europe. This forced him to stress the political aims involved while at the same time he was trying to avoid leaving the impression that it was directed

¹⁵⁷Reitzel, Kaplan, and Coblenz, op. cit., p. 118.

solely against Russia. He walked a chalk line between the two goals by discussing each to a limited degree.

Vandenberg faced another major hurdle. He had to sell the program to a Republican Congress that had promised to reduce taxes and balance the budget. It was to this chore that he directed most of his argument. The fact that he spent little time in outlining the seriousness of Europe's economic conditions or the dangers this situation posed would indicate he thought the American people were fully aware of these and were prepared to take up the burden of doing something about them. But he was not as sure that the Republican Congress would provide the requested amount of money for the project. He hoped to avoid a big slash in the appropriation.

His strategic purpose, therefore, was to offer the Republican Congress a rationale for accepting. His chief advantage was the influence of his own personality. But he had to find a means of letting the Republicans save face. His subtle approach to the handling of this problem added much to his status as a Congressional leader.

He tried to show the Congress in an implicit manner that the President had made a number of concessions. For example, he noted that Truman had agreed to the establishment of an independent governmental agency to administer the program. The President had originally urged that the program be administered through the State Department in order to integrate the program with the total foreign policy. The

Republican majority in the Senate objected on the grounds that the State Department personnel lacked the business experience needed in the handling of large sums of money. Vandenberg noted that the President agreed to follow the advice of the Brookings Institution of Washington who recommended that a separate agency be established which could enlist top businessmen to handle the project. He quickly dispelled the fears of those, however, who thought this plan might result in economic considerations overshadowing the political aspects. He pointed out that the final decision in case of conflicting interests would be made by the President.

Without specific reference to them as such, the Senator noted other concessions. One of the major compromises involved in the executive-Congressional problem was the decision to encourage annual Congressional review of the program. Vandenberg called it the "watchdog" committee. The evaluation of the program was not left entirely in the hands of the President. "It must be determined," said Vandenberg, "to what extent yesterday's performance warrants tomorrow's continuing cooperation."¹⁵⁸ The implication advanced here was that the Congress was

¹⁵⁸Record, 80th Cong., 2d Sess., 1948, XCIV, Part 2, 1918.

forcing the President to give it a hand in the shaping of foreign policy and a share in its administration.

Vandenberg also called attention to the administration's acceptance of the Republican demand that the program's continuation would depend upon the effective use of the money in Europe. He noted that a "roving ambassador" would provide a means of holding "these governments to strict accountability for these relationships upon which they and we must depend for the final basic success of the undertaking."¹⁵⁹ He failed, however, to specify practices to which the countries would be expected to comply. He offered no specific form of economic organization which the countries would be forced to follow. This would indicate that Vandenberg was expecting Europe to make use of the money to restore its standard of living, but that he did not envision the aid as a means of requiring these countries to adopt any particular economic system.

In this manner, he tried to convert a reluctant Republican Congress to his point of view. He put the burden of proof directly on the backs of those who would oppose him when he asserted that the "greatest nation on earth either justifies or surrenders its leadership. We must choose."¹⁶⁰ This, in fact, virtually forced the Republicans either to

¹⁵⁹Ibid.

¹⁶⁰Ibid., p. 1915.

support the measure or offer a better program in its place. To have done less would have meant that America was turning its back on the countries calling for help from Communist imperialism.

His speech also noted the lagging faith which the American people held in the ability of the United Nations to keep the peace. The Senator, in fact, felt no compulsion to offer an apology that the program by-passed the United Nations. While admitting that the better way "is an undivided United Nations which is made to work,"¹⁶¹ he proceeded on the assumption that the American people now viewed this body as impotent in the face of the communist threat. Consequently, he felt no compulsion to try to fit the program into the scheme of the United Nations. He implied, in fact, that the program actually looked beyond the United Nations to a new "position of strength" based on the concept of "balance of power."

The issue of trade.--For the most part, Vandenberg made a very candid choice of arguments. If one chooses to ignore the adverse effect which it could have had on the Senate's consideration of the bill, however, one can criticize the Senator for skipping over a vital phase of European recovery. As Vandenberg outlined it, Europe's economic problem was one of inadequate industrial capacity and temporary

¹⁶¹Ibid., p. 1920.

food shortage. American aid was to be used to prime a few pumps so that European production could be restored. Assuming that this transformation could be brought into being, it became obvious that Europe needed markets for her manufactured products. That meant foreign trade. The Senator, however, made no mention of the American tariff walls which would have to be removed or lowered if Europe were to find economic recovery. The relationship of the Marshall Plan to world trade was recognized by the National Planning Association:

In the long run, no temporary expedients can suffice to put into the hands of foreign importers amounts of dollar exchange needed to pay for the exports which the United States is equipped to send them. The most important action which the United States must take is the negotiation of a series of reciprocal trade agreements that will make a really substantial breach in the protective tariff.¹⁶²

One must turn to conjecture to ascertain Vandenberg's reason for omitting any discussion of the trade issue. He may have felt that the need for more trade with the United States was not a pressing one. Certainly, it must be admitted that at that point there were few goods that Europe could send to the United States. He must have recognized, however, that Europe could not recover, no matter how much American aid was given her, as long as

¹⁶²J. B. Condliffe, "Obstacles to Multilateral Trade," Planning Pamphlet No. 59 (Washington, D. C.: National Planning Association, April, 1947), p. 1.

trade restrictions stifled her producers and traders. But since that day was a few years away, he may have felt no compulsion to introduce the subject. To have done so might have invited opposition to the proposal. On the other hand, the speaker claimed that the program offered a good chance to help Europe back to economic stability. It can be argued that Vandenberg should, at least, have recognized the trade condition as an essential if rehabilitation under the Marshall Plan was to be effective.

Collectivism as an issue.--Vandenberg also chose to slide over one major objection to the proposal. It had been charged that the money might go to countries essentially socialistic in behavior. Such was the opinion of Merwin K. Hart, President of the National Economic Council. He argued that "the political implication of our adoption of this Marshall Plan . . . is that we will be promoting the very system in which we disbelieve."¹⁶³ The Senator said little in refutation to this objection. He either concluded that it carried little weight or else he had little to say in return. Wilson noted that during this period "collectivism seemed to be the order of the times"¹⁶⁴ in Europe. Americans were alarmed by such trends. The Senator, instead, relied

¹⁶³Merwin K. Hart, "Marshall Plan," Congressional Digest, XXVII (March, 1948), p. 91.

¹⁶⁴Francis Graham Wilson, The American Political Mind (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1949), p. 467.

upon the equally strong opinion of Americans that each country had a right to chart its own economic destiny. He simply asserted that "we do not presume to dictate the formula."¹⁶⁵ The implication was that should the Marshall Plan be installed as a model of American private enterprise, the program would obstruct the efforts of Europeans to recover and might even encourage the Communists. But this point was not vigorously asserted. It was evident that American aid was to provide the means of using the country's economic and political resources on behalf of its foreign policy goals.

The Address on the North Atlantic
Treaty Organization

The Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan served notice that the United States was prepared to resist Soviet expansion. The result was a world-wide awareness by the middle of 1948 that the Soviet bloc nations and the Western Allies were solidly engaged in a "cold war." Tensions built up in America that it might turn into a hot war. What followed was a series of steps that eventually resulted in the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization--a military alliance of twelve Western bloc nations who agreed to aid each other in case of attack.

¹⁶⁵Record, 80th Cong., 2d Sess., 1948, XCIV, Part 2, 1920.

Senator Vandenberg gave his support to this new containment policy. He had, in fact, been instrumental in gaining the approval of Congress for a special resolution which cleared the way for the proposal. His major Senate address in support of the treaty was presented on July 6, 1949.¹⁶⁶

The Context of the Speech

Reactions to American containment policies.--The Economic Recovery Program is believed to have been instrumental in preventing Italy and France from going into the Russian camp in the elections of 1948. The fact that the United States, however, considered these areas vital to her defense drew protests from the Soviet Union. Her first reaction was to hold a conference in Warsaw in September of 1947 with nine Eastern European nations for the purpose of drawing up strategy to meet the new American policies. Defense treaties were drawn up with Bulgaria, Finland, Hungary, and Rumania. A series of protest strikes against the Marshall Plan broke out in Italy and France. The most violent reaction, perhaps, came in the attempt by Russia to push the West out of Berlin. Beginning in April of 1948, the Soviet Union tried to stop any movement into or out of

¹⁶⁶Record, 81st Cong., 1st Sess., 1949, XCV, Part 7, 8891.

the city. The American response was an airlift which lasted until April of 1949, at which time an agreement was reached to end the blockade. The "cold war" had been officially declared.

In America, the blockade added to the growing belief that Western Europe might expect military aggression from the Russians. While economic aid was a help in preventing Communist infiltration, it offered no assurance that Western Europe could defend itself from military attack. John Foster Dulles reported that this fear of attack in Europe was interfering "greatly with economic recovery," adding that "only a decisive pronouncement by the United States would check the fear that was inspired by Moscow."¹⁶⁷ Bernard Baruch proposed that the United States join with the nations receiving Marshall Plan aid in a "firm promise to go to war in joint defense if any of them are attacked."¹⁶⁸ Baruch was not the first, however, to make the proposal. Winston Churchill at Fulton, Missouri, on March 5, 1946, proposed a "fraternal association of the English-speaking people"¹⁶⁹ as a means of preventing a war with the Russians, noting that while the

¹⁶⁷John Foster Dulles, War and Peace (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950), p. 95.

¹⁶⁸U. S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Hearings, European Recovery Program, 80th Cong., 2d Sess., 1948, p. 556.

¹⁶⁹Winston Churchill, "Alliance of English Speaking People," Vital Speeches, XII (March 15, 1946), 330.

Soviet Union admired strength, "there is nothing for which they have less respect than weakness, especially military weakness."¹⁷⁰

The Vandenberg Resolution.--Vandenberg was among those in Congress who gave the matter of a military alliance much consideration. He was present at a meeting in 1948 when John Foster Dulles proposed to President Truman that an alliance be set up which would serve notice on the Communists that an attack on one free nation would mean collective defense on the part of all of them. Vandenberg indicated that "the Senate liked the idea of regional associations and would be disposed to approve in principle a further developing of such associations for collective defense."¹⁷¹ Within a month, the Senator had a resolution before Congress which urged the United States to establish "progressive development of regional and other collective arrangements for individual self-defense."¹⁷² President Truman recalled that Senator Vandenberg "skillfully steered" the resolution "through the Senate to overwhelming approval."¹⁷³ The Senate passed the resolution on June 11, 1948, thus paving the way for the entrance of the United States into

¹⁷⁰Ibid., p. 332.

¹⁷¹John Foster Dulles, op. cit., p. 96.

¹⁷²Papers, p. 407.

¹⁷³Truman, op. cit., p. 244.

a military alliance with Western Europe. "The contents of the resolution," noted Under Secretary of State Lovett, "became our guide in the discussion and subsequent negotiations which led to the conclusion of the North Atlantic Pact."¹⁷⁴

Defense of bipartisan policies.--Before the Vandenberg resolution was put into practice, the 1948 election intervened. During the campaign Vandenberg urged the Republicans not to involve foreign affairs in politics. He was distressed when President Truman persistently attacked the Eightieth Congress as "the second worst in history." Speaking from Washington on October 4, 1948, Vandenberg told the nation that the "80th Congress, in all that relates to our foreign affairs," was definitely not "the second worst in history as we sometimes hear." He then gave a detailed account of Republican contributions to the United Nations Charter, the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the Rio Pact--all of which represented, he contended, "bipartisan foreign policy" at its best.¹⁷⁵ Through Vandenberg's efforts, in large part at least, the new treaty issue did not become involved in the campaign.

¹⁷⁴U. S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Hearings, North Atlantic Treaty, 81st Cong., 1st Sess., 1949, Part 1, p. 237.

¹⁷⁵Papers, p. 451.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization.--In his Inaugural Address in January, 1949, President Truman told of security plans with twelve North Atlantic nations which would insure that "any armed attack affecting our national security would be met with overwhelming force. . . ."176 Dean Acheson, whose appointment to the job as Secretary of State in January, 1949, was defended by Vandenberg, negotiated with twelve European countries to complete the pact. It was signed on April 4, 1949, and submitted to the Senate on April 12, 1949.177 The pact that emerged was a bipartisan project. Secretary Acheson told the Senate that it was "without parallel in my knowledge, as a cooperative enterprise between the executive and the legislative branches."178 Working together the two groups had committed America to a pledge that in case of attack on a member each country would assist "by such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force."179

Senator Vandenberg gave public support to the treaty in March, 1949. He called the pact the "most important step in American foreign policy since the promulgation of the

176The New York Times, January 21, 1949, p. 4.

177Foster Rhea Dulles, op. cit., pp. 242-44.

178Hearings, North Atlantic Treaty, p. 4.

179Ibid.; p. 19.

Monroe Doctrine."¹⁸⁰ But long before this statement, he was busy behind the scenes working in liaison with the State Department and the Foreign Relations Committee to help produce a document acceptable both to the political parties in America and to the nations signing the treaty. His imprint was particularly found in Article 3 where the nations signing agreed "to develop their individual and collective capacity to resist attack 'by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid.'" This was language which appeared in the Vandenberg resolution. He was also instrumental in securing a change in the original version of Article 5 in which the parties had agreed to use armed force if necessary in case of attack to restore the peace. He was of the opinion that this would invoke criticism from the isolationist element of his party. At his insistence, the Article was changed so that each nation agreed to take such action "as it deems necessary including the use of force."¹⁸¹

In spite of the traditional objections to entangling alliances, only scant opposition developed in Congress. A small group of Senators, however, voiced alarm over the possibility of sending American troops abroad and the obligation which the pact imposed on America to furnish armaments

¹⁸⁰Record, 81st Cong., 1st Sess., 1949, XCV, Part 3, 3171.

¹⁸¹Papers, p. 476.

and other supplies. "Especially was there continuing and often vehement controversy," notes Dulles, "over the military assistance the United States was called upon to provide its North Atlantic partners."¹⁸² The debate in fact largely resolved down to this issue. The bill passed, however, without any crippling amendments. Dean Acheson captured the sentiment: "History and common sense dictate the wisdom that the preservation of peace and of our own security is immeasurably advanced by the strengthening of Western Europe."¹⁸³

The North Atlantic Treaty approached the limits in 1948 of American willingness to support containment policies. To give economic aid to those in need was one thing, but to commit the nation's military power to a binding policy was another. But in spite of the extremely cautious attitude, the American people took up the new burden. Events in Europe during 1948-49 tipped the scales in favor of the move. The forces of Communism subverted Czechoslovakia, and Russia leveled the Berlin blockade. It became evident that economic aid would be inadequate in the face of the Russian army rolling over Western Europe. It is doubtful that many Americans came to a full realization that the

¹⁸²Foster Rhea Dulles, op. cit., p. 244.

¹⁸³McGeorge Bundy (ed.), The Pattern of Responsibility--From the Record of Secretary of State Dean Acheson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1952), p. 69.

United States had committed itself to give money, armaments, and arms to the defense of 229 million people spread out over 6.5 million square miles. But the choice was before them. Either they moved in such manner that the Soviet Union would know that if war came it would lose it, or run the risk of having Russia seize Western Europe. They naturally chose to align themselves with democratic Allies. It is probable that if they had not made this decision in July, President Truman's announcement in August of the same year that Russia had exploded an atomic bomb would have made it for them.

Report of the Speech

Vandenberg's major speech in support of the Atlantic Pact was given "in an atmosphere where the Senators obviously knew how they intended to vote but were conscious that the debate was a heavily historical one."¹⁸⁴ In his last "full-dress" foreign policy speech in the United States Senate, Vandenberg spoke for two hours in defense of the proposal.

The development of the speech was two-fold. First, Vandenberg outlined the major aims of the proposal. Then he gave answers to leading attacks against the measure. It must be stressed, however, that the speech included a number of digressions from these two divisions. These were usually

¹⁸⁴The New York Times, July 7, 1949, p. 1.

inserted for purposes of historical review, often emphasizing the role of bipartisanship in American foreign policy. Such comments may have been a psychological device on Vandenberg's part to make full use of his own historical role in foreign policy.

Introduction.--The opening followed the usual Vandenberg pattern. He, first, plunged straight into his thesis. "I present to the Senate," he said, "my urgent reasons for supporting the pending North Atlantic Treaty." His next move was to recognize that honest differences of opinion existed on the issue. "There is no monopoly of truth on either side," he insisted. This attempt to leave the impression of fairness was a standard practice for the Senator. Then he tried to place the discussion on a rational basis. "The treaty's final authority depends upon the extent of our intellectual conviction that this philosophy of collective action is wise and sound and right." After appealing for the use of logic in making the decision, Vandenberg moved to the final phase of his introduction in which he outlined the main issues of the debate.

. . . this treaty is the most sensible, powerful, practicable, and economical step the United States can now take in the . . . interest of its own security; in the effective discouragement of aggression; . . . in the stabilization of Western Germany; and, as declared by its own preamble, in peacefully safeguarding the freedoms . . . individual liberty and rule of law. . . .¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁵Record, 81st Cong., 1st Sess., 1949, XCV, Part 7, 8891.

Objectives of the North Atlantic Treaty.--From the introduction, Vandenberg moved to an analysis of the objectives of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. His first argument more or less stated the pact's immediate goal. He insisted that the treaty was needed to stop Soviet aggression. The pact, he argued, was "the best available implement to discourage armed aggression and thus stop another war."¹⁸⁶ The peace of the world was being challenged. In Vandenberg's thinking, the way to meet that threat effectively was through a new military alliance with Western Europe. The argument was obviously geared to the fear of aggression.

Vandenberg conceived of the treaty in terms of this organized threat. Peace, he argued was in "jeopardy in today's tortured world." This jeopardy stemmed not from the North Atlantic community, but from "greedy communism abroad and at home; from open conspiracies which have frankly sought to wreck the brave self-help and mutual aid which would restore independent peoples to their heritage."¹⁸⁷ He made no attempt to prove this assertion. He simply claimed that "every vigilant American knows this is true." He referred, of course, to the prevailing belief that the Soviet purpose was world domination. The Senator's proposal recognized this threat as a reality. "Only those without eyes to see

¹⁸⁶Ibid.

¹⁸⁷Ibid.

and ears to hear," said Vandenberg, "can deny that these precious values . . . are in jeopardy in today's tortured world."¹⁸⁸ Only a year previously in arguing the case for European Recovery, the Senator had gone to great lengths to emphasize that the act was not directed at containing the Soviet Union. But now that the means had changed from economic to military, he freely admitted that a Soviet attack on Western Europe was a possibility, and he proposed NATO as a deterrent to this act.

But Vandenberg did not present the proposal as a charity drive to save Western Europe for its own sake. He made the point that the control of Europe by an unfriendly power would constitute an intolerable threat to American security. He was not asking his colleagues to approve the measure as a means of making the world "safe for democracy." The rationale was clothed in the belief that the Soviet Union would like to encircle Western Europe so that in the end the United States, the main enemy, would be isolated. "We are the final target," insisted Vandenberg, "though other independent peoples are in nearer jeopardy." The strategy of Russia as he pictured it was to keep the democracies divided so that they could gradually pick away at each one by one without encountering a unified force. "We cannot run away," he argued. "We may argue ourselves out of ratifying the

¹⁸⁸Ibid.

pact. But we cannot thereby argue ourselves out of the jeopardy which the pact seeks to minimize."¹⁸⁹

Vandenberg finally came to the question of whether this move would be effective in stopping a Communist attack in Europe. He emphasized that the real issue was not whether America would be involved if such an attack came. America would be involved with or without the pact. "Once upon a time, we were a comfortably isolated land. Now we are unavoidably the leader and the reliance of free men throughout the free world. We cannot escape from our prestige nor from its hazard."¹⁹⁰ The question, he contended, was whether this pact would help reduce the danger in which Europe found itself. His reply was in the affirmative. He thought, in fact, that it might "well extinguish the jeopardy . . . by the clear demonstration that this united self-defense against aggression will be invincible."¹⁹¹ The proposal, insisted Vandenberg, demonstrated that each country would rely on every other member of the pact to contribute to the common defense. This arrangement should give tangible proof to the Communists that the defense against aggression would be so effective that an invader would see only ruin for his people if he attacked. Peace was to be maintained under this arrangement by a balance of power. This concept

¹⁸⁹Ibid.

¹⁹⁰Ibid., p. 8892.

¹⁹¹Ibid., p. 8891.

rested on the assumption that the human and material resources, the skills, the initiative and the strength of these countries would tip the balance in favor of the Western World. "Upon two previous occasions," said Vandenberg, "the Kaiser and the Fuehrer found this out the hard way. This treaty ought to make a renewal of the lesson, in blood and sweat and tears, unnecessary."192

Vandenberg's second reason for supporting the treaty presented an intermediate aim of the pact. He contended that the act would enable the Western powers to develop a "position of strength," which should conceivably force the Soviet Union to negotiate for peace. The pact, he argued, "spells out the conclusive warning that independent freedom is not an orphan in this Western World, and that no armed aggression will have a chance to win."193 Faced with such a prospect, Russia would have to choose between possible destruction or co-existing with the West. The aim of such strategy was clearly to eliminate the threat of aggression, but also to strengthen freedom and democracy. The Senator, however, did not speak of the triumph of democracy over communism. The program was aimed at a settlement through compromise and pressure. The pact was a system designed to obtain concessions from Russia short of war. Through

192 Ibid.

193 Ibid., p. 8893.

a show of strength, the Western powers hoped to find a better bargaining position.

While the pressing objectives of the pact revolved around the restoration of the balance of power by means short of war, Vandenberg also had his eye on a long-range goal. He argued that the treaty could help integrate Western Europe. He particularly noted that the program would help in the "stabilization of Western Germany."¹⁹⁴ Such was possible, he contended, if the Atlantic Community could function not only as a unified military operation, but also as an integrated political unit. Noting that the Marshall Plan had inaugurated this goal, the Senator asserted that the Atlantic Pact would complete the task by safeguarding "the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law."¹⁹⁵ He claimed, however, this centralized machinery would not invade the prerogative of national sovereignty. It would, on the other hand, at least encourage these nations to discuss, consider and recommend on matters of mutual concern.

Defense of the proposal.--In the second main division of his speech, Vandenberg defended the treaty against a number of attacks. He first considered the argument of those

¹⁹⁴Ibid., p. 8891.

¹⁹⁵Ibid., p. 8893.

who believed that the treaty represented a "sharp departure from our historic American foreign policy of nonentanglement in the affairs of others."¹⁹⁶ He admitted that in the literal way of looking at the situation this might be true. But he insisted that in the sense of departing from a "philosophy of preventive action against aggression,"¹⁹⁷ it was in keeping with the Monroe Doctrine and American membership in the United Nations. "I assert," he said, "that on the basis of our own American experience with candor under the Monroe Doctrine that it is more calculated to encourage peace and prevent the insane events which would make peace impossible."¹⁹⁸ His motive was clear. He hoped to connect the pending treaty with respected traditions.

Having admitted that the situation called for solutions heretofore unnecessary, he pushed on to the conclusion that America must make the move whether she liked it or not. "We are unavoidably the leader of the reliance of free men throughout this free world. We cannot escape from our prestige nor from its hazard."¹⁹⁹ America must do what she has to do. "Like the practical people that we are, we faced

¹⁹⁶Ibid., p. 8892.

¹⁹⁷Ibid., p. 8894.

¹⁹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹⁹Ibid., p. 8892.

these hard facts of life," he insisted. "We sought to make ourselves safe in a world of peace and justice."²⁰⁰

What had America done in the past to achieve this objective? He enumerated in quick succession Dumbarton Oaks, San Francisco, European Recovery, Act of Chapultepec, the Rio Pact, and now the North Atlantic Treaty. All these steps were taken for collective security. All were built on the theme of cooperation for mutual protection. "We cannot turn back the clock. We cannot sail by old and easier charts. That has been determined for us by the march of events."²⁰¹ He thus concluded that America had long ago embarked upon a policy which demanded that she use her strength to protect the free nations of Europe from aggression. "We have to play that part," he insisted. "All that we can decide is whether we shall play it well or ill."²⁰²

Vandenberg next refuted the charge that the pact was a "repetition of an old military alliance as menacingly known to history."²⁰³ He noted that the Holy Alliance of 1815 was a "contract not only for survival but for domination."²⁰⁴

²⁰⁰Ibid.

²⁰¹Ibid.

²⁰²Ibid.

²⁰³Ibid., p. 8893.

²⁰⁴Ibid., p. 8894.

By contrast, the Monroe Doctrine was dedicated to peace by "warning of the consequences of aggression."²⁰⁵ Such, he contended, is the basis of the North Atlantic Pact. It must be compared, he insisted, to the Monroe Doctrine. "The North Atlantic Treaty . . . is dedicated solely to peace," he concluded, adding that it was "devoid of a single imperialistic obligation."²⁰⁶ His main proof was the analogy he drew between the pact and the Monroe Doctrine. Aware of the popular respect Americans held for the Monroe Doctrine, he attempted the rhetorical feat of connecting his proposition to this respected and cherished value.

. . . the North Atlantic Pact may be a literal departure from orthodox American diplomacy although George Washington's Farewell Address visualized temporary alliances. . . . But I deny that the treaty is a departure from a philosophy of preventive action against aggression. . . . I assert, on the basis of our own American experience with candor under the Monroe Doctrine that it is more calculated to encourage peace. . . .²⁰⁷

The Michigan Senator then considered the question of arms. Much of the Senate opposition to the pact had arisen over this issue. Senator Taft, for example, said that he would vote "in favor of the Atlantic Pact . . . if the question of arms were not involved."²⁰⁸ Vandenberg's reply was two-fold. He first attempted to divert attention away

²⁰⁵Ibid.

²⁰⁶Ibid.

²⁰⁷Ibid.

²⁰⁸Ibid., p. 9206.

from the arms aspect of the treaty by emphasizing the non-military phases of the program. "It is not the military forces in being which measure the impact of this 'knock-out' admonition, important though they are. It is the potential which counts,"²⁰⁹ he insisted. The pact's real value, he thought, would lie in its assurance to the world that an attack upon any of the NATO powers would be regarded as an act of war by all the members. "It is this total concept which, in my view, would give even a reincarnated Hitler pause."²¹⁰ The purpose was one of peace. The plan was supposed to give tangible proof to an aggressor that he would have to face the combined efforts of the entire Atlantic community. The real value in this plan, insisted Vandenberg, was in its means to avert war rather than its ability to wage one.

Fully aware, however, that he could not completely ignore the arms implication of the pact, he elected to divorce this phase of the program from the treaty itself. He could not avoid the fact that the treaty promised military support to Western Europe. He argued that such vital questions as how much support and what type of military plan need not be answered at that time. He went so far, in fact, as to imply that a Senator might support the treaty and later vote against the use of military instruments. "I shall never argue,"

²⁰⁹Ibid., p. 8894.

²¹⁰Ibid.

he said, "that their vote for the Pact precludes free and honest judgment and independence in any such subsequent event."²¹¹ He, of course, agreed with Secretary of State Acheson that "there is an obligation to help,"²¹² in terms of military requirements, but he insisted that a Senator would not be obligated to vote this help if the manner and timing were not as he believed it should be. In the precise sense, this was true; but at the least, it would appear that even under Vandenberg's interpretation of America's responsibility in this case, a military assistance program would be regarded as a significant supplement to the treaty. It could be assumed that the agreement reached in principle would probably never be a reality unless Congress could define the extent of military assistance implied in the treaty.

One of the most prevailing fears in the Congress was that the treaty would take away the freedom of the United States to declare its own wars. Senator Taft voiced the sentiment of this group. "The obligation to go to war seems to be binding upon the United States as a nation, so that Congress would be obligated to declare war if that were necessary to comply with the provisions of the treaty."²¹³

²¹¹Ibid., p. 8895.

²¹²Ibid.

²¹³Ibid., p. 9206.

Since this objection involved the heart of the treaty, in that it concerned the pledge of mutual assistance, Vandenberg attempted to deal with it in precise terms.

His first move was an obvious attempt to take the focus of attention from the "war" aspect of the objection. He argued that just because the Article provides that "an armed attack upon one shall be considered an attack on all" did not necessarily commit the United States to war. Noting that the use of armed force was only one alternative, he stressed that the Atlantic community might very well achieve its defense through a strong warning or even an appeal to the Security Council.

Vandenberg then faced the possibility that some aggressor might seek to accomplish its political ends with military means. "Let us say," said Vandenberg, "that it is clearly the dread thing which threatens the life and freedom of one of our associated nations, if not ourselves directly." In this event, said Vandenberg, America would be at war. "Pact or no pact, it would mean war for us anyway in this foreshortened world." All the treaty will have done in this case, insisted the Senator, is formalize our policy in such contingency, and "we would be infinitely better off for having instant and competent Allies."²¹⁴ Without mentioning names, the Senator was saying that the basic purpose of the alliance was to

²¹⁴Ibid., p. 8895.

officially announce what Americans already knew, i.e., an armed Soviet attack on Western Europe would be treated by the United States as an act of war and would find the United States repelling such a move. Aggressive Communism would have already called the play, with or without the pact's existence. The treaty would have simply formalized American policy. At this point, insisted Vandenberg, the legalities would be of small consequence.

From here, Vandenberg moved to a consideration of the constitutional issue. Though arguing that Congress would retain unimpaired its power to declare war, he still reminded the Senate that the President already held the power to act in defense of the country even without the consent of Congress. Would the President have the authority to use American armed forces for the mutual defense of the Western Allies if the attack were not on American territory? Vandenberg's reply was vague. He said: "Whoever is attacked will have dependable Allies who will do their dependable part by constitutional process."²¹⁵ He then argued that those who insisted the discussion on the constitutional issue be more specific were guilty of "procedural hypotheses." Using the rhetorical device of begging the question, he said that people overly concerned with the procedural aspects of the problem were forgetting that the pact was designed to

²¹⁵Ibid.

provide measures for military aid which should make it unnecessary for the countries to use their armed forces.

"Let us not make the fatal error of deserting the treaty because of our preoccupation with contingencies," he argued. He then concluded the point by attempting to attach the stigma of war to those who would raise such technical matters. "The prevention of the next war," said Vandenberg, "is more important even than the winning of it."²¹⁶ Thus, it seems that Vandenberg left hanging the issue most in need of clarification.

Vandenberg went from the touchy question of "automatic war" to a much less controversial issue. He answered those "malignant critics who cry out that the North Atlantic Pact is born of warmongers harboring evil, and armed designs upon their fellow men."²¹⁷ As might be expected, the Senator turned primarily to emotional appeals to answer this charge. In essence, his argument was simply that the objective of the pact was to help create conditions which should make disarmament possible. "This is the supreme Christian aspiration,"²¹⁸ he said. And while the Senator remained vague in his language at this point, he obviously meant to imply that the pact was designed to obtain concessions from Russia without war.

²¹⁶Ibid.

²¹⁷Ibid.

²¹⁸Ibid.

Vandenberg then addressed himself to those who argued that the plan would "defile, if not . . . scuttle, the United Nations."²¹⁹ He bluntly denied that the pact defied the Charter. Stressing that Article 51 made ample provisions for regional arrangements, the Senator insisted that the pact was based upon the self-defense features of the Charter. First, he stressed that the pact provided in the event of an attack from outside the membership of NATO, the countries involved would consult with each other and give the required notice to the Security Council. Second, if the member nations decided to take action, again the Council would be informed, but such measures would not interfere with any action the Council might take.

The Senator recognized, however, that the question was not so much whether the pact complied with the technical requirements of the Charter as it was a question of whether NATO would fit into the spirit of the United Nations. Thus, he insisted that the pact preserved the Charter in that the Western Pact nations could do what the United Nations could not; i.e., prevent Communist aggression. "How can we undermine the Charter," he argued, "when we keep its obligation alive--when we keep its spirit alive?"²²⁰ Obviously aware, however, that such an answer would not satisfy those who insisted that the organization would overshadow the United

²¹⁹Ibid.

²²⁰Ibid., p. 8896.

Nations, the Senator brushed the issue aside with the remark: "The United Nations . . . have no sturdier, no more militant friends than those who have joined forces to sustain righteous peace through the North Atlantic Treaty."²²¹

Vandenberg interrupted the refutation of major attacks against the proposal to comment upon the interpretation of several provisions within the Charter. He assured his countrymen that Italy would not exceed the peace treaty limit on rearmament, new members could be admitted to the organization, the pledges ceased to apply to a member which "fundamentally changes character,"²²² the treaty did not bind a country to take action in civil wars, it implied no tariff commitments, and finally, the United States was not excluding its concern for other nations of the world who were not in the pact. With the exception of a brief quotation by Warren Austin that the program would aid the cause of peace, he relied upon the audience's awareness of his work on the treaty as evidence that he was giving proper interpretations to each of these matters.

The Senator did not dwell on the cost of the program. He knew, of course, there was no way of estimating the eventual cost. He simply said the most effective way to reduce federal spending was to aid the cause of peace. "We

²²¹Ibid.

²²²Ibid.

truly spend to save," he stressed, "when we invest in peace."²²³

Conclusion.--Vandenberg concluded with a stern warning that the pact could not be abandoned without the gravest of consequences for the free world. The Senator, perhaps, realized at this point that the strongest point in favor of ratification was the Senate's realization that it had little choice but to approve the treaty. At that hour, rejection could have been a clear signal to Western Europe that America was indifferent to the dangers of Communist encirclement.

Interpretation of the Speech

The bipartisan leader.--Vandenberg's defense of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization carried the tone of the opposition leader again pleading for bipartisan acceptance of a major foreign policy move. The address contained little, perhaps, that had not already been said by others, or even by the speaker. At least, an examination of the speech reveals no set of new ideas. The speaker's contribution to the measure may have been the fact that a former exponent of Jefferson's "entangling alliances with none" maxium was advising his countrymen to commit the nation to a military pact. His strong personal appeal was placed

²²³Ibid., p. 8897.

solidly behind the measure in an attempt to "water down" the voice of the opposition.

For Vandenberg, the North Atlantic Treaty was more than just another containment measure. He defended it with the vitality of one fighting for an ideal. And indeed it was. He sensed the inevitable breakup of big power unity even before the San Francisco Conference and was instrumental in getting Article 51 into the Charter which provided for regional defense groups. Even before the Charter was ratified Vandenberg's faith in global collective security had swung to regional collective security. He then pressed for the Rio Pact which provided for regional defense of the Western Hemisphere. After the Soviet Union threatened the security of Western Europe, he pushed through Congress the Vandenberg Resolution which opened the way for the President to seek a mutual defense arrangement with the North Atlantic Nations. The pact had become in his mind the sine qua non of the free world's defense against the Soviet Union.

Vandenberg's speech in support of the treaty shows that he was looking to the pact as a balance of strength between the Soviet Union and the United States. His main objective was clear: to deter a Soviet attack by making it evident that the members of the alliance were in a position to defend themselves through a cooperative effort. It was in this manner that Vandenberg thought the alliance would offer its major reward. He recognized, of course, the

long-range objective. If war should come, retaliation would be more effective if carried out with other democracies in a co-ordinate manner.

The Michigan Senator played down the importance of the long-range objective. He always insisted that the chief advantage of collective security did not lie in its overt military acts, but rather in its potential force and moral impact. He argued, in fact, that the chief value of the United Nations was not in the Security Council where power to take military action had been placed, but, instead, was found in the General Assembly where the nations of the world were standing ready to pass moral judgment on those who broke the peace. He claimed the same for the Rio Pact. His conception was simply that through regional collective defense the democracies could defend themselves without having to wage war.

Little need be said at this point in proof of the fact that the Soviet Union did not frighten as easily as Vandenberg implied in this address. The time was soon to come when the United States would be forced to provide the military means to implement the agreement defined in the North Atlantic Pact. Vandenberg was naive, indeed, if he assumed that the Western powers could sign a military pact without provoking the Soviet Union into actions which would increase its strength. Hindsight is not needed to arrive at this conclusion. Vandenberg had witnessed the reactions

to America's "get-touch" policy, the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. While the economic measures had speeded recovery in Western Europe, the positive effects did not follow from any withdrawal tendencies of the Soviet Union. The change had come because American dollars enabled the countries to buy needed commodities from the United States.

Military assistance.--Vandenberg, of course, recognized the persuasive value of divorcing the treaty from the proposed military assistance program. He recognized that this phase of the treaty offered the major opposition to the achievement of his goal. Aside from this, however, a close comparison of Vandenberg's remarks in his January 10, 1945, address with the one under consideration will reveal that he placed great faith in the deterrent force of potential military strength.

All this is not to suggest that Vandenberg did not anticipate that military assistance to the members of the organization would follow the signing of the pact. He was prepared to contain the Communists by whatever means the free world could muster. His speech shows that he hoped an extensive program would not be necessary. Although no further proof was needed at this hour, it gave further evidence that Vandenberg was fully prepared, if necessary, to risk war in the name of national security.

The Senator's purpose in calling for ratification of the treaty was thus not dependent on whether the Soviet

Union desired to pursue a policy of conquest. This was assumed. The real issue as the Senator put it was simply whether the United States wished to permit the divided elements of the free world to be swallowed up, thus leaving America to deal with Russia alone. He saw Western Europe as the key to the future security of the United States. Anything short of this policy, he argued, would result in appeasement which he called "surrender on the installment plan."²²⁴

Function of the pact.--By the time the North Atlantic Treaty reached the Senate floor, the differences of opinion on the measure were more a matter of procedure than of fundamentals. The goals had been agreed upon in the debate over the Marshall Plan and in the year of discussion over the pact. Vandenberg's speech reflects these attitudes. The basic premises in his address were the same as those he had used in defending the European Recovery Program. The Soviet Union threatened Western Europe. In the name of American security, both economic and military measures had to be taken to check the Communists. Controversies arose over the extent to which America should become involved, the circumstances under which the use of troops could be employed in foreign lands, and the fear that the program might drain the American economy. Vandenberg, therefore, devoted most of his time to a discussion of these issues.

²²⁴Ibid., p. 8891.

As previously stated, the major function of the pact, according to Vandenberg, was to force a peaceful restoration of the balance of power. He made a very candid analysis of this issue. He argued that the Atlantic Community would bring overwhelming power to resist the Soviet Union. This would demonstrate to Russia that peaceful retreat would be preferable to military defeat. Vandenberg made it evident that the center of this great show of strength was to be the American possession of atomic energy along with the economic and military restoration of Western Europe. Although more brilliantly clothed, such a combination in essence was little more than power politics in response to the challenge presented by power politics of Russia. The strategy and force of the organization was designed to meet and defeat an invasion of Western Europe by an aggressive enemy. He hoped that this would force the enemy into a position of possible retreat--the extent to which Vandenberg never specified. Certainly it was upon this issue that the American people would either accept or reject the proposition. The Senator argued the core of the issue.

In insisting that the pact would bring the fringe benefit of an integrated Western Europe, however, the Senator failed to demonstrate the validity of his thesis. His fundamental premise that a common heritage of ethical values and belief in democracy existed among the countries

was even open to serious question. He omitted the fact that even if many of the peoples in Europe did possess a high regard for justice and the individual liberties of man, there were also many who were Communists and others who had association with fascist movements. The fact that Portugal with its dictatorship was a member of the pact tended to destroy the image that these countries shared mutual democratic ideals and respect for the individual's role in society. It is thus not surprising that he turned to generalization to discuss the long-range goal of the pact. It was much easier to show that these people might develop a theme of cooperation for their mutual protection against a common enemy than it was to prove that a true community of nations would evolve. At best, he could only contend that this move coupled with the European Recovery Act constituted a step in this ultimate direction.

The pact and the Monroe Doctrine.--Vandenberg's attempt to show that collective security was an extenuation of the Monroe Doctrine offers insights into the manner in which he attempted to justify his shift from isolationism to internationalism. He argued that the pact was at least within the spirit of past American traditions. It was, perhaps, ironical that in 1941, he opposed Lend-Lease as a collective measure against Hitler on the grounds that it violated the American tradition of avoiding foreign entanglements. Now, only eight years later, he looked upon

America's attempts at collective security as an extension of the Monroe Doctrine. But Vandenberg could not deny that the pact marked an innovation in United States Foreign Policy. He was forced to admit that the move meant the United States would participate in a permanent alliance with nations across the ocean, whereas, America had attempted to avoid such commitments in the past. "Times have changed," he insisted. His rationale for the turn in American policy was thus geared to the concept that different conditions demand new criteria as a basis of problem solving. "We might compare," he said, "old-fashioned muskets with new-fashioned bombs."²²⁵ America must meet twentieth century problems with new solutions. The immediate solution, in his mind, called for alliances.

In his efforts to show that the Atlantic Treaty was simply another Monroe Doctrine, he failed to note significant differences. The Monroe Doctrine, for example, was a unilateral declaration--not a treaty. The United States was free to modify the doctrine without the consent of other powers. The United States, in fact, was free to withdraw at any time and was left completely free to judge the merits of each situation without consultation with others. The Atlantic Pact imposed an obligation to go to the defense of member nations in case an armed attack occurred. Such obligation was binding for twenty years. The Monroe Doctrine

²²⁵Ibid., p. 8892.

imposed no such obligation and set no time limit. He could not demonstrate (and this was a crucial issue in the minds of the American people)²²⁶ that the treaty would not obligate the United States to go to the defense of any member nation whether the other members did so or not.

The military means.--It can be argued that the Senator was trying to make a distinction without a difference in insisting that a vote for the pact did not necessarily commit the country to support its principles with military means. Logic does not support his position. The pact was basically a military pact.²²⁷ It is doubtful that the pact could be perfected without military support. The pact, at least, implied an obligation to fight in case of attack.

It is open to question whether Vandenberg's position on the military assistance aspect was defensible. It was possible that the military implementation could get the Atlantic Community into the very difficulty it was trying to avoid. Many thorny problems were involved in implementation. What would a defense which would protect Western Europe from invasion by Russia involve? The Soviet Union was believed to have in 1949 about 4,000,000 men in uniform, including 175 to 210 divisions. The scanty information available placed her combat aircraft at 14,000 to 16,000 planes.²²⁸

²²⁶Foster Rhea Dulles; op. cit., p. 244.

²²⁷Reitzel, Kaplan, and Coblentz, op. cit., p. 133.

²²⁸The New York Times, August 4, 1949, p. 3.

To create a defense against such force involving all of the Atlantic Community would take time and money. Would such rearmament delay economic recovery? If recovery were hindered, would it invite Communist infiltration? On the other hand, America could attempt to send enough troops to Europe immediately, thus not calling on her Allies for much help. Would the Russians stand by while America moved an army into Europe?

The American people were naturally concerned about these problems. At least minimally associated with the pact was the possibility that America might be making a pledge she might not wish to keep. Vandenberg, perhaps, owed it to his audience to include a consideration of these questions. A discussion of the implications involved in the pact might have avoided a mistaken notion in the minds of many Americans that all the pact involved was a promise by Americans that any Russian aggression would be met by American force. These problems later proved to be of such significance that one historian has concluded that the difficulties in providing military assistance "might have dragged on interminably, if the Soviet Union had not tested its first atom bomb in September, 1949," adding that "even with this stimulus," the program "did not become effectively operational until early 1951."²²⁹

²²⁹Reitzel, Kaplan, and Coblenz, op. cit., p. 134.

The pact and the United Nations.--Neither was the Senator's attempt to connect the program with the United Nations very satisfactory. He must have recognized that merely repeating, "This treaty does not affect in any way the obligation under the charter of the parties which are members of the United Nations,"²³⁰ could not hide reality. America's line of defense was shifting away from that body. The mere fact that Vandenberg apparently believed he could justify this shift with a few scattered comments about the spirit of the Pact and its relationship to the Charter would indicate that the American people by 1949 had relegated the Charter to a place of secondary importance. The Senator felt little compulsion to justify this shift. His brief remarks on the subject appear to have been directed to those nations in the United Nations which might look upon the Atlantic Pact as further dividing the peoples of the world into the "East" and the "West." In view of the formation of the neutral bloc in the United Nations, which followed the creation of the Atlantic Community, the Senator should have been more concerned with this group.

Finally, Vandenberg passed over the possibility that such a plan as NATO might lead to the war its supporters were trying to prevent. Or stated another way, one can

²³⁰Record, 81st Cong., 1st Sess., 1949, XCV, Part 7, 8896.

ponder the question of whether this course of action was the best possible strategy for America to take against the Russians. Would such a policy actually have kept Russia, if she had so desired, from invading Europe? Was America prepared to build an army in Europe big enough to stop this threat? To these questions, Vandenberg gave no answers. In fact, he never raised the issues.

With his speech on the North Atlantic Pact, Vandenberg's support of containment policies entered a third stage. His rationale for the Marshall Plan was based on the belief that economic aid would render the Western World less vulnerable to infiltration. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization added a new dimension. He hoped this new regional alliance would enable the free world to face the Soviet bloc from "positions of strength" obviously designed to make the Communists adjust to Western policy.

The Defense of Containment

This chapter attempts to describe Vandenberg's rationale for policies to cope with the problem of American-Soviet relations. His public addresses between the ratification of the United Nations Charter and the adoption of the North Atlantic Treaty indicate an attitude shift from faith in the United Nations as America's best hope for peace and security to that of Soviet containment through regional alliances.

The Pattern of the Speeches

The shift of ideas.--Vandenberg was one of the first in official circles to call openly for a firmer policy in dealing with the Communists. In both the "What is Russia Up To Now?" speech in 1946, and the Cleveland Forum Address in 1947, he conceived of stiffer opposition to the Russians in political negotiations. That was the design of his containment policy in its early stages.

Although he had not yet constructed a new approach, by early 1947, he was willing to follow the administration's leadership beyond the "get-tough" policy at the conference table. He agreed to overt acts designed to develop positions of strength in the non-Communist world. The first move came in his support of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. His rationale for supporting this phase of containment evolved from his concept of a bipolar world. He concluded that the United States must have help in the struggle. The new containment policy called for extensive economic aid programs to nations facing the threat of Communist infiltration. This was containment in its second stage.

While economic aid started the European nations on the road to recovery, it did not provide military defense from the Soviet threat. Containment was containment in all forms decided Vandenberg. He initiated a Senate Resolution which paved the way for the administration to explore a

defense arrangement with the North Atlantic countries. Vandenberg gave full support to the new treaty on the rationale that it would restore the balance of power between Russia and the United States by means short of war. This was containment in its third stage.

In the "get-tough" stages of containment, Vandenberg moved slowly ahead of public attitudes. The American people had not, in 1946, lost faith in the Charter of the United Nations to keep the peace. But by the time of the economic and military aid programs, Vandenberg and public sentiment were in accord. By 1947, Vandenberg and the public were subscribing to the philosophy of containment as expressed by George Kennan. The idea behind the concept was to "force upon the Kremlin a far greater degree of moderation and circumspection than it has had to observe in recent years, and in this way to promote tendencies which must eventually find their outlet either in the breakup or the gradual mellowing of Soviet power."²³¹ The Michigan Senator must have recognized the possible consequence of such a move. At its best, the policy meant a permanent display of strength around the Communist world. At its worst, it could mean an arms race ending in war. Why did Vandenberg support such a risky proposal? The answer probably lies in

²³¹Kennan, op. cit., p. 127.

an examination of the alternatives confronting him. His speeches indicate why he made the choice for containment.

Vandenberg could have called for a return to isolationism. Since the United Nations had failed to prevent an arms race, the Senator could have argued that collective security had failed. But his speeches show that he faced the facts of life. His diplomatic relations with the Russians and a full awareness of the atomic era convinced him that isolationism was an impossibility. In all of his major foreign policy addresses after 1943, the Senator insisted that "obviously" America was a world power and must act as one. The only question was whether she wished to act as a leader or a follower.

America also faced the alternative of waging a war of annihilation against the enemy. Such a policy could have been carried out in the name of liberation. While the containment policy was apparently designed to hold the line against the Russians, liberation would have attempted to suppress the Communist movement wherever it existed. The policy of liberation would have meant that the United States intended to free the Communist enslaved peoples throughout the world. This type of struggle would have involved whatever military and political means the United States and her Allies could procure. One notable exponent of this policy--James Burnham--argued that liberation would have had a better chance of averting war because it threw the "Soviet Empire

on the defensive," adding that "only the offensive can win."²³²

Senator Vandenberg refused the liberation policy. His speeches from 1937 to 1949 were filled with hatred of war. His view of the postwar world was more realistic than Burnham's. Even if Vandenberg admitted that preventive war or any other attempt at liberation might shorten the struggle, he recognized that conflict would still continue among nations. He was looking for a means which would enable America to peacefully negotiate the settlement of such disputes rather than create new ones. He also believed that any deliberate attempt at liberation would lead to full-scale war. He had fought that disease all of his public life. He sincerely believed that if the Soviet Union were faced with the alternative of surrender or annihilation, she would fight to the end. The Senator had no illusions about the Soviet Union being afraid to fight. He rejected the possibility of freeing captive peoples with a policy which might destroy both the Communists and the free world.

Neither could Vandenberg join the movement of those who more or less chose to ignore the conflict between the East and West, or those who called for a universal society or world government. In the first place, the idea that

²³²James Burnham, Containment or Liberation (New York: The John Day Company, 1952), p. 242.

America should surrender her sovereignty to a superstate remained unthinkable to the Michigan Senator. In addition, he recognized that international politics is the art of the possible. Even if he admitted that international anarchy along with arms races and wars were undesirable, he recognized that the major powers were not in the mood to establish a world government. The Michigan Senator knew his history. He recalled that it took the United States over eight years to complete a federation in a situation where the states were close geographically, culturally, and ideologically. The Communist challenge was real. It might take decades to find answers to the problems that would confront those who would attempt to formulate a world government. In the meantime, the Soviet government was expanding into every country within its reach. America needed an immediate answer to a pressing problem. Vandenberg turned with his country to containment.

Vandenberg's containment.--The main line of action envisioned by Vandenberg was to contain the Communists by a coalition of individual states who would act in collective effort. He hoped that the economic and military assistance programs would build up a Western World that would balance the Soviet Union. From this, he hoped would come a more favorable climate for negotiations. He did not anticipate a restoration of the war-time unanimity between the East and the West. Neither did he expect the complete extermination

of problems; but he did hope for the control of them.

Vandenberg's solution faced facts as they existed in the late 1940's. Both a show of power and a willingness to compromise were needed in dealing with the Soviet Union. America's hope for peace and justice was not abandoned. But the Soviet threat was imminent. The Senator decided that containment was the price America would have to pay for her way of life. The programs for which he argued were the first of many designed to meet the challenge. There is no evidence that he thought these policies would erase the problem. His hope was that over the long run the Soviet Union would be forced to adjust to the new American concept.

The Pattern of Political Leadership

As America faced up to the task of meeting the Soviet threat, it was necessary to adapt to the situation with new programs for action. This meant that the administration had to re-evaluate its policies in dealing with the Soviet Union and propose changes consistent with the fact of a bipolar world. Congress had to face the evaluation of these programs clearly and quickly. Failure of the two branches of government to reach a consensus on the best means of dealing with the situation could have meant long delays in which much of the free world could have been absorbed by Communist infiltration. From 1948 to 1949, Vandenberg emerged as the connective between the two branches and as the leader for bipartisan efforts in dealing with the problem.

The mediator.--Vandenberg's speeches indicate the nature of the role he set for himself. He became the mediator between the Republican Party and the State Department. He tried to show what both groups would accept and the compromises that were essential in bringing the two together. In his address before the Cleveland Forum, for example, he showed the extent to which the Republican Congress would go to support the administration, but he expressed a warning to the President on the necessity for bipartisan consultation in policy making. Such consultation was a minimal essential to Congressional cooperation and a united front. The same can be said of the Marshall Plan address. In this speech, he stressed the concessions that had been granted by both the Republican leadership in the Congress and by the administration in making the bill a reality. Vandenberg, of course, had been active behind the scenes in bringing about these compromises, but he used the occasion of the speech to present the concessions as means of persuasion.

Vandenberg also became mediator between those of both parties who advanced extreme positions in dealing with the "cold war." He fought his way between those who would appease and those who would liberate, between those who would have America withdraw from the struggle and those who wanted the full force of America's might placed in the war, between those who would negotiate from positions of total disarmament, and those who would negotiate from positions of war-time strength. Vandenberg usually

spoke out for the middle group. He called for a "get-tough" policy in political negotiations that would neither appease nor insult, one that would continue to support the United Nations but one that recognized that the war-time alliance had become a myth. When this proved inadequate, he called for economic and military aid which placed American force behind American goals, but he called for restrained policies in the use of these resources. He would not approve of the use of America's might for liberation, but he approved of its use for total containment. As a political leader he used the public platform to show that this was the only acceptable alternative.

The bipartisan voice.--Finally, Vandenberg assumed the obligation of verbalizing for the world America's united front behind containment. In his mind, it was especially important that the Soviets have no doubt but that the Republican Party and the Congress were behind the President's containment program. He sensed the necessity of letting both the Communists and American Allies know that a change of parties, either in the White House or Congress, would not change America's approach to the Communist menace. This meant that he must, at the same time, spell out what constituted a bipartisan policy. Through his speeches, as one means, he let the President know that the opposition Congress expected to be in on policy formation; otherwise, it could not be expected in every case to approve the policy after it

was delivered. He wanted him to know that there were differences in points of view on means and that these must be ironed out in the formation period. He let the Republican Party know that it could either follow through on the programs that were decided upon in bipartisan efforts, or run the risk of weakening America's position.

In short, Vandenberg provided much of the initiative for the formation of a total policy of containment from 1946 to 1949. His speeches show that he viewed his role as that of compromiser and adjuster. Once he found the position upon which the major contending forces could agree, he verbalized the concessions that he had helped to formulate as means of persuasion.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Introduction

In the foregoing chapters selected speeches by Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg have been examined in order to describe his changing views of American foreign policy between 1937 and 1949, and to describe his "political role" in securing acceptance for policies to implement these views. The "changing views" so described were somewhat arbitrarily grouped under the labels of isolationism, collective security, and containment. The presumption underlying this three-part division was that Vandenberg's rationale for each of these positions is distinctive, that there are three discernible phases in the over-all change in his thinking during this twelve-year period. Having characterized these three phases individually and in chronological sequence, it is the purpose of this chapter to discuss the nature of the ideas which run through the entire period, to describe the total process of change.

The foregoing examination of these three phases, however, has produced the following hypothesis: while the

changes in Vandenberg's position throughout these twelve years were sincere and deep-running, he did not greatly alter the fundamental premises upon which these changing beliefs rested. Put differently, he carried through this entire period a set of ultimate objectives toward the achievement of which he unvaryingly aimed all of his proposals for American foreign policy. "The "changes" in his beliefs, the differences between his policy proposals during this period, were in the means by which he thought America could best pursue the fixed objectives. He varied these "means" as the American political condition changed and as the circumstances of the world around him changed.

This concluding chapter, therefore, will begin by examining the pattern of ideas in the eleven speeches as (1) a set of ultimate and constant goals, and (2) a set of changing means to achieve them.

The second, and somewhat secondary purpose of this thesis was to describe the "political role" of Vandenberg in seeking to gain acceptance for these changing policies. Obviously, there were changes during these years in Vandenberg's role in the Senate, in the Federal government, and in the eyes of the nation and the world. Some of these variations in "role" took place concurrently with the shifts in attitude on foreign policy described above, but others were produced by the operation of other variables. This chapter will be closed by a discussion of Vandenberg's changing political

role throughout the period. In both of these concluding sections the effort will be to indicate the fashion in which these conclusions are deducible from his speeches.

The Pattern of Ideas

An examination of Vandenberg's speeches has revealed that he subscribed to three broad foreign policy concepts from 1937 to 1949: neutrality, collective security, and Soviet containment. It was discovered that these policies proved to be the means through which he hoped to achieve a constant set of four goals. Although "means" and "goals" are not wholly separable, an effort is made here, nevertheless, to describe the two processes apart from each other.¹

Ultimate Goals of Foreign Policy²

Constant pursuit of the national interest.--In Vandenberg's mind, the single most important factor in the formation of foreign policy was the concept of national interest. Throughout his public life, national security and national interest were synonymous to him. America should engage in those foreign policy activities which,

¹In a "Dewey" view, a change in "means" inevitably alters "goals" and this is true of Vandenberg's ideas, but at least it can be argued that in this twelve-year period his goals shifted in nature much less than did his means.

²In general, these goals are discussed in the rank order of their priority in Vandenberg's mind. Very often he seemed forced to choose between two policies, each of which pursued a different one of his goals; his choice was to rank order the goals and make the choice.

first of all, protected her national interest. The wisdom of this conclusion was never questioned. "I am not so impractical as to expect any country to act on any final motive other than self-interest,"³ Vandenberg told the nation on January 10, 1945.

The national interest in his mind was not a static phenomenon. His so-called dramatic switch from isolationism to internationalism was not a vision like that which came to Paul on the Damascus road. The origin of the change was his realization that the national interest had changed. He made the change from isolationism to internationalism when his concept of the national interest was altered. America's international interests became the supreme national interest to such an extent that he was willing to risk war for his country. Pearl Harbor appeared to awaken in him a conviction that the United States had interests in the rest of the world. From that point on, he was willing to engage in alliances, in peace and war, if necessary to preserve the national security.

Senator Vandenberg always placed great faith in the ability of the executive and Congressional leaders to sit down together and decide what the national interest should be at any given moment. For this reason, the clamor of competing interests never seemed to disturb him. In his

³U. S. Congressional Record, 79th Cong., 1st Sess., 1945, CXI, Part 1, 166.

speeches, both before and after his "conversion," he was always very careful to point out these conflicting claims. But he usually spent the remainder of his speech trying to show in a rational manner that the national interest would be best served by the direction in which he hoped his audience would move. In all of his foreign policy speeches, Vandenberg tried to show that national survival was involved with each proposal. He did not, however, conceive of survival in a limited sense. He was concerned with more than physical survival. He hoped to advance policies that would retain the social, economic, and political institutions of America as he had come to know them.

Preservation of maximum sovereignty for the United States.---Although he outgrew his thinking of the 1930's that internationalism was foreign to American interests, Vandenberg never lost his conviction that the American national-state, free of outside control, was the main stay of American security. He viewed the American government with its system of checks and balances, the separation of powers concept, and the precautions for the safeguarding of personal liberties as the best system of government in the world. He placed great faith in the ability of Americans to use the nation's resources to protect this inheritance, but he was never willing to surrender any control over the use of American power to other peoples.

It is true that Vandenberg joined in the writing of treaties and international agreements in which the United States assumed political and military obligations toward others. But he viewed all such arrangements as necessary extensions of the country's duty, and as freely chosen by the American people. He insisted that they in no way impaired American sovereignty. In his thinking, American membership in the United Nations and the North Atlantic Pact simply meant that his country accepted certain general rules and obligations by which it agreed to conduct foreign affairs. But at no time did he view these international agreements as an extension of power to another nation to enforce its decisions upon the United States without the prior consent of this country. He had great respect for the obligations accepted by a country engaging in international agreements. But he believed the obligation was a moral commitment rather than a binding force of law.

Attainment of peace with justice for all men.--Like most civilized men, Vandenberg hoped for peace. The passion for this goal was so strong, in fact, that it may at times have blinded him to the world's realities. But there was probably never a time when he would not have been willing to wage war to protect his country's security. When faced with the choice between war, as a means of preserving the rights of men, and peace, based on subjugation, he never hesitated to advocate war. It was just that until Pearl

Harbor he did not think it necessary for America to take up arms to protect her security or her rights. Desire for peace and the national interest both argued for isolationism.

Vandenberg's goal of peace with justice was not limited to America. He was never indifferent to the rights of others. Before Pearl Harbor, however, he believed that there was little to be gained by America joining in a conflict to "save democracy." He adhered to the nineteenth century belief that America's greatest contribution to democracy was to demonstrate that the American experiment could be made to work. His switch from isolationism to internationalism was in large part a result of the realization that a threat to peace and justice anywhere in the world was a threat to America's peace. For this reason, he was concerned that each American foreign policy decision be consistent with the nation's traditional dedication to human freedom and dignity for all peoples. He looked upon a strict adherence to this dedication to human rights as the prime force behind America's moral strength in all her dealings with foreign powers.

The maintenance of appropriate check and balance in the making of foreign policy.--While granting that the President had full power to negotiate with foreign governments, Vandenberg believed that there were inherent dangers in the failure of the Congress to keep tight reins on the executive in such matters. He thought Congress should have

an influence on the processes employed by the executive in foreign affairs and should retain a constant voice in the final outcome of all decisions. It is true that his attitude on this issue may have reflected, in part, his opinions of the men in the executive chair while he served on the American scene. But in large measure, it registered his firm belief that Congress had both an obligation and a prerogative to help decide and implement issues of policy in foreign affairs.

Vandenberg fought the trend to expand the power of the executive in the conduct of foreign relations. His attempt, for example, to amend the Neutrality Act of 1937 to deny the President any discretion in the embargo of goods was motivated by a desire to keep this authority in the hands of Congress. His major objection to Lend-Lease was based on a similar rationale. As he moved beyond isolationism, he came to recognize that a wide latitude was necessary in the administration of such massive programs as the Marshall Plan, but he still sought means of limiting Presidential discretion as much as possible.

Foreign Policy as "Means"

In the preceding section, four general goals were described which appear to run throughout Vandenberg's foreign policy speeches. This section will examine the proposed means through which he attempted to implement these goals.

Isolationism as "means."--When war broke out in Europe and Asia in the 1930's, Vandenberg concluded that America could and should stay out of the struggle. Disillusioned by past American attempts at internationalism, he decided that the national interest could only suffer if the United States became involved. He concluded that it was not necessary for the country to depart from its traditional aloofness in foreign affairs. He stressed that the United States had ample protection with the three thousand miles separating her from Europe, and that it was unthinkable that any European country would ever challenge America's guardianship of the Western Hemisphere. Furthermore, in his mind, there was no foreign interest (including the human rights of individuals in other countries) important enough for the United States to run the risk of involvement in war.

He turned to statutory neutrality as a means of avoiding the conflict. In an effort to avoid all provocations to war, his brand of neutrality proposed to treat all other nations alike. To insure the success of this program, he was willing for the United States to sacrifice traditional rights upon the high seas and American trade relations with belligerents, to sacrifice a lesser for a greater national interest.

With the fall of several Western European countries in 1940, his concept of neutrality was dealt a serious blow.

Americans were torn between the desire to stay out of war and the equally strong hope that the Nazis would be defeated. Vandenberg was forced to defend neutrality in this context. He tried to tip the balance on the issue of war by arguing that such proposals as Lend-Lease and selective service would involve the country in the struggle. He admitted, however, that neutrality had ended. While insisting that it was far more important for America to stay out of the war than it was for her to insure a British victory, he agreed to loans and gifts to the Allies. Even this limited help, however, was a drastic alteration of his earlier neutrality policy. But the thought of intervention remained unthinkable. The safe path for America was still to remain at home and rely upon the protection afforded her by geographical location.

For all this, it still can be stated that Vandenberg's role in isolationism during the 1930's was not a deliberate attempt to abstain from relationships with the rest of the world. His immediate objective as he spoke for neutrality, against Lend-Lease, against selective service, against embargo repeal was peace in his time and security for his country. He was not a spokesman for isolation for the sake of isolationism. He was willing for America to cooperate with foreign nations. His sympathies were certainly with those struggling for human rights. But his disillusionment over the World War I settlement convinced him that any encounter of American democracy in foreign wars would mean that America would come out on the short end of the struggle.

Collective security as "means."--When bombs fell on Pearl Harbor, Vandenberg's rationale for isolationism was dealt a death blow. The attack was convincing proof that America's geographical location no longer protected her from foreign quarrels. Furthermore, the massive strength that was necessary to defeat the Nazis convinced him that America could no longer provide her own security; she needed the help of other nations. Hitler's massive array of military might destroyed any illusions he might have held that the European balance of power could be depended upon in the future to safeguard the Western Hemisphere. With the theoretical foundations of his isolationism shattered, he turned to new foreign policy means to preserve his country's security, its freedom of action, its hopes for peace with justice, and its way of life.

Vandenberg's new concept became that of collective security. By combining forces, peace-loving nations could deter aggression. America's national interest could be protected not by isolationism any longer, but by establishing a preponderance of power to be used against those who broke the peace. His new "means" substituted collective security for self-help. Short of any sacrifice of American sovereignty and American constitutional processes, he was willing for the United States to assume military and political obligations to other countries that were unthinkable to him in the 1930's.

The United Nations became the instrument. He viewed that organization as offering America a chance for survival. It was, perhaps, natural that he would hope with other Americans that the alliance of countries which defeated Germany and Japan could continue that same cooperation to keep the peace. From the beginning, however, Vandenberg had misgivings about the manner in which the United Nations would operate in actual practice. Even before the San Francisco Conference, he questioned Soviet peace aims. He was especially fearful that the new organization would be used as an instrument for protecting the world's status quo. The Senator was not exactly happy with the world as he saw it at the end of World War II. But when faced with the alternative of individual action or concerted effort with others, he was willing to give the new organization a chance to prove itself. At the risk of overstatement, one might conclude that Vandenberg turned to the United Nations as a means for —collective security on a "this-or-nothing" basis.

Containment as "means."--Vandenberg was one of the first men in public life to reinterpret America's position in the face of the Soviet threat that followed World War II. He was quick to sense that war-time military cooperation between the two powers did not apply to political goals after the war. The United States must either adopt appeasement in the face of Soviet diplomatic demands or counter with pressures of her own.

Vandenberg led the drive for a new direction. He proposed a "get-tough" policy with the Russians. It was based on the assumption that the security of the United States was threatened by any change of the world's status quo in favor of the Soviet Union. He advocated that America seek political adjustments through negotiations at the conference table. National interest, the maintenance of peace with justice, and national sovereignty were all involved.

By 1947, it had become evident that collective security through the United Nations could not deal with the "cold war." Neither were negotiated adjustments an adequate defense against the threats of the Soviet Union. Vandenberg now believed that any further Soviet absorption of free nations was a threat to the peace and security of the United States. His support for the Marshall Plan was based on the assumption that it would help to contain the Soviets. European hunger played into Soviet hands. It was hoped that American economic aid would help raise the standard of living of the peoples of Europe. From a self-interest point of view, he hoped it would check the Soviet penetration of the free world. It was a marked departure in policy for one who eight years earlier had refused Lend-Lease to a nation about to be invaded by Hitler. His "collective security" in 1941 did not go beyond loans and gifts. Redefined in 1947, the concept included massive economic aid to a large part of the entire free world. It also marked a radical departure from his

concept of war-time Lend-Lease. He demanded that Lend-Lease end with the war. But that was before the Senator had become a full partner with the White House in the formation of policy, and before the world condition became almost desperate.

With full awareness that the European Allies lacked the military capacity to defend Western Europe, Vandenberg expedited a step which made a fundamental change in the nature of American international relations. He pushed through the Senate a resolution which paved the way for American support of a regional alliance of the North Atlantic Community. He was willing at this point to risk war to prevent Soviet aggression. He was further willing for the United States to use her total strength if necessary to contain the Soviet Union. America had now assumed not only the political leadership of the free world, but in his mind, must now assume the role of protector of the anti-Soviet nations because of her own self-interest and of a desperate hope for peace.

In accepting the containment policies, Vandenberg took the Communist threat at face value. He looked upon the cold war as a fight to the death struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States. He accepted the risks involved. It was indeed a radical departure from his isolationist position. In 1939, he opposed embargo repeal on the rationale that it might provoke Hitler into an attack. But now he was

willing to call the Russian bluff--even at the risk of war. His method had become regional collective security--another step away from the United Nations as "means" and indeed the antithesis of isolationism.

The Pattern of Political Leadership

It can be deduced from Vandenberg's speeches that he played at least three major leadership roles from 1937 to 1949: the role of the compromiser, the expediter, and ultimately--the "elder statesman."

The compromiser.--Vandenberg looked upon himself as the "great compromiser" in the area of international affairs. He was forever concerned with bringing competing interests together for purposes of achieving workable legislation and for creating the impression of a united front. The changes in his leadership resulted from changes in his conception of the levels at which compromise should take place and as he worked with a variety of different groups.

Vandenberg's role as compromiser during the 1930's was played at the level of legislative ratification and among groups opposing the Roosevelt administration's foreign policy. During the battle over neutrality and intervention, he was on the outside looking in as far as policy formation was concerned. He could only accept, reject, or modify the policies that were formulated and presented by the Roosevelt administration. He viewed most of the programs that came

before Congress as measures that would lead his country into war. His major problem was how to oppose these measures in the face of an America that regarded Britain as the country's first line of defense. His strategy evolved in attempts to mold the behavior of the various forces that stood with him in opposing the President.

His public speeches show the leadership role that he assumed. He became the mediator between the opposing extremes in his own party. He tried to provide a rallying point for those non-compromising isolationists, and those who were willing to accept a portion of the President's leadership. Sensing that the public would frown upon an indifference to Europe's plight, he also took on the task of giving respectability to his cause by advocating proposals that would both aid the British and avoid direct intervention. Finally, he became the face-saving voice for those Democrats who opposed the President in foreign affairs, but voted consistently with him on domestic matters. By avoiding direct attacks on the President, he tried to keep the issues from becoming immersed in party considerations.

After Pearl Harbor, Vandenberg became the mediator between the White House and the Republican Party. He shifted the level of his compromising from the legislative floor to the conference room. Pearl Harbor awakened in Vandenberg more than the realization that America could not isolate herself from the world. He could foresee that in the postwar

world America would have to assume a larger share of international responsibilities than she had accepted in the past. This would mean a more active role for the President in foreign affairs. But Vandenberg hoped that the Senate would increase its voice in the shaping of foreign policies. He could also see that a divided country on foreign policy matters could be disastrous to the nation's security. Never again could the country split down the middle as it had done in dealing with the European situation before Pearl Harbor.

At this point, Vandenberg assumed a new leadership role. He sought a means whereby the Republican Party could have a voice in foreign policy on the lower levels of decision-making so that differences could be ironed out before America faced the world with her decision. Indecision and differences could only serve to confuse America's Allies and encourage her enemies. This was the beginning of Vandenberg's role as bipartisan leader in foreign affairs--the one, perhaps, in which he earned his greatest distinction.

Beginning in 1943, his speeches began to reflect the changing pattern of his role as compromiser. He became his party's major spokesman for a new order, rushing to put the party on public record for collective security before the few remaining isolationists could assume the leadership. He served notice on the administration that help was forthcoming from the opposition in the shaping of America's postwar

role, and he assumed the role of major compromiser of differences among his party members on what the new policy should be.

After the Republicans captured control of Congress in 1946, Vandenberg's role as bipartisan leader was extended beyond that of party to that of Congressional leader. He became mediator between the administration and the entire Congress. His position as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee became the channel of communication between the two. In spite of the odds, he suffered no setbacks in pushing through Congress such significant containment policies as the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. It was an unprecedented era in the achievement of a bipartisan foreign policy in the conduct of foreign affairs.

Vandenberg's speeches during this period reflect his efforts to mediate differences in policy between the White House and the Congress. He made maximum use of the fact that prolonged consultation between Congressional leaders had preceded the actual formation of each major issue. He also assumed the task once again of compromising the extreme points of view. There were members of both parties who wished to face the Soviet threat with appeasement while others advocated extreme counterattacks. Vandenberg worked his way through a variety of considerations to compromise these extreme points of view. The end result was a set of containment policies which committed the full force of America's

might against the Soviet threat while at the same time preserving the possibility of a negotiated truce in the cold war.

The expediter.--With few exceptions, Vandenberg served in the role of expediter of foreign policy rather than as originator of the ideas behind the policies for which he worked. During the 1930's he played only a minor role in the construction of ideas placed in support of isolationism. He did, however, become a major defender of the concept when it came under serious attack. When neutrality proved inadequate to meet the demands of a war-torn world, he offered little in its place that could protect his country's security. His major role was that of taking the ideas advanced by others and expediting them with a high regard for the ethical standards involved in making use of the "available means of persuasion." In so doing, he may have played a role in restraining the President in his efforts to help Britain. Cole notes that "persons close to Roosevelt felt the non-interventionists had fought the President very nearly to a standstill late in 1941."⁴ If historians conclude that this was a diplomatic blunder, then Vandenberg must share in the blame.

Between 1943 and 1949, Vandenberg earned a distinguished place in American history through his handling of

⁴Wayne S. Cole, America First (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1952), p. 199.

foreign affairs. He achieved national unity in foreign relations during a critical period in the country's history. He did not provide many of the concepts, but he helped to provide a national consensus that made the final result possible. He expedited the compromises that were necessary to produce the Connally Resolution in 1943, and the United Nations Charter in 1945. With courage, he supported policies that helped America enter the postwar world with a united front. When the "cold war" erupted he ironed out many of the thorny problems necessary to make the Marshall Plan an acceptable piece of legislation, and when the administration called for a regional arrangement for security, he initiated a Senate Resolution that paved the road for the North Atlantic Pact.

Vandenberg's speeches, however, show a few instances of creativity in the initiation of new ideas or new directions. In early 1945, for example, he suspected the Russians of sinister designs on the buffer states; he proposed an immediate postwar alliance that would call the Russian bluff by removing her claim that her actions in Poland resulted from fears of a rearmed Germany. His insistence that the United Nations Charter make provisions for regional arrangements foreshadowed America's entrance into regional collective security. In demanding that the General Assembly be given a full voice in recommendations for action needed to preserve the peace and security, he may have perceived the

instrument that the organization has come to be; i.e., a "town meeting of the world," whose greatest influence lies, as Vandenberg predicted, in its ability to mobilize a moral voice for peace. Finally, Vandenberg was the first American diplomat to come to grips with the Russian threat following the breakup of the Big Five war-time unanimity and call for a new "get-tough" policy in dealing with the new threat to America's peace and security.

The elder statesman.---Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes described a great man as "a strategic point in the campaign of history, and part of his greatness consists in his being there."⁵ This can certainly be said of the stature which Arthur Vandenberg achieved in the postwar world. He both helped to clarify the issues of his time and possessed the necessary judgment and imagination to allow for the changes that the play of events forced upon him and to appreciate the necessity for action. But much of the leadership which he exerted on foreign policy during the 1940's evolved from the reputation which he enjoyed as a keen observer and follower of foreign affairs. He utilized to its fullest the advantage which he gained from having been an isolationist; he never ceased in his efforts to keep the respect of this group. At the same time, he made full use of the fact that he was a respected member of the opposition party. He earned this

⁵Max Lerner (ed.), The Mind and Faith of Justice Holmes (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1943), p. 383.

reputation honestly. Even in his worst moments, Vandenberg never resorted to name calling or character assassination. As a result, it was easy for the Roosevelt and Truman administrations to turn to him as bipartisan leader.

On the basis of these experiences, he emerged as "elder statesman" in foreign affairs. In this role, he took up the task of verbalizing America's foreign policy. Allies and foes alike were told that the Congress would support the President in protecting the national interest, and that a change either in the White House or in the Congress would not mean a drastic alteration in the conduct of foreign relations. Vandenberg thus used bipartisanship as a persuasive device to achieve a united front in foreign affairs.

As Vandenberg's countrymen, both in Congress and the public at large, came to respect his judgment and insights in foreign affairs, his speech making took on the air of the elder statesman, conveying the need to remove foreign affairs from partisan politics. He became interpreter of American policy at home as well as abroad. He used every opportunity on the public platform to speak well of members of both parties who were responsible for the conduct of foreign affairs. He elevated the whole tone of all discussions by stressing the fact that both parties had worked together to formulate the proposed policy.

Vandenberg urged Americans to face the world as it actually was rather than as they would like for it to be.

In this role, he was attempting to lead and direct the American people rather than be guided by them. Ironically, he was very critical of President Roosevelt in the 1930's for this same sort of effort. But once in the position of bipartisan leader, he seemed to recognize that all the information necessary in making a rational decision in foreign affairs could not be aired before the world.

Vandenberg as "elder statesman" accepted the role of persuading his countrymen to face the realities of international politics. He warned them that they would have to live with threats to their security. His most enduring contribution to his country may have been in the final analysis his insistence that Americans face aggression, cope with it, sacrifice to meet it, and if necessary elect war rather than be overcome by it.

Summary

An examination of Vandenberg's speeches shows that he worked for the attainment of four broad goals in American foreign policy between 1937 and 1949. In all of his policy activities, he was in the constant pursuit of the national interest, the preservation of maximum sovereignty for the United States, the attainment of peace with justice for all men, and the maintenance of an appropriate check and balance between the executive and Congress in the making of foreign policy.

His proposed means to attain these goals may be grouped into three major directions between 1937 and 1949. He insisted on a policy of strict neutrality until Pearl Harbor destroyed his illusions about an isolated America. After war came, his thinking took at least two major shifts. His faith in the United Nations experiment based on the war-time unanimity was born in the idealism of war. He quickly came to grips with the imponderables in world politics and dropped any immediate dream of one world. A full realization of the perilous involvement with the Soviet Union, however, failed to direct him back to isolationism. With the breakup of the Grand Alliance of World War II, he turned his efforts to Soviet containment, advocating the maximum use of American economic and military forces consistent with national safety.

It was deduced from Vandenberg's speeches that he played the political roles of "compromiser" and "expediter" among competing interests in foreign policy. The changes in his leadership occurred as he moved through various levels of government at which foreign policy decisions are made, and as he worked with a variety of different groups. While he was not essentially a creator of new ideas, he was especially successful in designing and implementing programs for action. In the twilight of his career, he assumed the role of the "elder statesman" whose job it became to interpret American foreign policy to his countrymen and to the

world. His effectiveness in this role was particularly noted after his retirement from the political scene. The New York Times captured the contrast:

Without him the Republicans seem leaderless and uncertain. Even the Democrats miss the clear, authoritative voice that rises above the buzz of party politics to define American policy to the world. For Senator Vandenberg's distinction is that he has given leadership to both parties in the development of foreign policy. . . .⁶

⁶The New York Times, March 24, 1950, p. 24.

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The Vandenberg Speeches

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