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# The great debate : an examination of conflicting views regarding American defense policies, 1950-1951

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF Glen J. R. Jackson for the  
Master of Science in Teaching presented May 22, 1970.

Title: The Great Debate: An Examination of Conflicting  
Views Regarding American Defense Policies, 1950-  
1951.

APPROVED BY MEMBERS OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE:

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This paper is an examination of conflicting views regarding American defense policy which surfaced in a debate during the winter and spring of 1950-51 between the Truman Administration and its supporters and a group of conservative Republicans. The research problem involved unraveling the debate's manifold issues, determining its outcome, and analysing the impact of that outcome on the future of American foreign policy, particularly in Asia.

The debate's principle issues centered around American defense of Europe versus defense of Asia and the reliance on ground troops rather than on sea and air power. The

Administration, while believing the United States should help repel the Communist invasion of South Korea, also advocated sending additional troops to Europe. Republican critics disagreed, arguing there was no overt Communist threat in Europe, only in Asia, and American efforts there should be redoubled. Furthermore, they claimed that whatever defense of Europe was necessary could best be accomplished through the use of naval and air power, not the infantry.

The immediate result of the debate was victory for the Administration. A majority of senators was convinced that additional American troops were needed in Europe, and the Senate passed a resolution expressing that opinion in early April, 1951, ostensibly ending the debate. The victory was short-lived, however. The debate had repercussions at the polls in 1952 and helped sweep the Republicans into office. The ultimate outcome of the debate was to bring the conservative arguments to the fore and remold American foreign policy so that it conformed to those views.

The information used in this paper was collected from books and contemporary periodicals, newspapers, and government publications. The only leading conservative critic still living, William F. Knowland, did not respond to a letter requesting clarification of statements he made during the debate. The memoirs of President Truman and Dean Acheson, his Secretary of State, received special attention.

Works on and by Senator Robert A. Taft, the Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, The New York Times and The Times of London, and The Department of State Bulletin were particularly useful. One potentially important primary source, a paper written by the National Security Council in 1950, remains classified and was thus unavailable.

THE GREAT DEBATE: AN EXAMINATION OF CONFLICTING  
VIEWS REGARDING AMERICAN DEFENSE POLICIES,  
1950-1951

by  
GLEN J. R. JACKSON

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE  
in  
TEACHING

Portland State University  
1970

TO THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES:

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II THE NEW ISOLATIONISM . . . . .	8
Traditional Concepts of China . . . . .	8
The Hoover Thesis . . . . .	12
Zeroing in on Acheson . . . . .	17
"The Senator from Formosa" . . . . .	20
Robert A. Taft: "Mr. America" . . . . .	28
III THE ADMINISTRATION'S CASE . . . . .	38
NSC-68 . . . . .	38
The Conservatives Attack . . . . .	46
Truman's Response . . . . .	54
The Acheson Testimony . . . . .	64
Senate Resolution 99 . . . . .	69
IV AN APPRAISAL . . . . .	74
The Question of the Soviet Threat . . . . .	74
The Role of the Troops . . . . .	76
The Executive and the Senate . . . . .	79
Aftereffects . . . . .	83
A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	87
APPENDIX . . . . .	91

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The winter of 1950-51 found the United States enveloped in pessimism, if not actual despair. A sense of impending disaster seemed to permeate the nation. The mood was self-generating: each new crisis, real or fancied, provided fresh fuel for another outburst of national paranoia; the fear in turn brewed new crises.

For most Americans the threat of Communism, in all its myriad forms, was somehow responsible for the anxiety and suspicion which beset the country. There seemed to be no end to the "Communist conspiracy." From Korea came reports of American armies being chased pell-mell down the peninsula by "hordes" of Chinese Communists, a situation calling into question America's presence there in the first place and also presenting the nagging puzzle of how those likeable Chinese ever became disciples of Karl Marx.

The answer to that, claimed some, could only be found if the Department of State were vigorously investigated by proper senatorial committees. Something smacked of treason at Foggy Bottom. Alger Hiss had already been convicted of perjury. Owen Lattimore had been linked vaguely with Mao tse-tung, and he was therefore suspect. The name John Carter Vincent aroused associations with the loss of



China.<sup>1</sup> And the Secretary of State, Dean Acheson himself, had defended them all. Apparently, he insisted on surrounding himself with a malignant milieu of appeasers and traitors.

From Europe the news was hardly more optimistic. Reports kept indicating that the Red Army, with its 175 divisions (or was it 225?) and 30,000 tanks (or was it 45,000?) was posed on the borders of the satellites ready to strike and expand godless Communism onto the helpless peoples of Western Europe. Yugoslavia, it was reported, was to be first choice on Stalin's menu of conquest. Tito would have to be supported. But so would Franco. Indeed, it could only be expected that all of Western Europe would have to be protected from the onslaught.

Presumably, European manpower should protect Europe. As armchair strategists eagerly pointed out, even Yugoslavia and Spain were not without divisions: the former reportedly had thirty while the latter could scrape together twenty-two. Further, it was noted that "Greece could produce and was willing to produce ten divisions. . . ." <sup>2</sup> And of course there was always Britain and France. Still, would these forces really be enough? Would America have to supply divisions, too? But how could it, already involved with Asia

<sup>1</sup>For an excellent analysis of the Carter affair see Ross Terrill, "When America 'Lost' China: The Case of John Carter Vincent," The Atlantic, November, 1969, pp. 78-86.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas A. Dewey, "Enlarge North Atlantic Treaty," Vital Speeches, March 1, 1951, p. 292.

and the hordes of Chinese Communists in Korea? From these questions emerged the framework for a congressional debate on the future of American foreign policy.

Actually, the "great debate" as it came to be called was really one of a series that began in the late 1940's with the China question and continued on afterward with the MacArthur hearings, the Quemoy-Matsu controversy, and the role of American aid to Indochina. Although European defense composed a large measure of the great debate the Far East, and America's relation to it, was never far from center stage. Indeed, for some the main event was the Far East; Europe to them remained on the periphery.

Still, it often seemed difficult to pinpoint the nature of the debate. Adlai Stevenson once suggested it "was mostly a debate about military strategy and not foreign policy. . . ."<sup>3</sup> Others, with the benefit of intervening years, have found it more complex:

In short, the debates of 1951-1952 thrashed out the premises which would govern American foreign policy for at least the next decade and a half. At the simplest level, the arguments pivoted on the question of whether Asia should enjoy equal priority with Europe in American policy. Overall, the debate was far more complex. It became a prime example of how oversimplified (often unquestioned) premises of one historical era could, almost inevitably, develop into apparently unrelated but far-reaching policies affecting life and death in a later era.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Adlai E. Stevenson, "There Are No Gibralters," Vital Speeches, February 15, 1951, p. 287.

<sup>4</sup>Walter LaFeber, America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1966 (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1967), pp. 128-129.

Chronologically, it is also difficult to set an exact date for the beginning of the debate. Certainly the Korean War had much to do with it. As the war began to sour for the United States in the autumn of 1950, it tended to have a catalytic effect on national mood. Rumblings of discontent increased in late November and early December as Chinese troops drove American forces out of North Korea and caused them to retreat well into the southern portion of the peninsula. The notion the troops would be "home by Christmas" quickly dissipated and was replaced by a wave of defeatism and mistrust. Much of this national anxiety developed into a serious questioning of President Truman's intention, which he had first announced on September 9, to make "substantial increases in the strength of the United States forces to be stationed in Western Europe in the interest of the defense of that area."<sup>5</sup> But the President's intentions toward Europe were only reinforced as the situation in Korea deteriorated in late November. Indeed, the Chinese intervention was all the more reason to suspect "a world-wide pattern of danger to all the free nations . . ." and, consequently, it was now "more necessary than ever that integrated forces in Europe under a Supreme Command be established at once."<sup>6</sup> In

<sup>5</sup>U. S., President, "Statement by the President Upon Approving an Increase in U.S. Forces in Western Europe," Sept. 9, 1950, Public Papers of The Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1965), p. 626.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., "The President's News Conference of November 30, 1950," p. 725.

mid December Secretary of State Dean Acheson flew to Europe to do just that.

In Congress, however, some members reacted to the Korean imbroglio, and the President's statements concerning the related possibility of Communist expansion into Western Europe, with something just short of pandemonium. Senator Kenneth McKellar, Democrat of Tennessee, and then dean of the Senate, solemnly summed up the state of affairs in Congress and in the nation:

I have served in one or the other of the two Houses of Congress for a period of nearly 40 years. During that long period of time I do not believe I have ever seen the Members of this body and the Members of the other body, or the people generally, ever working at such cross purposes. I do not believe I have ever seen them so critical of one another.<sup>7</sup>

McKellar himself was hardly an impassive bystander. Indeed, in his view the issues being debated reached truly momentous proportions: "Shall the greatest Constitution ever written and the greatest government ever devised by man and freest and most successful and most prosperous people on earth, remain as presently set up; or are we to be taken over by Communists who believe neither in God nor man?"<sup>8</sup>

Senator McKellar's rhetoric to the contrary, the infidels were not yet at the gates. Nevertheless, his

<sup>7</sup>Kenneth McKellar, cited by Anon., "The 'Lame Duck' Session Features Anxiety and Taxes," Congressional Digest, January, 1951, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

remarks reflected the confusion which resulted from a fundamental and plaguing question: by which gate would they strike? The Administration's response was to opt for a flexible defense, one that would be capable of defending Europe as well as Asia. This position was decried by opponents in both parties who argued that the threat in Europe was remote while the one in the Far East was real and immediate. Coupled with this concern was the supposed danger, darkly hinted at by some, that a fifth column was operating out of the highest echelons of government, and it was responsible for many foreign policy decisions. Such views were in turn roundly attacked as being "isolationist" by pro-Administration forces.

The isolationist tag attached to the Administration's critics offered a quick and neat label, but it did not adequately define the opposition's views. To argue that their views were simply a resurgence of "traditional isolationism" was to be guilty of mouthing a vague generality. Historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. was more specific when he attempted to catalogue the group. He found that the isolationism of an earlier era--that of Senators Norris and LaFollette, for example--tended to be "affirmative" whereas the isolationism of the present period was found to be "negative." He differentiated the two by arguing that "one was moved by hope for America, the other by hatred of Europe." Further, "one shunned Europe the better to change America; the other, the

better to keep America from changing."<sup>9</sup> In Schlesinger's view, then, there was something inherently more repugnant about the new isolationism.

Anxiety of this sort among liberals increased when it became evident to many of them that the proponents of the new isolationism often seemed to offer no specific solutions to foreign policy problems other than to fire away at the hazy target of "traitors in Washington." Others professed to see the advocates of the new isolationism following a course that could eventually lead to a "preventive" war--nuclear style. While these views may have had some validity, they usually failed to deal with the reasoning, such as it was, that lay behind the conservative position.

<sup>9</sup>Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., "The New Isolationism," The Atlantic, May, 1952, p. 35.

## CHAPTER II

### THE NEW ISOLATIONISM

#### Traditional Concepts of China

Much conservative thinking in regard to China, and indeed all of the Far East, consisted of a curious blend of historical fact with a smattering of Realpolitik, a generous portion of missionary zeal, a discernible trace of nineteenth century business ethic, and a sizeable amount of Midwestern intuition. What emerged was a political stew of confusing and questionable content. However, since much of this concoction had been spoon-fed the American public for years, its ingredients require a more careful examination.

First of all, many conservatives simply could not--nor did they wish to--shake off the propensity to view Asia, especially China, with a special nostalgic favoritism. China would always remain in their minds as that humble sleeping giant which could only be awakened by a slow and somewhat painful transfusion of capitalism and Christianity. Only by following America's example would China ever progress. This belief was so ingrained in a certain segment of the American public that it literally became a form of gospel. Senator Kenneth T. Wherry, for example, reportedly addressed a crowd in 1940: "With God's help, we will lift Shanghai up

and up, ever up, until it is just like Kansas City.<sup>1</sup>

While dazed wonder would be the common reaction to such an utterance today, it was received with "wild cheering" in 1940. Senator Wherry's exhortation may have been somewhat of a classic even for that period, but it nevertheless reflected the type of information and thinking which many Americans gullibly accepted concerning China.

Undoubtedly much of this was due to years of reports sent back from American missionaries in the Orient. Often, in fact, local churches provided the only link between small-town America and Christian progress in far-off Asia. One authority has noted:

The Far East (including southeast Asia and India) absorbed more American Protestant missionaries than any other section of the globe. The education carried on through the Protestant churches of the United States to acquaint the supporting constituency with what was being done gave to millions information, usually sympathetic, about the peoples, cultures, and problems of eastern and southern Asia.<sup>2</sup>

The traditional economic policies associated with the "Open Door" principle also helped Americans to adopt a patronizing attitude toward China. Presumably, what was good for American business was also good for China, or at least eventually would be. Of course, Chinese merchants often resented this notion, and occasionally American interests suffered local reverses when rebellions broke out.

<sup>1</sup>Kenneth T. Wherry, cited by Eric F. Goldman, The Crucial Decade--and After (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), p. 116

<sup>2</sup>Kenneth Scott Latourette, The American Record in the Far East, 1945-1951 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1953), p. 12.



Still, aside from following a policy of "gunboat diplomacy," the supporters of American interests in China never seriously suggested that America go to war to defend those interests.<sup>3</sup> Curiously, what developed as a result of such thinking was in fact a policy of contradiction. As Professor Tang Tsou has noted: "While reluctant to pay a heavy price to promote her ideals and to protect her interests, the United States was unwilling to relinquish her principles and her hope of future gains."<sup>4</sup> Undoubtedly, this was in part due to the rise and continued rule of the Nationalist regime under Chiang Kai-shek. As long as Chiang remained in power, American economic interests seemed to be in little danger, due in large part to his dependence on American aid.

Another American concept concerning China developed during World War II when most of the American public was persuaded to accept China as a "great power." Of course China never really did belong in this category, but such fiction was necessary in order to insure her continued participation in the war against Japan. President Roosevelt and his Secretary of State even made certain overtures suggesting that China would "be granted a high place among the nations" of the world at the conclusion of the war.<sup>5</sup> While

<sup>3</sup>Tang Tsou, America's Failure in China (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 25.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Herbert Feis, The China Tangle (New York: Atheneum, 1965), p. 95.

there were some officials at high levels of government who held serious reservations about the practicality of such a proposal, it was unfortunately accepted by most Americans as a sensible and realizable goal. This was particularly true of conservatives who had long been enchanted by the possibilities of China's rehabilitation and emergence as a world power, thanks to American faith and know-how.

Still, there remained the occasional conservative who felt that China's importance lay not in commerce, Christianity, nor as a potential great power. Rather, her importance to the United States lay in her strategic location. This line of reasoning held that America's concern for China should be based solely on the security considerations of the United States itself. A proponent of such thinking, Representative Walter Judd, argued before the Executive Club of Chicago in February of 1951:

It was not necessary that they should have a good government in China. That was desirable, but wholly secondary. It did not necessarily need to be a democratic government, an honest government, or an efficient government. The key thing was that the manpower and the resources and the basis of China be under Chinese friendly to the United States, and not under the control of potential enemies of the United States.<sup>6</sup>

Congressman Judd's arguments are of interest for several reasons. First, they hint at some sort of Bismarckian sophistication, a rather strange tack for a man who had

<sup>6</sup>Walter Judd, "How Can We Be So Stupid?" Vital Speeches, March 1, 1951, p. 294.

spent a good portion of his life engaged as a missionary in China. It would normally be assumed that a former clergyman would not find the notion of a good government in China to be a "wholly secondary" consideration. Possibly such a discrepancy could be explained away by suggesting that Dr. Judd's ecclesiastical interests had simply given way to a sense of hard-headed power politics. But what seems more likely is that here was an example of a pro-Chiang Republican who had become so worked up over the possible fate of his favorite Asian regime that he was reduced to employing arguments that were both contradictory and misleading. Dr. Judd's concern, however, was not with the type or manner of argument he used; rather, he was only interested in the United States continuing to both vigorously support and encourage the actions of Chiang Kai-shek. If this meant he was to become a practitioner of Realpolitik, so be it. In essence, then, while his arguments may have added a new degree of sophistry to the great debate, his motives and reasoning were much the same as those of other conservatives. Unfortunately, they also reflected their weaknesses.

#### The Hoover Thesis

As previously noted, opposition to the foreign policy of the Truman Administration mounted steadily after the "loss" of China in 1949. With the advent of the Korean War, it momentarily subsided owing to the necessity of supporting a President and country engaged in an Asian war against

Communism. But when it became clear in November of 1950 that the war in Korea would not be over by Christmas and the President was not going to allow General MacArthur to bomb Chinese targets in Manchuria, opposition once again quickly mounted. Its tempo increased even more when it became apparent that Truman was determined to send additional troops to Europe. Its eventual high water mark was reached on December 20, 1950, when former President Herbert Hoover delivered a national radio address which is generally recognized as the opening salvo in the "great debate" of the coming months. In it can be found many of the issues with which most of the new isolationists could readily identify.

A clue to Mr. Hoover's remarks can be gleaned from his repeated references to the United States as "this Western Hemisphere Gibraltar of Western Civilization"--terminology that was to provide Administration defenders with the opportunity to castigate him for his "fortress America" outlook. Basically the Hoover Gibraltar philosophy held that so long as the Pacific Ocean and Japan, Formosa and the Philippines remained as one frontier, and the Atlantic Ocean (along with Great Britain, "if she wishes to co-operate") remained as the other, the United States would be guaranteed a defense posture that would be sufficient to her needs. To implement such a program, however, it would be necessary to "arm our air and naval forces to the teeth." (Hoover was to add in a later radio speech that this only made good sense since "the

whole Korean tragedy is developing proof that the way to punish aggressors is from the air and sea and not by land armies.")<sup>7</sup> Conversely, since America would no longer need to maintain large armies either on the mainland of Asia or in Europe, such forces should be removed. For any future war using large numbers of American ground troops would prove disastrous. Cautioned Hoover:

We must face the fact that to commit the sparse ground forces of the non-Communist nations into a land war against this Communist land mass would be a war without a victory, a war without a successful political terminal. Any attempt to make war on the Communist mass by land invasion, through the quicksands of China, India [?] or Western Europe is sheer folly. That would be the graveyard of millions of American boys and would end in the exhaustion of this Gibraltar of Western Civilization.<sup>8</sup>

Hoover, apparently impressed by the Nazi defeat at the hands of the Red Army during World War II, repeatedly warned against American soldiers becoming involved in a war against a "Kremlin-directed horde." This concern about employing large numbers of American ground forces in almost any future conflict was widely held by a number of the Administration's opponents, if not by a sizeable portion of the American public itself. It became, in fact, a sort of fundamental maxim: American "boys" in large numbers simply could not be sacrificed in battles against faceless hordes capable of overpowering them with sheer numbers alone.

<sup>7</sup>Herbert Hoover, "We Should Revise Our Foreign Policies," Vital Speeches, February 15, 1951, p. 264.

<sup>8</sup>Herbert Hoover, "Our National Policies in this Crisis," Vital Speeches, January 1, 1951, p. 165.

During the coming weeks, while Hoover both modified and expanded his thesis, many of his speeches continued to deal with the specter of Russian and/or Chinese hordes. Gradually, however, the hordes were joined by new allies, factors he referred to as "General Space, General Winter and General Scorched Earth." Any attempt to engage Russian or Chinese armies would also have to reckon with these factors, warned Hoover.

Some observers were to detect another concern of Hoover's. He seemed not only to be worried by the strategy of national defense but also the cost of it. Often it became difficult to sort out his priorities: defense against Communism or defense against excessive defense of Communism. At times Economic considerations definitely won out:

The unbearable strain on our economic system will come from trying to do five things at the same time. That is, to maintain armies in the Pacific; to build up an air force; a naval force; to furnish munitions to nations who are determined to defend themselves; and beyond that to send land armies to Europe. Our economy cannot carry this load for long.<sup>9</sup>

The uproar over Hoover's original speech of December 20 was both instant and noisy. Administration supporters were quick to claim that his interpretation of what American foreign policy should be amounted to little more than old-fashioned isolationism. (In later weeks Hoover and his defenders were to be labeled "neo-isolationists," a term,

<sup>9</sup>Herbert Hoover, "We Should Revise Our Foreign Policies," pp. 264-265.

according to one observer, that was applied to those wishing to fight in China but not in Europe.)<sup>10</sup> Dean Acheson remarked that any withdrawal of American troops from Europe would only "enable the Soviet Union to make a quick conquest of the entire Eurasian land mass" and that would be "catastrophic to the United States."<sup>11</sup> Conservatives were just as quick in claiming Hoover's message had been misinterpreted, perhaps intentionally. Columnist Raymond Moley, for instance, wrote it was "not only incorrect but very dangerous to call the Hoover plan isolationism. A foreign policy that proposes an area of American power, from the North Sea to the Sea of Japan and from the North to the South Pole, cannot be called burying our head in the sand."<sup>12</sup> Warming to his subject, Moley went on to note that Hoover had also made it clear that the "Communist empire" was not nearly as secure as it appeared. In fact, it was extremely vulnerable:

The Red China regime advances its borders in weakness rather than in strength. Its efforts to push into southeast Asia extend its capacities to the breaking point. There are hundreds of thousands of Asiatics behind the Red lines who can be more and more activated by the virus of revolt. We must fight with the underground there as well as in the Communist satellites in Europe.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Norman A. Graebner, The New Isolationism (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1956), p. 27.

<sup>11</sup>"Acheson: Joint Defense," Newsweek, January 1, 1951, pp. 10-11.

<sup>12</sup>Raymond Moley, "The Hoover Challenge," Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

Here Moley struck a chord that was to be heard again and again throughout the great debate. Somehow, the notion that large-scale, anti-Communist, clandestine activities were occurring behind the iron and bamboo curtains became widely accepted by the American Right. Yet while conservatives placed a great amount of faith in this belief, they could never muster up any hard evidence which might support such a thesis. References such as Moley's about aiding "underground" activity were constantly being made, but most of them dealt with generalities with few specific suggestions as to implementation. Many of the proposals were based more on a sense of romanticism than realism. Where they originated is hardly a mystery; many of them were simply based upon the propaganda of refugee groups such as the Nationalists on Taiwan. Chiang's government, in particular, was noteworthy in its attempts to convince the United States that guerilla-initiated actions were occurring with increasing frequency on the mainland. Again, proof of this was unobtainable, but lack of it never troubled the true believers of Chiang in America.

#### Zeroing in on Acheson

As they sought to defend Hoover and his foreign policy proposals, many conservatives searched for a weak link in the Administration's armor. In Secretary of State Dean Acheson they felt they found it, and by December of 1950 the



Secretary was being subjected to increasingly virulent attacks from the Right. As disillusionment with foreign policy increased, even more moderate conservatives began to view him as the prime villain in the Truman Administration. He became the scapegoat for Administration critics because as one observer noted, "he was the easiest target in sight." Aside from policy decisions alone, his very character seemed reason enough to increase the invective. Concerning this onslaught, one historian has noted: "His personality, his genteel New England background, his faultless grooming (one Congressman habitually referred to him as 'that goddamn floorwalker'), his air of aristocratic detachment, and his intellectual superiority made him superbly vulnerable."<sup>14</sup> In other words, not only was Acheson a weak and reckless liberal, to many he was also a stuck-up snob. A more "anti-American" caricature would be difficult to imagine. In fact, there seems little doubt that in the eyes of his domestic enemies, Acheson assumed the proportions of an American Chamberlain. Similarly, he would be accused of leading American diplomacy through one Munich after another. And, like Chamberlain, he would be denounced for practicing "appeasement."

In a very real sense the semantics of these attacks became more important than the attacks themselves. "Appeasement" emerged as the best example; it seemed the only lesson

<sup>14</sup>Graebner, p. 65.

the American Right learned from World War II was the use of this term. Nevertheless, from its use the Right was able to squeeze an enormous amount of political mileage. When employed in conjunction with an attack on Acheson, it was effective in conjuring up the image of a dapper and debonair diplomat bowing and scraping before a leering Communist bully. Consequently, many Americans were conditioned into assuming that China was "lost" in 1949 because of "appeasement" and the rest of Asia would go the same way unless the spineless Acheson were removed from office. Even Hoover in his speech managed to matter-of-factly insert it, cautioning, "We should have none of appeasement." "Appeasement," then, became an overworked but incredibly potent political shibboleth for arousing indignation at Administration policy under Acheson's control.

The attacks against him accelerated at such a clip that the President was forced vigorously to defend his Secretary at a press conference in December:

These recent attacks on Mr. Acheson are old, in the sense that they are the same false charges--and I emphasize that false charges--that have been made time and again over a period of months. They have no basis in fact whatever.

It is the same thing that happened to Seward. President Lincoln was asked by a group of Republicans to dismiss Secretary of State Seward. He refused. So do I refuse to dismiss Secretary Acheson.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup>U. S., President, "The President's News Conference of December 19, 1950," Public Papers of The Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1965), p. 751.

While his allusion to Lincoln was overdrawn, Truman's trust in the ability of his Secretary of State was unshakable. He knew Acheson to be both loyal and hard working. Moreover, he felt that even with Acheson gone the debate would continue. In Truman's view the conservatives "wanted Acheson's scalp because he stood for my policy."<sup>16</sup> Much of this "scalp hunting" frankly perplexed the President, and he was later to wonder what had happened to the bipartisanship approach to foreign policy that had prevailed when Arthur Vandenberg had spoken for the Republican Party. Since Vandenberg's death, Truman found it distressing to note in the Republican party "the rise of a faction . . . that seemed to know no approach to government except to belittle, to denounce, and to negate."<sup>17</sup>

#### "The Senator From Formosa"

The voice of Republican Senator William F. Knowland of California was to emerge as one of the most vocal and persistent in deploring and denouncing the foreign policy of the Truman Administration. Knowland gradually became the unofficial prolocutor for the Republican Party on the subject of Far Eastern affairs, and next to Senators Taft and Wherry, he probably headed the list of Truman's "irresponsible

<sup>16</sup>Harry S. Truman, Memoirs (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1956), II, 430.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

faction." While most of his senatorial colleagues devoted a good portion of their efforts to discussing the question of European defense, Knowland limited most of his to Asia. In the Senator's mind, Asia was certainly no mere backwater; indeed, he often proclaimed that the future of Europe was clearly dependent on the course of events in the Far East. He was fond of quoting what he termed Lenin's "sound observation" that "the road to Paris is through Peiping."<sup>18</sup>

Tactically, Knowland has to be given credit for his remarkable ability to exploit the semantics of the Cold War. In regard to "appeasement," for instance, he never tired of using what had to be the best one-liner on the entire subject, one that he was to employ on numerous occasions: "A vast majority of them [Asians] are convinced, I believe, that the road to appeasement is not the road to peace and that appeasement, as at Munich, is but surrender on the installment plan."<sup>19</sup> Thus in one fell swoop he managed to rattle an already frightened American public by conjuring up bitter memories of Hitler, Chamberlain, World War II, and installment buying--a memorable feat even for a politician. On another occasion he insisted that while Asians still admired what the United States represented, such good will

<sup>18</sup>U. S., Congressional Record, 82d Cong., 1st Sess., 1951, XCVII, Part 1, 157.

<sup>19</sup>William F. Knowland, "A Fateful Hour: Necessity for Combating Aggressive Communism in Asia," Vital Speeches, December 15, 1950, p. 155.

could be increased if only America would "draw the line" against Communism.<sup>20</sup> "Drawing the line" had become an important and catchy phrase in the Knowland lexicon. The idea seemed to be that tricky foreign policy disputes could be settled by line-drawing, much as a schoolboy might etch out a line with his toe in the dust of a playground and dare the local bully to step across it. However questionable the validity of such an analogy may have been, Knowland sensed the American public accepted it, and that was all that mattered.

In his speech to the Senate of December 4, he outlined a policy that if implemented would presumably have held the line against Communism in Asia. First, as the result of a recent junket to Korea, he urged that American aircraft be allowed to pursue Chinese fighters across the Yalu River and into Manchuria. Knowland was yet another of the air and naval strategists that the American Right produced in no short supply during this period. As a consequence, they argued that if only the "off limits" signs were removed, American air power would end the war in Korea.<sup>21</sup>

Knowland next turned his attention to Japan and called for "an early Japanese peace treaty, with Japan having means, under proper supervision, of participating in the collective security system against aggression. . . ."<sup>22</sup> Most

<sup>20</sup>U. S., Congressional Record, p. 158.

<sup>21</sup>Knowland, p. 156.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

conservatives wholeheartedly concurred on this point, sensing, perhaps before most liberals, that Japan would constitute an important anchor in any defensive screen in East Asia. (Often, however, the importance of this view was lost amidst the metaphorical cliches of a cold war opportunist as when Senator Joseph McCarthy prophesied: "If Japan falls, the entire Pacific falls, and we will have a Red Pacific washing our western shores with its communistic atheistic erosion.")<sup>23</sup>

Knowland then turned to his favorite topic: economic and military aid to Chiang Kai-shek's regime on Formosa. He claimed Chiang's armed forces were over six hundred thousand men strong, a force larger "than all the other non-Communist nations of Asia put together."<sup>24</sup> Such a force was simply indispensable to the free world. It would act as a powerful deterrent against any future Chinese Communist aggression. Moreover, if supplied with the proper equipment the Republic of China would be able to stimulate its "non-Communist guerrilla forces of over 1,000,000 men" which were operating behind the iron curtain.<sup>25</sup> Further, Chinese Nationalist forces would be able to conduct "raids" along the coast of China which would have the effect of forcing the Communists to siphon troops away from Manchuria and Korea, thereby relieving the beleaguered United Nations forces fighting on

<sup>23</sup>U. S., Congressional Record, Part 2, p. 2396.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

the peninsula.

Another aspect of Knowland's drawing-the-line plan consisted of giving "the Chinese Communists 48 hours to stop their aggression in Korea and to get back across the Yalu River." If they refused Knowland would have had the United States ask all member states of the United Nations to "pledge" to withdraw any recognition that had been afforded that regime. Such action, Knowland maintained, would "weaken the prestige of Mao tse-tung at home and [would] make that government illegal in the eyes of the people."<sup>26</sup> While he did not specifically say so, it seems apparent that Knowland felt such action would have amounted to a diplomatic catastrophe of such a magnitude that the Communist government would have toppled from sheer despair.

Finally, Knowland advocated "an immediate naval blockade of the entire China coast . . ." which would "not permit the entry or exit of a vessel of any nationality."<sup>27</sup>

Strangely, much of the Senator's thinking--and this was true of many other conservatives as well--seemed to reflect a fantastic ignorance and/or deliberate misreading of what had been occurring in China for the previous twenty years. The fanatical faith he held in Chiang and his Kuomintang is almost mystifying. The only explanation that can account for such devotion was that Knowland could not bring himself to accept the failure of the Nationalists. In going

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

to almost any length to buttress the Chiang regime, he was reduced to advocating a policy whose inception would have proven fatal not only to Chiang but quite possibly to the United States itself. This, at least, was the way the Truman Administration viewed proposals of this sort. There is absolutely no evidence to indicate, for example, that a series of "raids" along the coast of China would have had any marked effect on the Korean conflict. The claim that there were one million dedicated guerrillas operating on the Mainland was probably pure fabrication,<sup>28</sup> but it was important because by its very suggestion a romantic image of a courageous but vastly outnumbered group of freedom fighters was instilled in the mind of the public. The notion that Mao would have withdrawn from Korea as the result of a forty-eight hour ultimatum, lest he lose "prestige," was ludicrous. Again, it indicated that Knowland had not the vaguest idea of what Mao and his revolution were all about. And the proposal that a blockade of China's coast with the right to turn back vessels of "any nationality" amounted to a declaration of war against China and quite possibly against any other nation which might choose to challenge such a ukase. Clearly, in December of 1950 the United States did not intend to proceed along such a path.

<sup>28</sup>When queried about this statistic by the author, Senator Knowland chose not to reply.



While Knowland's jingoism was successful in gaining him further publicity and in extending the attack on the Administration, it also had the effect of mystifying some of his senatorial colleagues. To some, no matter how the Senator sought to disguise certain unpleasant eventualities, his remarks seemed to offer the very real possibility of an all-out war with Communist China. Such thinking naturally led them to wonder if this would mean a land war on the Asian continent. As a result of such disquieting thoughts, Knowland hastened to assure his fellow senators that nothing could have been further from his own mind:

I have never favored sending a United Nations land army into Manchuria or into China. I have never favored sending an American Army into Manchuria or into China. I think that would be a futile policy. It would be the same mistake that Napoleon made in Russia, and that others have made in the invasion of Russia. I would not operate in an area of terrain in which the enemy is superior to us by 10 to 1. I would operate in areas where we are superior to them by many times that number to one.<sup>29</sup>

The question remained, however, just precisely what were those areas where the United States was "superior to them by many times that number to one"? To Knowland the answer was simple: in sea and air power. American sea and air power, coupled with Chiang's American-equipped armies, would be capable of dealing the Communists a blow from which they would never recover. Still, skeptics found it difficult to imagine, given the history of Chiang's military record in

<sup>29</sup>U. S., Congressional Record, p. 162.

China, that Nationalist armies could ever wrestle back control of the Mainland, even with the added factor of American sea and air power. Knowland's contention was eventually to become one of the weakest weapons in the arsenal of the Right.

As mentioned above, because of his fascination with Asia Knowland found little time to devote to Europe. Even during the height of the debate he could only bring himself to propose half-heartedly that America allocate one division for European duty for every six divisions fielded by the Europeans themselves.<sup>30</sup> The proposal got nowhere, and Knowland seemed not to care, a reflection, no doubt, of his general lack of interest in the entire European issue. If the subject of Europe did occasionally strike a spark of interest in him, it was over a related matter rather than Europe itself. In making his proposal on a ratio of American divisions for NATO, for example, he saw the importance of Europe linked, of all places, to Africa: "Certainly it is vital that Europe not fall into the orbit of international communism. If Europe is lost to the free world, the strategic bases and materials of Africa would be difficult to hold. The bulk of the uranium for the American atomic development comes from Africa."<sup>31</sup> It is of interest to note that while the Senator found the uranium ore of Africa to be of prime importance to the United States, he

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

could not bring that same thinking to bear in regard to the coal, iron ore, and industrial capability of Western Europe. Western Europe was important because it represented a steppingstone to Africa, not because of any worth of its own. Because of this factor Knowland felt Europe would have to be defended, but hopefully not with American ground personnel in large numbers. Exactly how Europe should be defended Knowland did not spell out. Apparently satisfied that he had done his duty in explaining how the tide of Communism could be reversed in the Far East, he left this chore to his close friend, Robert A. Taft.

Robert A. Taft: "Mr. America"

Herbert Hoover had become the elder statesman of the new isolationist movement, William Knowland had become its Asian authority, but the maestro of the entire effort was Republican Senator Robert A. Taft of Ohio. By 1950 Taft had arrived at an extremely important post for a Republican in the Senate: he was chairman of the Senate Republican Policy Committee, having risen to this position through the ranks of the Republican Party with remarkable swiftness. Whatever the attributes are that propel a man up the ladder of American political success, Taft seemed to possess them. During the 1940's he became established as the Republican voice in the Senate on domestic affairs. After World War II he also sought to become an expert on foreign affairs. He gradually

slipped into this role and assumed it completely with the death of Arthur Vandenburg in 1950. It was not long before he somehow began to personify what proper conservative thinking ought to be all about, and because of this ability he was nicknamed "Mr. Republican." One historian has suggested, however, that by the time of the great debate he had become "Mr. America," so well did he express "the public's ambivalent isolationist-aggressive state of emotion" on world affairs.<sup>32</sup> An examination into Taft's philosophies does much to confirm the appropriateness of the "Mr. America" epithet, and it also aids in explaining how the Senator became the acknowledged leader of the "new isolationists."

First and fundamentally, Taft had always been a vigorous and sincere anti-Communist. He could foresee no worse evil. Throughout his senatorial career he fought Communism internally and externally. And as often seems to be the case with conservatives, Taft recognized the danger of Communism but was apparently incapable of seeing any threat which might challenge the Republic from the other end of the political spectrum. William S. White, a generally friendly biographer of Taft's, has revealed:

In the war years and later he ridiculed any theory that Nazi Germany had ever raised any danger to the United States. He said to me as late as November of 1951 that at no time had Germany menaced the security of the United States and that there would have been

<sup>32</sup>John W. Spanier, The Truman-MacArthur Controversy and the Korean War (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1959), p. 156.

no menace even had the British fallen. . . .<sup>33</sup>

His passionate denouncements of Communism were directed primarily against the Soviet Union which he saw as the prime mover of all Communist activity everywhere. "Soviet Russia," as Taft preferred to call it, had broken every treaty to which it had ever been a signatory. It had promoted the military actions of both North Korea and China. There was "sufficient evidence," he warned in a speech on the Senate floor, "of a determined plan to communize the entire world, which can be clearly envisioned from the writings of Lenin and Stalin, just as Hitler's intention could be found in Mein Kampf."<sup>34</sup> In the Senator's mind, proof of the existence of such a "plan" could be found by taking note of how far the conspiracy had progressed within the United States itself. He insisted various organizations and labor unions were being infiltrated, as was "the government itself."<sup>35</sup> He had no apparent difficulty in relating the machinations of Soviet imperialism with domestic issues inside the United States and even, by implication, with an American government controlled by a party of which he was not a member. Sly allegations of this sort always boosted his stock with fellow Republicans but over a period of time caused moderates to wonder about the credibility of his

<sup>33</sup>William S. White, The Taft Story (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), p. 151.

<sup>34</sup>U. S., Congressional Record, p. 56. <sup>35</sup>Ibid.

arguments in matters dealing with foreign affairs. It gradually became evident that his own style may have been one of the chief obstacles in his legislative defeats.

With Taft's concern over the conspiratorial power of the Soviet Union being what it was, it would seem probable that he would have been in the forefront of the fight to increase the strength of NATO forces in Western Europe. But, strangely, such was not the case. He actively opposed American participation in any European defense program except under certain specified conditions. The basis for his opposition was manifold and often oddly contradictory, at least when compared with his ideas on the defense problems of the Far East.

Although the Soviets may have been engaging in various sinister activities, Taft sincerely felt that they were not interested in launching any massive invasion into Western Europe. In fact, he felt American reaction to the possibility of such an attack might well cause the Soviets to initiate it out of self-defense:

The course we are pursuing will make war more likely. If this great international force which we envision is gradually built up, the Russians for a while will gradually increase their strength, but it seems obvious that if they think the Allies are gaining on them too rapidly, they can always begin the war. However defensive and pacific our intentions, to them the building up of this force must look like aggression when it is completed.<sup>36</sup>

Taft went on to note that he had been unable to discover any

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

evidence which indicated the Soviets were preparing to invade Western Europe. Further, he wondered, for what were they waiting? Surely it made better sense for them to strike when western defensive positions were weak rather than wait for the completion of an American and allied build up. All of this was reason enough, he claimed, to be against any increased American role in NATO, just as he had been opposed to the very formation of the Atlantic Pact in 1948. Apparently accepting any support he could find for his argument, he was not above pointing out the Atlantic Alliance "abandoned the whole principle of the United Nations,"<sup>37</sup> which was a rather curious statement for Taft since he had shown little inclination to defend U. N. principles in the past.

Often, however, it did appear Taft was unsure of his own position. From time to time he noted, albeit hesitantly, that if Western Europe fell to the Soviets the threat to American liberty would be considerable. Still, he cautioned, it did not follow "that because we desire the freedom of every country in the world we must send an American land army to that country to defend it."<sup>38</sup> After all, Europe had more than a sufficient manpower base from which to raise an adequate army to repel any Soviet attack.

<sup>37</sup>Robert A. Taft, "United States Relations with Western Europe," Vital Speeches, June 15, 1951, p. 518.

<sup>38</sup>U. S., Congressional Record, p. 1120.

America need only supply the armament. No American divisions would be necessary. If the situation became really desperate, however, he was willing to employ American air and sea units.

Taft seemed to base at least part of his military thinking on his own reading of the outcome of World War II. In his mind two simple lessons had emerged from the war. First, the Russians had created a tremendous land army that was almost unstoppable; and second, the Americans had put together an air force which proved to be, in his own words, "the decisive factor in the winning of the war."<sup>39</sup> Given these two axioms, Taft considered it merely common sense to minimize the role of American ground forces and to maximize American air power. Further, since the U. S. Navy was victorious in the Pacific, its role in any coming defensive strategy would also have to be emphasized.

In short, in a military sense Taft nurtured a strategy that suggested a philosophical cross between Alfred T. Mahan and Curtis LeMay. That such a combination would be effective was never doubted by the Senator:

My own view is that we do have the capacity to secure a practical control of sea and air, throughout the world. I believe we do have the capacity to build up an air force so superior to Russia as to give us control of the air over this country, over the oceans that surround this continent and everywhere, except perhaps over Russia itself. I believe that should be the first priority, and I have not heard any substantial objection made

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 57.



against this priority. In theory the administration agrees.<sup>40</sup> In practice they seem to prefer land armies.

What accounted for Taft's infatuation with air and naval power? Possibly the best answer is supplied by White:

He told me in 1951, in the period when he was first clamoring for a reassessment of foreign-military policy to give practically all the emphasis to sea-air, that his proposal had been influenced, if not shaped, by "certain reading" he had been doing. "What reading, Senator?" he was asked. "I have gone very carefully again over the history of the Napoleonic campaign," he replied. "Wellington at Waterloo accomplished what he did with only twenty per cent of his troops from the United Kingdom and the rest mercenaries."

He had, in short, by a strange paradox, a compulsive bias toward the most traditionally professional of all professional military opinion. He believed that what Britain had done in the eighteenth century by her control of the sea the United States and Britain, with Britain of course the lesser partner, could do past the halfway mark in the twentieth century.

In this regard he saw air power as only an extension of the sea arm. And because of his hesitations, because of his lively but uncomprehending compassion for the nasty job of the infantry, he gladly accepted one of the special prejudices of the old-fashioned Admirals--their prejudice against a war of mass and especially against having to use vast numbers of amateurs in the shape of quickly impressed civilians. Taft could readily understand this; he did not like amateurs in political campaigns.<sup>41</sup>

As with Hoover, Taft also feared the possible economic repercussions of a third world war. War would have meant

<sup>40</sup>Taft, "United States Relations with Western Europe," p. 517.

<sup>41</sup>White, p. 154.

probable federal controls on the free enterprise system, a disaster in Taft's opinion. White quotes him as saying that any future war might force "the nationalization of all industry and all capital and all labor" which could only mean an eventual "socialist dictatorship."<sup>42</sup> Even the preparation for war "was likely to be almost as bad as war itself."<sup>43</sup> (Taft's anxiety in this area was shared by his colleague, Kenneth Wherry, who in addressing the Senate once wondered rhetorically, "How long . . . do you suppose America can escape becoming a garrison state when annual expenditures are running at the rate of a hundred billion dollars?")<sup>44</sup> Such a view may sound strange in the light of his dedication to a strong air and naval force, but Taft actually felt that air and naval readiness would not be nearly as expensive as the maintenance of hundreds of infantry divisions.<sup>45</sup>

Taft also insisted that much of his opposition to Truman's desire to increase American ground forces was based on the manner in which the increase was to be carried out. He felt that Truman had to secure the approval of Congress before proceeding with any increase; to do otherwise would be tantamount to subverting the Constitution. Taft referred

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>44</sup>U. S., Congressional Record, p. 328.

<sup>45</sup>White, p. 153. In 1950-51 this may well have been the case, although it is almost impossible to arrive at any cost comparison.

to this upon occasion as the "fundamental issue" in the great debate and attacked executive agreements in foreign policy because they threatened the liberties of the American people.<sup>46</sup> Whether it really was the "fundamental issue" is open to serious question; what mattered, however, was that tactically Taft was able to hurt the Administration more with this one charge than with other weapon in his armory. The idea of presidential usurpation of congressional power did not sit well with his fellow senators, and Taft knew it. Even former Secretary of State James Byrnes was forced to agree, arguing, "If we are to have a bi-partisan policy, the President should consult the leaders of the minority . . . party before and not after basic decisions of policy are made. Once decisions are made, consultation is a sham."<sup>47</sup>

Finally, for all his worrying about America becoming overextended in Europe, Taft was shoulder to shoulder with Knowland on "holding the line" in Asia. He became part of what White has aptly called "the politico-military cult that developed around General MacArthur."<sup>48</sup> Aside from bestowing hosannas on MacArthur and his policies, the cult encouraged a strong sense of American nationalism, questioned the patriotism and motives of certain Administration officials,

<sup>46</sup>U. S., Congressional Record, p. 61.

<sup>47</sup>James F. Byrnes, "Firm Stand by a United People May Prevent War," Vital Speeches, February 15, 1951, p. 269.

<sup>48</sup>White, p. 167.

and, as has been shown, denied the notion of European defense being related to American security. Taft, White maintains, " . . . was not wholly comfortable in the cult aspect of the thing."<sup>49</sup> Perhaps not, but somehow he managed to hide his discomfort.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 168.

## CHAPTER III

### THE ADMINISTRATION'S CASE

#### NSC-68

Much of the Administration's fear of the possibility the Soviets would attack Western Europe was generated by the general Cold War atmosphere which grew noticeably more frigid after 1948. Most authorities have fixed two events in particular--the detonation of the first Soviet atomic bomb late in 1949 and the Communist attack on South Korea in June of 1950--as the prime causes of this apprehension. Indeed, after the opening of the Korean War high officials both in Washington and in the capitals of Western Europe "seemed to be agreed that the Soviets had shifted back from political means for achieving their ambitions to military ones."<sup>1</sup> The impetus for providing additional American troops to NATO would therefore seem to date from this period.

Actually, however, Administration action in this regard began approximately six months earlier. On January 30, 1950 the President authorized the National Security Council to begin work on a secret study (NSC-68) which would analyze the objectives of the United States in peace and war during the coming years. The study was completed in the

<sup>1</sup>Roger Hilsman, "NATO: The Developing Strategic Context," NATO and American Security, ed. Kluss Knorr (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 18.

spring of the same year and was to prove to be a milestone of sorts in the shaping of American foreign policy. While it has not yet been declassified, the general recommendation of NSC-68 are fairly well known. It concluded that Soviet policy consisted of three major objectives which have been summarized as:

(1) to preserve and to strengthen its position as the ideological and power center of the Communist world; (2) to extend and to consolidate that power by acquisition of new satellites; and (3) to oppose and to weaken any competing system of power that threatens Communist world hegemony.<sup>2</sup>

In light of these conclusions, it seemed safe to predict that Soviet military strength would continue to increase over that of the West until "the economic rehabilitation of Western Europe and the full implementation of the NATO alliance" were carried out.<sup>3</sup>

The forecasts related in NSC-68 were not unanimously accepted by all branches of the Administration, however. State Department officials were sharply divided over it. The so-called "Kremlinologists" at State argued Moscow had no real desire to assume the role of an expansionist military power bent on world domination. Members of the Planning Staff, including Dean Acheson himself, argued that while this was fine in theory, it must not detract from the

<sup>2</sup>Cabell Phillips, The Truman Presidency (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966), p. 306, citing Paul Y. Hammond, NSC-68: Prologue to Rearmament (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), no p. no. given.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 307.

fact that the Soviets would continue to probe for "weak spots" in the West and, once having found such frailties, would demand concessions.<sup>4</sup> It was necessary, therefore, to eliminate the vulnerability of such areas by increasing the strength of military alliance systems such as NATO. Naturally, the view of the Acheson team prevailed.

Still, how valid were the views and recommendations of NSC-68? Senator Taft, who knew nothing about the study, would surely have rejected it out of hand as a clumsy attempt to bolster the sagging NATO alliance. Moreover, from the evidence so far available it would seem probable that even those who were the most impressed with it were not totally assured of its validity. Under the circumstances possibly the best defense of the report was penned by Dean Acheson almost twenty years later:

A decade and a half later a school of academic criticism has concluded that we overreacted to Stalin, which in turn caused him to overreact to policies of the United States. This may be true. Fortunately, perhaps, these authors were not called upon to analyze a situation in which the United States had not taken the action which it did take.<sup>5</sup>

Whatever the validity of the premises of the report, once they were accepted they had to be sold to the Congress and the public. This was precisely what Acheson did in the late spring and early summer of 1950. Unfortunately, as he

<sup>4</sup>Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1969), p. 753.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

was later to admit, an "over-sell" was deemed necessary; consequently the nature of the Soviet menace fell victim to hyperbole. Again, Acheson himself explained it best:

Qualification must give way to simplicity of statement, nicety and nuance to bluntness, almost brutality, in carrying home a point. It is better to carry the hearer or reader into the quadrant of one's thought than merely to make a noise or to mislead him utterly.<sup>6</sup>

And so it came to pass that, in the Secretary's words, "if we made our points clearer than truth, we did not differ from most other educators and could hardly do otherwise."<sup>7</sup> As an "educator" Acheson would prove to be no small success, even though some of his students turned out to be incorrigible.

With the acceptance of NSC-68 in Administration circles and with Acheson's "over-sell" campaign under way by late spring, obviously much of Washington's anxiety toward Soviet intentions in Europe had crystallized before the start of the Korean War. The decision to augment NATO was clearly related directly to the findings of NSC-68. When the war in Korea ignited, it served only to reinforce a fundamental belief already held by key Administration personnel: the forces of international Communism, directed by the Kremlin, were on the march.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 375.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.



### The Defense of Europe

The Administration held a series of high level meetings during the summer months to thrash out the exact nature the defense of Europe would take. Prodded by the Pentagon, Acheson and his advisers reached the conclusion that German participation would be necessary if a successful defense of Europe were to be guaranteed. On the last day of July the Secretary convinced the President of this view.<sup>8</sup> The problem, however, now became doubly difficult: not only would the American public have to be convinced that increased participation in NATO was necessary, but it would also have to accept the fact that a former hated foe would be needed in the alliance. This latter issue would also prove to be a sore point with the other alliance members. The Administration of course realized this, but the fear of a Soviet invasion was so strong that German involvement was considered essential. According to Acheson: "At the time . . . the danger to Europe seemed to us great and immediate, and these decisions were not being made in the unhurried calm of an academic study."<sup>9</sup>

These issues and others were brought to the attention of the other alliance members during a series of meetings held in New York beginning on September 15. To avoid any unscheduled public disclosure during these meetings,

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 437.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 440.

President Truman on September 9 first publicly announced America's intent to increase its forces stationed in Western Europe. While not disclosing exact figures, the President let it be known that the number of additional troops needed would be "worked out in close coordination" with other NATO members.

Conservative opposition to the announcement and the NATO meeting was largely blunted by the success of the Inchon invasion in Korea. With the recapture of Seoul and the almost total annihilation of the North Korean armies, protestations in regard to European policy momentarily sank from sight. In fact, senatorial support for Truman's proposed troop increase seemed to mount, at least among Administration supporters. Senator Tom Connally, chairman of the important Foreign Relations Committee, remarked:

Despite the war in Korea and the tension throughout the Far East--let us never forget it--Europe is still the pivotal point. Continued weakness in western Europe will free the Soviet Union for aggressive action everywhere. A strong Europe is a barrier, not only to Soviet ambitions in the west, but to the Kremlin's freedom of action in the Middle East and in the Far East as well.<sup>10</sup>

During the next two months the NATO question continued to simmer on the back burner while the Korean situation bubbled and eventually boiled over. Nevertheless, the defense of Europe and the question of American participation in that

<sup>10</sup>U. S., Congressional Record, 81st Cong., 2nd Sess., XCVI, Part 2, 15,526.

defense could not be forgotten. As Acheson later put it:

The North Atlantic Treaty, its organization, and its military forces are recognition of the truth that no balance of power in Europe, or elsewhere, adequate to restrain Soviet power is possible unless the weight of the United States is put into the scales. Without association with the United States, the European powers cannot prevent the leaders of the Soviet Union from having their way in Western Europe. Without American association with Western Europe, independent national life in Eastern Europe cannot revive.<sup>11</sup>

In order to pursue these ends, Acheson flew to Brussels in the middle of December. Once there he sought agreement for the appointment of an American as Supreme Commander of an integrated NATO force. After some discussion the council decided it "would appoint General Eisenhower as Supreme Commander of the integrated force and each government would put under his command its troops assigned to the integrated force."<sup>12</sup> Most observers felt that given Eisenhower's background in World War II, the decision was militarily sound. Left unsaid was the fact that since he was an American, his appointment would aid in dampening any conservative opposition to the NATO issue that might develop within the United States.

Ironically, however, while the Secretary was adroitly maneuvering matters in Brussels, Herbert Hoover was busy delivering the opening cannonade of the great debate.

<sup>11</sup>Dean Acheson, Power and Diplomacy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 84.

<sup>12</sup>Acheson, Present at the Creation, p. 486.

Returning to Washington on December 21, Acheson was aghast when he heard about Hoover's speech: "The stench of spiritless defeat, of death of high hopes and broad purposes, given off by these statements deeply shocked me. It took a day of talking with my associates for the situation to sink in."<sup>13</sup> Apparently the exact nature of the Hoover speech had caught the whole Administration off guard. On December 19, only two days earlier, President Truman had indicated little concern over the strength of his domestic opposition:

Q. Mr. President, in line with what you have been telling us about foreign policy, a number of writers believe that there is a--as they put it--a wave of isolationism rising in the United States. Do you feel that condition to exist?

THE PRESIDENT. I don't think there is any wave of isolationism, outside of the Chicago Tribune and those papers.<sup>14</sup>

Owing to the reverberations of the Hoover speech, the Administration began to have second thoughts over the possible influence of the new isolationists. On December 22 Acheson called his own news conference and sharply rebutted point by point Hoover's remarks. He ended by calling on the American people to reject "any policy of sitting quivering in a storm cellar waiting for whatever fate others may wish

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 489.

<sup>14</sup>U. S., President, "The President's News Conference of December 19, 1950," Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1965), p. 752.

to prepare for us."<sup>15</sup> As the news conference concluded, it was clear to most onlookers the Administration was now fully cognizant of the danger posed to the nation's foreign policy by the Hoover-Taft segment of the Republican Party and was prepared to engage it in verbal battle. Just three days before, the President had stated he could see no "wave of isolationism" washing over the country. Now Acheson had asserted that neither was the Administration going to allow one to swell up.

So matters rested for the remaining two weeks of the old year as both camps broke for the respite afforded by the holidays. Yet it seemed a foregone conclusion that with the coming of the new year the great debate was going to take up a lot of everyone's time.

### The Conservatives Attack

The attack on the Administration's foreign policy was launched anew in a long speech made by Robert Taft on the floor of the Senate on January 5, 1951, just three days before the President was scheduled to deliver his annual State of the Union address. Taft's remarks were noteworthy for their scattergun effect: they hit just about every target that had ever outraged the American Right. In some respects they also conveyed a sense of frustration, of some

<sup>15</sup>Dean Acheson, "United Action for the Defense of a Free World," The Department of State Bulletin, January 1, 1951, p. 6.

desperate grandstand play needed to gain the public's attention and win its support of foreign policy issues.

Beginning with Korea, which in January of 1950 seemed the epitome of hopelessness, Taft lashed out at America's role in the world. Korea afforded Taft an excellent example with which to attack the Administration because his own views on the war were always so ambiguous. On the one hand he demanded a policy that would insure "total victory" over Communism in Asia. Yet on the other he opposed the "needless slaughter of American boys," even if such opposition meant the total evacuation of American troops from the area. Regardless of what the Administration did, then, the Korean War became a convenient political whipsaw which Taft and his fellow dissidents used to bludgeon it. On occasion, as in his speech of January 5, this strategy took some curious twists. Taft proposed that the United States had been duped by the Soviets into getting involved in the war in the first place. This they had accomplished by slyly inveigling the Administration into initiating and helping to pass the United Nations resolution which authorized a military response to North Korea's aggression, a resolution the Soviets could not veto because they were boycotting the Security Council at the time. However, since the Chinese entered the war it had become impossible to pass a similar resolution against them because the Soviets were once again participating in the Security Council. To Taft the lesson was

clear: proper United Nations military action against China (the bombing of Chinese bases and supply lines, for instance) could not be brought to bear because of this trickery. The Soviets at first had purposely stayed away from the Security Council meetings in order to "suck" the United States into the war, and then they had reclaimed their seat in order to insure the Chinese an opportunity to engage America in an endless and apparently stalemated ground war. Taft could only sadly surmise: "We were sucked into the Korean War, as a representative of the United Nations, by a delusion as to a power which never has existed under the Charter."<sup>16</sup> As to the future, he would not hesitate a guess but offered the suggestion that if worst came to worst, it would be "far better to fall back to a defensible position in Japan and Formosa than to maintain a Korean position which would surely be indefensible in any third world war."<sup>17</sup>

Taft's willingness to "fall back" to Japan and Formosa was again indicative of his strong trust in air and sea power. American aircraft and naval vessels would be able to defend these islands from any foe. His reasoning for so thinking was often grounded, as his biographer William S. White has already shown, in questionable historical

<sup>16</sup>U. S., Congressional Record, 82d Cong., 1st Sess., XCVII, Part 1, 57.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

analogies:

Our position is not greatly unlike that of Great Britain, which dominated much of the world for a period of 200 years, and brought about the balance of peace of the last half of the nineteenth century. The British had control of the seas and met every challenge to that control. There was no question of air power. They seldom committed any considerable number of British land troops to continental warfare, and when they did so they were by no means successful.

It was the sea power of Britain which gave Britain a powerful influence on the Continent of Europe itself. It seems to me that by reasonable alliance with Britain, France, Holland, Australia, and Canada the control of sea and air can establish a power which never can be challenged by Russia and which can protect Europe as it has been protected now for 5 years through fear of what sea and air power can accomplish against Russia.<sup>18</sup>

Even with such a firm belief in the might of sea and air power, Taft made it plain he still felt there was a need for a professional army. Using the opportunity to switch from the Far East to Europe, he did "not object to committing some limited number of American divisions" to Europe provided the Europeans themselves contributed a larger amount to NATO defense. He further cautioned that such a program "never ought to be a key point in our overall military strategy."<sup>19</sup> Still, whatever his intentions, his statement signifying that some American troops in Europe would be permissible was to prove to be a source of difficulty to him in the coming weeks. The importance of his remark had not been lost on the Administration.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 60.



Taft's apparent unswerving faith in air power was jolted midway through his speech when a senator friendly to the Administration's position challenged some of his assumptions. Senator Paul Douglas rose to inquire why, if air power were such a panacea, had it not turned the trick in Korea where the United States enjoyed complete air dominance. The Chinese were continuing to push back United Nations' forces, and American air power was seemingly incapable of stopping them. Taft was frankly forced to admit, for the first time, that bombing alone was not going to stop an army. To which Douglas asked:

Does it not follow from the Senator's statement that, if continental Europe does not build up a sufficient army to check the Communists on the ground our threat of bombing from the air will certainly not stop the Communist armies if they wish to move into Europe?

MR. TAFT. Once war is declared it will not stop the Communist armies, no.

MR. DOUGLAS. And will not the Communist armies therefore sweep through completely to the English Channel?

MR. TAFT. Does the Senator think there would be any difference if we have 10 American divisions there?

MR. DOUGLAS. That is something else.

MR. TAFT. It is not something else again. It is exactly the question the Senator is asking. I am saying that the commitment of American troops will not substantially change that situation.<sup>20</sup>

In this short encounter lay the rationale for all the verbiage of both camps concerning the merits of air power. Unfortunately, three months were to pass before most of the participants fully realized this fact.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

The belief in the invincibility of air power was not an easy one to dispel among certain Republicans. The Republican minority leader, Kenneth Wherry, held to the opinion throughout the debate that air power was the "decisive" weapon in World War II and therefore would be in World War III also. He conceded that if war came to Europe, the United States would be unable to stop it, but the "Russian horde" would soon become "powerless" because American bombing would cripple Russian industry and agriculture at home. Reasoned the Nebraskan:

There is nothing unique about trading space while getting off knock-out punches by air and sea. It is not pleasant to contemplate Europeans taking another occupation, temporary though it may be, but there will be many more Europes left, and more of their industries still standing, in that circumstance, than if we wage ground war, with another inferno of guns and tanks and bombs consuming Europe. It is a case of the lesser of two evils.<sup>21</sup>

In other words, not only would massive bombing of the Soviet Union bring about the end of Red aggression, it would also save Europe from the physical destruction that would result from the clashing of large ground armies. To engage American troops in such an "inferno" in Wherry's view would be a "foolish venture."

Taft, while agreeing with Wherry, wondered if the inferno could not be postponed altogether by not antagonizing the Soviets in the first place. This could be quite simply accomplished by not increasing the size of NATO

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 328.

forces. Otherwise, asserted Taft, "the building up of a great army surrounding Russia from Norway to Turkey and Iran might produce a fear of the invasion of Russia or some of the satellite countries regarded by Russia as essential to the defense of Moscow."<sup>22</sup> Understandably, the Soviets saw the situation in largely the same light and indicated that Taft's evaluation of any future ground war was a correct one. The correlation between Taft's view and the Kremlin's was duly noted by the Administration, and during the middle of the debate the State Department reprinted--no doubt gleefully--a Tass report which observed:

Even such an experienced reactionary as the American Senator Taft was recently forced to admit that the plans which are being hatched by the American aggressors for a war with Russia on the European Continent by land forces are doomed to failure and that an invasion of such a kind would prove to be impossible as Napoleon and Hitler discovered.<sup>23</sup>

Taking a somewhat different tack, other conservatives argued that Europe must learn to stand alone. Senator William E. Jenner offered a sample diagnosis: Europe would depend on the United States as a "crutch" as long as the "crutch" remained available. A limping Europe lacked the "heart" to defend itself.<sup>24</sup> Earlier, Senator Edwin C. Johnson had reported to his colleagues that from what he had witnessed first hand and had been able to piece together

<sup>22</sup>Robert A. Taft, A Foreign Policy for Americans (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1951), p. 113.

<sup>23</sup>The Department of State Bulletin, February 12, 1951, p. 260.

<sup>24</sup>U. S., Congressional Record, 82d Cong., 1st Sess., XCVII, Part 2, 2601.

from others, the people of Western Europe did not think war was imminent and consequently were "very calm and complacent about the whole thing." This was so despite the fact that France and Italy were "teeming with communism." Furthermore, it hardly made good sense to send the American army to countries such as Germany since it was "the most pacifist country in the world."<sup>25</sup>

Pacifist or not, for some Administration opponents NATO would be impotent unless the participation of West Germany was insured. Senator Joseph McCarthy went one step further and asserted that it did not make any difference whether the United States sent one or ten or twenty divisions to Europe; the entire region would be lost "without the manpower of Spain and Western Germany." Any plan that did not include both of these countries would constitute a "phony defense."<sup>26</sup>

While most of the spotlight of publicity was concentrated on the Senate during the great debate, the House occasionally did enter the fracas. Midway through February, House minority leader Joseph Martin reluctantly conceded that America should provide equipment "and possibly some of the manpower" necessary for the defense of Western Europe. Still, he emphasized that the "focal point" of America's troubles was Asia, not Europe. Martin warned he would use every resource at his command to counteract any Administration

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., Part 1, p. 497.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., Part 2, p. 2397.

strategy which ignored Asia.<sup>27</sup> Two days later, 118 of his fellow Republicans went even further. Offering something called a "Declaration of Policy," the group demanded "that the United States concentrate its military efforts on defending the Western Hemisphere" and cease supplying aid of any kind to Western Europe unless that area indicated a willingness to carry "its full share of the burden."<sup>28</sup> Just precisely what a "full share of the burden" constituted remained cloaked in ambiguity. A definition was hardly necessary, however, since the actual purpose of the manifesto was to drum up publicity and pressure for the Taft position in light of the fact that Senate hearings on the issue were slated to commence the following day.

#### Truman's Response

While Taft and his supporters continued to attack America's defensive posture, the Administration was far from inactive. On January 8, 1950 President Truman delivered his annual State of the Union address and left little doubt as to where the Administration stood in regard to the troops-to-Europe issue. Pointing out that NATO constituted the "heart" of America's defense, he declared that it was also "the basis for defense of the whole free world." The alliance could not be abandoned, for if it were, it would mean

<sup>27</sup>The New York Times, February 13, 1951, p. 24.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., February 15, 1951, p. 1.

the "loss of the largest workshop in the world. . . . Strategically, economically, and morally the defense of Europe is part of our own defense."<sup>29</sup> The speech was generally applauded both at home and abroad. The British seemed particularly impressed and The Times commented editorially:

No democratic leader has set out so simply before the duty which now falls upon each and upon all. The connexion between the United States and Europe is a partnership in self-help and self-defence. There is no question here of paymaster and pensioners or satellites. Each has to give, for its own peaceful survival and progress, its due share, according to its resources, to the grand design of successfully deterring attack, for the first time in history, by the prompt and sufficient show of peaceful strength. The safety of America and that of Europe, as the President said, are one. The President has set a high standard.<sup>30</sup>

Determined not to be overshadowed by Truman's address, the Republican dissidents sought publicity of their own on the very day of his speech. Senator Wherry counterattacked by introducing a resolution that would attempt to stymie the President's troop proposal: "Resolved, That it is the sense of the Senate that no ground forces of the United States should be assigned to duty in the European area for the purposes of the North Atlantic Treaty pending the formulation of a policy with respect thereto by the Congress."<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup>Fred L. Israel (ed.), The State of the Union Messages of the Presidents (New York: Chelsea House, 1966), III, 2979.

<sup>30</sup>The Times (London), January 9, 1951, p. 5.

<sup>31</sup>U. S., Congressional Record, 82nd Cong., 1st Sess., XCVII, Part 1, 94.

Eventually the resolution would surface in modified form, but for the time being it was all but ignored by those concerned as both sides seemed satisfied to continue to debate from the floor of the Senate.

Taft's attack of Administration policy on January 5 was answered in kind by several pro-Administration senators on January 15. Spearheading the effort was Senator Douglas of Illinois, who warned that the issues involved in the great debate were "broader than the survival of any political philosophy." The whole future of western civilization itself was at stake, according to Douglas. After paying due homage to the cultures of Asia, he sought to defend the Administration's role in Europe by reminding his colleagues of the greatness of western civilization, albeit somewhat bombastically:

. . . Mr. President, it is in the West, it is among the heirs of a civilization cradled in the Mediterranean and nurtured in the northern fastnesses of Europe, that the dignity, the worth, and the rights of the individual man have been most strongly asserted. To the people of the West, life is dear, and it ought not to be sold for something that is not dear.<sup>32</sup>

He went on to argue that by being unwilling to send troops to Western Europe, the United States would be more likely to cause a Russian attack rather than prevent one. The Russians had never been known to "spare" any country because it was weak, claimed Douglas. Europe needed American divisions, not because these divisions by themselves would halt

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 243.

any future attack, but because they would act as "the vital increment which would to a great extent create the willingness of Western Europeans to enlarge their armies." Further, if the United States did not increase its forces it would probably cause the European powers to do likewise and could well lead them to "throw in the sponge."<sup>33</sup>

Senator Estes Kefauver agreed with Douglas and rose to add that in his view the Soviet Union was "bent on world conquest," and its weapons were "propaganda and brute force."<sup>34</sup> A Republican, Senator Wayne Morse, concurred:

The danger that the Soviet Communists will resort to war to advance their imperialistic aim is of the utmost gravity and reality. There is no doubt whatsoever that Communist imperialism is out to spread over the world--over Europe and Asia by indirect aggression if possible, ultimately, I think, by war if necessary.<sup>35</sup>

Morse's statement was clearly meant to be in support of the Administration's position. Nor as a Republican was he alone in taking such a stance. Taft was simply unable to convince a number of fellow Republicans that Truman had misread the importance of the European defense picture. Such lack of political cohesion did much to explain why Taft was ultimately unable to win the great debate.

One of Taft's toughest antagonists turned out to be Republican Governor Thomas Dewey of New York. In early February Dewey made it plain he supported a joint air-sea-ground defense of Europe, and that the deployment of such

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 239.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 261.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 257.



forces would require no approval from Congress. Troop deployment, argued the Governor in what had to be a clear slap at Taft, "was a job for experts and not for politicians."<sup>36</sup> The following evening (February 12) Dewey went even further in his support for NATO. He was quoted as advocating the alliance "be extended along the Mediterranean Sea and beyond its eastern shores as a means of reducing the land area upon which Russia might have designs for aggression."<sup>37</sup> In other words, Dewey was seeking the inclusion of Greece and Turkey into NATO.

Dewey's statements were among the strongest uttered by one Republican against another during the course of the debate. Still, his remarks were not indicative of a simple two-way split in the party. An analysis by William S. White near the conclusion of the debate in late March found the Republicans had hopelessly splintered into no less than four factions, with some overlap occurring on many of the points.<sup>38</sup> The picture emerging, then, was that of Taft unable to rally the majority of his own party behind him with the ranks of the Democrats remaining almost solid.

Many of the votes that Taft had hoped to garner were lost during the first half of February when the Administration made a determined effort to squelch his arguments once

<sup>36</sup>The New York Times, February 12, 1951, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., February 13, 1951, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., March 31, 1951, p. 4.

and for all. The offensive began on a low key when General Eisenhower returned from Europe and reported to a joint session of Congress his observations of European defense. The General stressed equipment, not men. He pleaded that Western Europe be supplied with the latest military hardware available to insure Europe's soldiers would not be outgunned by their Soviet counterparts. Almost in passing he added: "I believe that the transfer of certain of our units should be in direct ratio to what Europe is doing so that we know that we are all going forward together, and no one is suspicious of the other."<sup>39</sup>

The return of Eisenhower was quickly followed by a series of joint hearings held by the Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees in which key military and foreign affairs personnel testified. Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall opened by revealing for the first time on February 15 exactly how many additional troops the Administration was proposing to send to Europe:

We already have there, on occupation duty, about two divisions of ground forces. Our plans, based on the recommendation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, therefore contemplate sending four additional divisions to Europe.

While this number does not appear to represent in pure fighting power a large contribution to the immediate defensive strength of Western Europe, it does represent a small Army unit of high efficiency and, we believe, a tremendous morale contribution

<sup>39</sup>U. S., Congressional Record, 82d Cong. 1st Sess., XCVII, Part 1, 875.

to the effectiveness and build-up of the projected ground forces. . . .<sup>40</sup>

What Marshall did not say was that such a relatively small force would undoubtedly catch the Taft forces un-awares, which it did. Taft and his supporters had been expecting Marshall to propose a far larger force than he did, possibly something in the neighborhood of ten divisions. When he asserted only four would be needed for the time being, he in effect sprang a subtle trap on the Taft forces: only a week before Taft himself had confessed he was prepared to allow "a few more divisions" to Europe without debate. Specifically, on February 8 Taft had said: "With regard to the sending of troops to Europe without any commitment no doubt the President has power to send divisions to occupy Germany, which it is our obligation to police and defend. But it can hardly be claimed that this power would justify sending more than two or three additional divisions."<sup>41</sup> The Administration simply increased Taft's three division figure by one and then took the position it was really sending about the same number he was willing to allow anyway. With this one apt maneuver the Administration, and Marshall and Acheson in particular, had clearly outflanked Taft. Years later Acheson confessed:

<sup>40</sup>The Department of State Bulletin, February 26, 1951, p. 329.

<sup>41</sup>U. S., Congressional Record, p. 1119.

With the President's consent, General Marshall revealed in public testimony what the Administration had in mind. It was four more divisions, making a total of six. Neither he nor General Bradley would be led into making that number a ceiling. It was, at the time, the meeting point of need and convenience; that point could in the future move up or down. They refused to speculate. Senator Taft was neatly caught. "A few" was more than two, three anyway, which reduced the great strategic issue, as had been stated by President Hoover--of holding the oceans by air and sea power versus involvement on land--to an argument over one division to Europe.<sup>42</sup>

Acheson went on to relate that once Taft realized "his predicament," he attempted to overcome it by shifting the issue at stake in the debate. His "new position," claimed Acheson, was one of challenging the Administration's right to send any number of divisions without the approval of Congress. Here Acheson's reliability must be called to question. Taft's "new position" was not "new" at all; it was one of the many issues he had linked to the debate over troops right along. It may well have been that after Acheson and Marshall sprang their trap Taft was forced to shift gears; but he certainly did not bring up issues that he had not already introduced. The question of Congressional approval was one that Taft had harped on since the very beginning of the debate, and he would continue to argue this point until almost the very last.

In any event, the Administration continued to press its case hard. The very day after Marshall's testimony, the

<sup>42</sup>Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1969), p. 495.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Omar Bradley, voiced the view that additional American troops were necessary to reassure the Europeans the United States intended to help them defend themselves. Furthermore, Bradley concluded, "this increase in collective military strength is needed as a deterrent to the aggressive intentions of Soviet Russia."<sup>43</sup>

Bradley's remarks were followed within a few days by statements from the country's three highest ranking air force, navy, and army officers. All three of them agreed with the Administration's proposal and all concurred that air and sea power could not alone be counted on to save Europe from Russian occupation.<sup>44</sup> Senator Wherry, who had been invited to sit in on the testimony although he was not a member of either participating committee, tried to press the Army Chief of Staff, General J. Lawton Collins, into admitting it would be better to rely on "pulverizing" the Soviets with atomic bombs than on committing American troops to Europe. General Collins "persistently rejected such a theory, saying to Senator Wherry that no amount of bombing of the Russians could keep them from occupying Europe and that bombing alone could never beat them."<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup>The Department of State Bulletin, February 26, 1951, p. 331.

<sup>44</sup>The New York Times, February 20, 1951, p. 1.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

Administration critics regained some hope when the commanding general of the Strategic Air Command, General Curtis E. LeMay, was called to appear. LeMay testified that while he agreed with the President's decision to send four more divisions, he also believed that all of the forces contemplated for Europe's defense at that time would not be adequate to stop a Russian invasion. In the general's mind these divisions would represent a "holding force," while the "main blow" would have to come from strategic bombing.<sup>46</sup>

LeMay, then, of all the military officers called to testify before the two committees, was the only one who even came close to supporting the Taft thesis. But even he did not advance the possibility that any future war in Europe could be won by air and sea power alone.

After questioning and listening to the various generals, Senator Wherry still was not satisfied. He complained from the Senate floor late in March: "The dominant voices in the Pentagon, General Marshall, General Bradley, and General Collins, all ground officers by training, have their eyes glued to the ground, when they should wake up to the aeronautical facts of life. Our air power is the chief deterrent to World War III."<sup>47</sup>

Other senators were even more upset by the military testimony. They viewed the committee hearings as a sham,

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., February 22, 1951, p. 1.

<sup>47</sup>U. S., Congressional Record, Part 3, p. 2907.

feeling the generals were bound to say whatever they were told to say. Of Eisenhower's inspection and fact-finding trip to Europe, for instance, Senator George W. Malone blustered:

The purpose [of the trip] was obviously to secure support for a decision which was fully decided upon beforehand. I do not believe that anyone is naive enough to think a week or two jumping from one European capital to another, could accomplish any purpose other than that of propaganda for the preconceived decision of the State Department to send our boys to make up a Maginot line in Europe.<sup>48</sup>

Malone, Wherry, and a few others were making a point, but it was a point born of frustration rather than reality. It was of course difficult to know precisely how much of the military testimony reflected the actual thoughts of the generals and how much of it had been "preconceived" by the Administration. What Malone and Wherry refused to admit, however, was that it was the duty of these officers to follow the dictates of their Commander-in-Chief; if they had truly opposed his military and political decisions, they should have resigned.

#### The Acheson Testimony

The high water mark of testimony favorable to the Administration's position undoubtedly occurred on February 16 when Dean Acheson read a long prepared statement in which he carefully outlined the need for additional troops in Europe. It was to become the Administration's definitive

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., Part 1, p. 952.

statement on the issue.

Acheson's remarks were awaited with greatest anticipation by his senatorial foes. Much of this was due to the symbolic quality associated with him; whether he wanted to be or not, he had become in the minds of many the "chief architect" of the Truman foreign policy. His enemies were also fond of recalling that on a similar occasion in 1949, Acheson had committed one of the major blunders of his career. When asked at that time by Senator Hickenlooper, in connection with the original ratification of the NATO pact, if the United States would ever be expected to send substantial numbers of troops to Europe "as a more or less permanent contribution," Acheson replied: "The answer to that question, Senator, is a clear and absolute 'No.'"<sup>49</sup> This unfortunate response was increasingly to haunt him for the next two years. His opponents would not let him forget it. He was later to candidly admit: "Even as a short-range prediction this answer was deplorably wrong. It was almost equally stupid."<sup>50</sup> Now once again he was to testify regarding NATO, and naturally his opponents were hopeful of another error in judgment, one that would prove fatal to both NATO and the Secretary of State. But this time he was to disappoint them.

<sup>49</sup>U. S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Hearings, on the North Atlantic Treaty, 81st Cong., 1st Sess., p. 47.

<sup>50</sup>Acheson, p. 285.



Basically, Acheson framed his line of attack with the same reasoning the generals had employed before the same committees. He argued the United States had to depend upon a "balanced collective force." And while he frankly conceded that for the present America enjoyed a "substantial lead in air power and in atomic weapons," this advantage would gradually be lost over a period of years. It was therefore important to continue to deter aggression after this advantage had been diminished. The only way to do so would be with a balanced force that had as much military muscle on the ground as on the sea and in the air. He went on to note that critics had labeled such a program as illusory because its forces simply could not be made large enough to offset those of the Soviet Union. The trouble with such reasoning, he asserted, was that it conveniently separated European defense from the rest of the American defense network. European defense forces could not be considered in isolation, as a weapon all by themselves; rather, they had to be seen as a "vital adjunct to the other deterrent forces available."<sup>51</sup> Summing up, he renewed this plea:

In the event of an attack the availability of defense forces in Europe would give us time that we would vitally need to bring our other forces into operation. In the meantime these defense forces would oblige the aggressor to use up his available resources, while his home sources of supply were being bombed. These forces would also deny him

<sup>51</sup>Dean Acheson, "The Joint Defense of Western Europe," The Department of State Bulletin, February 26, 1951, p. 324.

access to the industrial, human, and other resources of Europe. These are the resources that balance the scales of power. These are the forces that would prevent Europe, in the event of an attack, from having to go through another occupation and liberation.<sup>52</sup>

Acheson's presentation was on the whole a masterful performance, one that left his critics with little new to assault. Of course they could not and did not accept his arguments, but neither could they find anything weak enough in them to win over those senators who had been up to that time noncommittal on the troop issue. Clearly, the Secretary's testimony was a tour de force, an accomplishment which effectively sealed the fate of the entire debate. In retrospect, however, his case was not without flaws.

Early in his remarks, for example, Acheson cautioned his audience by suggesting that the danger confronting Western Europe was not just the obvious one of overt military aggression. There were also several other threats:

. . . conquest by default, by pressure, by persuasion, by subversion, by "neutralism," by all the paraphernalia of indirect aggression which the Communist movement has used.<sup>53</sup>

If the United States engaged in a sort of one dimensional strategy which ignored these other factors, then it could only be expected that such a policy would drive "our friends in Europe into a mood of non-resistance, a mood of 'neutralism,' which is for them and for all of us a short cut to suicide."<sup>54</sup> Acheson's successor, John Foster Dulles, once

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 325.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 323.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

referred to neutralism as being "immoral" and was subjected to such a fusillade of verbal brickbats that he never troubled to broach the subject with such terminology again. Yet, oddly, no one thought to challenge Acheson's groundless assumption. Presumably, even his opponents thought suicide to be an accurate prediction of the fate of neutral countries.

The possibility that Europe would somehow be "subverted" by internal Communist movements was also extremely remote in 1951, despite what Acheson said. Indeed, within one month of his statement, his own Department of State had issued statistics which cast serious doubt on such a possibility. After explaining to the reader that Moscow was "losing the battle to take over Western Europe by boring from within," an official communique stated that since 1946 Communist party membership had declined by 34 per cent in Austria, 30 per cent in France, 31 per cent in Italy, 65 per cent in Norway, 34 per cent in Western Germany, and 34 per cent in the United Kingdom.<sup>55</sup> But once again, in so far as is known, not one of the Administration's conservative opponents attempted to make an issue of this apparent discrepancy.

<sup>55</sup> "Communism on the Wane in Western Europe," The Department of State Bulletin, March 12, 1951, p. 407.

Senate Resolution 99

After the Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Forces Committees had sat through most of the month of February listening to and questioning Dean Acheson, George Marshall and a bevy of generals, it became obvious most senators had made up their minds in favor of the Administration's proposal. Indeed, the decision of the Committees was unanimous. By a vote of 23 to 0 they elected to leave the government "free to commit whatever forces were 'necessary and appropriate'" to uphold America's fair share of the NATO effort.<sup>56</sup> Truman had overpowered Taft and his allies and it now seemed only a matter of time before he would go ahead and order the four additional divisions to Europe. The debate continued from the floor of the Senate for approximately a month, but as the days drifted by it became increasingly obvious that few people were really paying attention. The whole Taft-Wherry-Knowland effort seemed to disintegrate after the hearings concluded.

A political autopsy of the debate quickly reveals why. At best Taft was able to count on only about one-third of the Senate to see the matter his way. Not all of the remaining two-thirds were necessarily on the side of the Administration, but neither was Taft able to win them over. The big factor was his inability to find any professional

<sup>56</sup>The New York Times, March 9, 1951, p. 1.

military men who would champion his views. (MacArthur of course was still in Korea, but he took no direct part in the great debate.) Without some military support, Taft's position became untenable. As one observer has summarized:

Faced with executive unanimity and the staunch defense of the Administration's position by three of the nation's four most popular soldiers (Marshall, Eisenhower, Bradley), the opposition senators failed to define any clear alternatives to the Administration's action, much less to influence or to reverse the character of that action.<sup>57</sup>

The final act of the great debate occurred on April 4 when the Senate, by a vote of 69 to 21, approved Senate Resolution 99. The resolution had first squeaked through two days earlier by the thin margin of 46 to 44, but a coalition reported to be composed of Republicans and Southern Democrats forced the Senate to reconsider and to adopt a declaration submitted by Senator John L. McClellan of Arkansas.<sup>58</sup> The McClellan amendment, which turned out to be a stipulation calling upon the President to seek congressional approval for any further troop increases to Europe, was adopted by 49 to 43. It was then attached to the full resolution which passed by a final tally of some forty-eight votes. The resolution which thus emerged was the ultimate outgrowth of the one Senator Wherry had first introduced in January. It had, however, become so amended over the months

<sup>57</sup>Samuel P. Huntington, The Common Defense (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), pp. 324-325.

<sup>58</sup>The New York Times, April 3, 1951, p. 1.

that Wherry himself could no longer support it. On the other hand, Taft and Knowland viewed it as the best possible under the circumstances and voted for its adoption. Others may have been puzzled over just what it did, but voted for it anyway. As with most measures that eventually work their way through the legislative process, Resolution 99 came through as a compromise, one, as Dean Acheson later remarked, that "had in it a present for everybody." Acheson's comment would seem to explain the resolution's final lopsided acceptance.

The resolution, being just exactly that, voiced the sense of the Senate and had absolutely no legislative power. It approved the selection of General Eisenhower as the Commander of NATO; it noted the existence of a threat to the security of the United States and its NATO partners which necessitated committing units of "armed Forces as may be necessary and proper" but warned that not more than four divisions should be deployed "without further Congressional approval"; it noted the President should consult with the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs, and appropriate congressional committees before sending troops abroad; it asked the Joint Chiefs to ascertain if other NATO members were providing their contribution; it requested semiannual reports on the implementation of the NATO treaty; and it asked that consideration be given for the inclusion of West

Germany and Spain into the pact.<sup>59</sup>

As there was no actual legislation involved, the Administration could have ignored the resolution entirely had it so desired. Instead, it wisely chose to accept it as a victory. The President issued a statement which said in part:

The clear endorsement of the appointment of General Eisenhower and the plans to assign troops to his command shows that there has never been any real question but that this country would do its part in helping to create an integrated European defense force.<sup>60</sup>

In an editorial on the same day, The New York Times optimistically reported: "Even with its amendments . . . the adoption of the resolution should provide Western Europe with new confidence to go full steam ahead with the defense programs agreed upon."<sup>61</sup> The Times' editors apparently had not been doing their homework; Western Europe by this date was paying little attention to the outcome of the great debate, so involved had it become with its own difficulties over NATO. France, clinging to bitter memories fostered by World War II, remained wary over the role West Germany was to play in the alliance. Other members, Great Britain in particular, had become disturbed over the increased costs NATO would mean. By the spring of 1951, regardless of the

<sup>59</sup>The resolution in its entirety may be found in the Appendix.

<sup>60</sup>The Department of State Bulletin, April 16, 1951, p. 637.

<sup>61</sup>"Troops for Europe," The New York Times, April 5, 1951, p. 28.

outcome of the great debate, Europe indicated little likelihood of proceeding at "full steam ahead." It soon became clear that the transformation of NATO into any meaningful military alliance was to be an agonizingly slow process.

In the United States, too, another matter soon diverted attention. Within a week of the passage of Resolution 99 the entire affair was momentarily forgotten following the President's removal of General MacArthur from his command. Unofficially, the great debate was now over, but the fresh controversy which arose from MacArthur's dismissal indicated some of the disputed issues could not be resolved by the passage of a congressional resolution.



## CHAPTER IV

### AN APPRAISAL

The great debate, then, did not really conclude with the passage of Resolution 99 on April 4. To be sure, the question whether four additional divisions would be sent to Europe was settled, but the question whether Europe or Asia had first priority in America's defensive strategy continued to be hotly debated. With Truman's dismissal of MacArthur the whole affair was opened anew, more vociferously than ever. The resulting uproar was to last well into the summer of 1951 and the consequences of this hectic period were to haunt the Truman Administration until its last days in office. Yet the debate itself had grappled with, or created, a number of important issues, some of which were to help formulate American foreign policy for the next fifteen years. The debate's effect on the immediate future of the Republican and Democratic parties was also notable.

#### The Question of the Soviet Threat

During the debate much of what Taft, Hoover, Knowland, and others protested concerned the question of the need for additional troops in Europe. It will be recalled that Taft in particular argued that he could find no sign the Soviets were preparing any overt military action against Western Europe. In his mind the threat which existed was in the Far

East. Clearly, the results of the debate show the Administration won the argument, at least in so far as a majority of the Senate was concerned. Yet what is not clear, even after a hiatus of some nineteen years, is whether its evaluation was sound. Was there, in fact, any serious possibility of a Soviet invasion of Western Europe during the early 1950's?

The only fact that can be stated for certain is that there was a climate of fear and suspicion prevalent in the United States. This in itself was probably enough to cause the Administration to assume an attack would occur. The findings of the National Security Council, as relayed in its paper NSC-68, were undoubtedly an important contributing factor. Unfortunately, this entire paper still remains classified, even though less than one per cent of it originated from classified sources.<sup>1</sup> According to Dean Acheson, this information put the need for a stronger alliance "beyond argument." At best, then, the hard evidence for the necessity of sending American forces to Europe was based upon a super secret portion of NSC-68. Until this information is declassified, it seems doubtful any final conclusion can be reached in regard to the possibility of a Soviet attack during this period.

<sup>1</sup>Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1969), p. 375.

### The Role of the Troops

Taft had also argued that even if a Soviet attack came, six American divisions would never be capable of stopping it. Taft's view in this instance seems sensible. Even with additional divisions supplied by the various nations of Western Europe, it is still difficult to understand how a massive Soviet invasion could have been contained. In answer to this point Administration supporters, such as General Lucius Clay, sought to assure the Senate that an American force, even such a small one, would be so skilled and tenacious that it would be capable of sustaining "the rather slow moving Russian attack" until additional allied forces could be brought to bear.<sup>2</sup> In light of the American military's less than brilliant record against a far less sophisticated opponent in Korea, Clay's statement seems particularly absurd.

A more plausible explanation for the sending of troops hinged on a political motive. At least one columnist saw the long-term implications of the issue at the time:

In the most literal sense they [the six divisions] are the vanguard of a potential army that might never have come into existence if they were not there. As a military force they are not big enough to win a land war, but as a political force, the nucleus of larger armies, the generator of confidence and the will to resist, they could be a potent factor in

<sup>2</sup>The New York Times, March 1, 1951, p. 16.

saving the peace.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, another observer noted, perhaps more succinctly, that America's role in providing troops to NATO was, in effect, "a deterrent commitment based on the belief that if American intentions to prevent the upset of the European balance of power were made clear in advance, the likelihood of a challenge to that balance would be greatly reduced."<sup>4</sup>

More recently, other writers, including some from the so-called "revisionist" school of history, have come up with a related motive for the Administration's actions. This group is of the opinion that American troops were primarily sent to Europe to serve as "hostages" in order to insure all-out American participation in case of any military conflict. Specifically, the reasoning of this group is just the opposite of what General Clay's had been: small numbers of American troops would never be able to withstand any massive Soviet attack, nor were they meant to. Their role was to act as a "tripwire" whose purpose would be to guarantee the full might of the American military would come crashing down on any force which attempted to rout them from the continent. Ultimately, of course, this meant that "any Soviet attack upon a NATO command containing American troops

<sup>3</sup>Anne O'Hare McCormick, "The Political Mission of Those Six Divisions," The New York Times, February 17, 1951, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup>Samuel P. Huntington, The Common Defense (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p. 313.

would automatically trip a nuclear attack from the United States."<sup>5</sup>

In other words, the loss of a sizeable number of American soldiers, coupled with the realization that adequate numbers of additional troops could not be despatched fast enough from the United States to hold the continent, would probably be reason, as one observer put it, to "create the casus belli atomici, at which point the Strategic Air Command would take over and unleash an atomic attack."<sup>6</sup>

This theory seems credible, especially since at least one high-level member of the Truman Administration has been unable or unwilling to respond to it.<sup>7</sup> What emerges from all of this, however, is the curious irony that if the logic of the revisionists is accepted, then in the end the Administration was relying on the capability of the American Air Force to deliver a devastating nuclear attack on the Soviet Union, the strategy Taft had advanced all along. Taft wanted the United States to be prepared to carry out this

<sup>5</sup>Walter LaFeber, America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1966 (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1967), p. 123.

<sup>6</sup>Raymond Aron, The Great Debate (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1965), p. 23.

<sup>7</sup>When asked about the revisionist theory by the author, Secretary Acheson referred him to several chapters in his new book, Present at the Creation. All proved to be useful, but none, unfortunately, dealt with the revisionist "tripwire" explanation. Nor could the author find evidence of a response to the theory by any other Administration defender.

action without sacrificing ground personnel in the process. The Administration, on the other hand, apparently felt that such an attack would never receive the political and public assent necessary within the United States unless American troops had already been killed by a Soviet aggressor force. Both strategies assumed American air power would have the capability to carry out such a mission. Fortunately, the air force was never asked to prove this contention.

### The Executive and the Senate

In questioning the President's right to send troops anywhere without the approval of the Senate, Taft and his supporters were employing a tactic that was anything but new. He was merely stirring up embers which periodically throughout American history have ignited over the constitutional question of the right of the executive branch to take military action without the approval of the legislative branch.

Truman, already annoyed with Taft and company over a variety of issues, saw little need to submit the troop question for their approval. The President made his position clear in a press conference in January, 1951:

Q. Mr. President, maybe it's my "tin" ear, but I didn't get this straight yet. In this particular case, with the debate raging in Congress over whether you do or do not have the authority to send troops to Europe--and Mr. Hoover said not another man or another dollar should be sent--the debate has been quite general. Do I understand that you will ask Congress for permission--

THE PRESIDENT. No.

Q. --before sending troops--

THE PRESIDENT. No, you do not want to take that view of the thing. I said that--in case of necessity and it became necessary, for the defense of the Atlantic Treaty countries, the Congress would be consulted before troops were sent. I don't ask their permission, I just consult them [emphasis added].<sup>8</sup>

Truman went on to note in the same news conference that if Senators Taft and Wherry, or anyone else, wanted to discuss this matter with him "the front door of the White House [was] always open." A public invitation of this sort was not what Taft had in mind. He desired a private invitation whereby he and the President would arrive at some mutual arrangement in regard to the troops question. In fact, the whole notion that it was Truman's duty to gain the consent of Congress really meant the consent of the GOP leadership.<sup>9</sup> As it was, Truman said nothing of his plans concerning the troop issue to the Republican leadership until after a decision had already been made and communicated to the other NATO members. Truman's actions were a clear indication the harmonious days when the President and Senator Arthur Vandenburg worked out a bipartisan foreign policy were nothing more than fond memories. It seemed clear, as one observer has noted, that "the procedures and

<sup>8</sup>U. S., President, "The President's News Conference of January 11, 1951," Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman (Washington: United States

<sup>9</sup>Cecil V. Crabb, Bipartisan Foreign Policy: Myth or Reality? (Evanston: Row, Peterson and Company, 1957), p. 94.

techniques designed to promote two-party cooperation in foreign affairs had fallen into almost complete disuse, and neither the Administration nor Republican leaders showed any evident desire to restore them."<sup>10</sup>

The reaction in the Senate to the President's policy was mixed, even in his own party. Senator J. William Fulbright was firmly in his corner:

The Congress has the right and power to raise the Armed Forces, but the President has the responsibility for the command of those forces. If in the exercise of his best judgment the defense of this country requires the sending of troops to Europe, he has the power and the duty to do so. Congress, of course, can refuse to appropriate the money for the troops but that is a decision for which Congress must take the responsibility. In the long run decisions on military strategy are best left to the Executive.<sup>11</sup>

Senator Paul Douglas, normally an Administration backer, was not so sure. He felt uneasy over the troop issue because Secretary Acheson had stated before a congressional committee in 1949 that American troops would never be sent to Europe under the NATO pact. Now it was obvious troops were going to be sent and apparently without congressional sanction. Consequently, Douglas felt:

. . . it would not be proper, in my judgment, for the administration now to try to put the agreement into effect by purely Executive action upon the narrow grounds of its constitutional powers. For to do so would violate the explicit pledge given by the

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>U. S., Congressional Record, 83d Cong., 1st Sess., XCVII, Part 1, 520-521.



the Secretary to the Senate when we had the power of refusing to ratify the treaty under which the Brussels agreement was later negotiated. It would be the path of honor instead for the administration to submit the question of approving the Brussels agreement to at least the Senate and possibly the House. . . .<sup>12</sup>

In the end Truman chose a compromise, but one which was favorable to his position. With the Administration's approval the issue was allowed to be aired in the joint hearings of the Armed Forces and Foreign Relations Committees. Since both committees were made up of men largely favorable to the Administration's position, this action almost insured a pro-Administration outcome, thereby neatly outmaneuvering Taft. The move also had the additional advantage of pacifying dissident Democrats, such as Douglas, who now felt the Senate had been properly consulted.

Taft's allegation that the Senate had not been given its constitutional due was further weakened when many prominent Republicans, convinced by the hearings, finally voted for Resolution 99. This avoided a showdown struggle in the Senate which probably would have resulted in a bitter partisan wrangle of considerable duration. But because of Truman's apt handling of the issue and because of the supposed Soviet threat to Western Europe, many "Republican senators did not dare to risk the consequences of defeating the treaty."<sup>13</sup> Some of them were probably fearful of

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 230.

<sup>13</sup>Malcolm E. Jewell, Senatorial Politics and Foreign Policy (n.p., University of Kentucky Press, 1962), p. 38.

falling victim to a "soft on communism" charge at some later date if they refused to support a military alliance against it at this time.

### Aftereffects

The long term implications of the great debate for both internal American politics and foreign affairs are admittedly difficult to surmise. On the surface, as has already been shown, the Administration was victorious. It succeeded in its desire to move additional troops to Europe, a move which turned out to be a thin entering wedge in light of the numbers of American troops which were to follow over the years.

A broader examination, however, suggests the debate, along with those issues which led up to and followed it, proved to be disastrous to the Democratic Party. For although some conservative Republicans were earnestly seeking a change in America's defense posture, it seems clear that in a larger sense they saw the great debate as yet another opportunity to make political hay for the 1952 elections. Every time the Administration was discredited, the Republican Party was assured of additional votes. One careful student of the period, historian Ronald J. Caridi, has frankly concluded this was the major motivation of the Republican dissidents. Commenting on the party's attitude toward Korea in particular, Caridi remarked:

They first supported the American intervention, then retreated from the implications of that support; they steadfastly called for American withdrawal . . . then passionately associated themselves with the "no substitute for victory" philosophy of MacArthur. Finally . . . the party nominated for the Presidency a military hero whose platform lacked any concrete program for peace even as it disavowed both unification and an all-out victory. Criticism by the Republican party during the Korean War was justifiable; but when the nature of a party's dissent indicates that its members are motivated more by political expediency than by a desire to present a consistent and viable alternative to Administration policies, then censure is in order.<sup>14</sup>

Censure may have been in order, but when it came the American public, via the ballot box, directed it against the Democrats. The Republican Party's election victories of 1952 indicated that its strategy had been successful. It may, in fact, have been too successful. As one foreign observer has noted: "Not only did it do untold electoral damage to the Democratic Party but it laid the basis for a significant change in American [foreign] policy."<sup>15</sup> Dean Acheson, writing in his memoirs, admits the period was a poisonous one and it "had a highly toxic effect on the American public." Still, he found that the "loss of confidence at home and abroad in the conduct of our foreign affairs was not the proximate cause of any change in our foreign policy, but it added to our difficulties and by so

<sup>14</sup>Ronald J. Caridi, The Korean War and American Politics: The Republican Party as a Case Study (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), p. 175.

<sup>15</sup>The Times (London), September 6, 1954, p. 7.

doing diminished our effectiveness."<sup>16</sup>

Perhaps there was no noticeable change in the direction of foreign policy during the remaining year and a half of the Truman Administration, but a subtle change was occurring. A whole set of attitudes concerned with the menace of Communism in Asia began to permeate the upper echelons of government. Korea, of course, started it, but the attacks and campaigns of Taft, Hoover, Knowland, and their followers must share a good deal of the responsibility for that change. Largely because of the momentum of their propaganda, American foreign policy became reoriented, with a greater emphasis placed upon the importance of Asia. Once the war in Korea was terminated with a state of permanent truce, the United States did not remove its presence from Asia; it increased it: fifty thousand troops remained in Korea; Chiang Kai-shek continued to receive vast amounts of military and economic aid; the French were first aided and eventually replaced in a hopeless attempt to suppress "Communist subversion" in Southeast Asia; and the SEATO alliance system was established in an effort to do for the entire region what NATO had supposedly done for Western Europe. In short, the whole concept of combating Communism by containment, which had originally been designed for events in Europe, was also adopted for Asia under the direction of the

<sup>16</sup>Acheson, p. 528.

Eisenhower Administration. Later Democratic regimes not only accepted all of this as worthwhile but sought to expand America's role there as well. No thought was apparently given to the possibility that by so doing the United States might seriously overextend itself.

In essence, then, most of the arguments in regard to Asia advanced by Taft and his troupe were accepted and eventually put into practice by later administrations. (Even the much touted superiority of air power was given another chance in Vietnam--where it met with only marginal success.) The irony of the great debate was that while Taft and his supporters lost the battle in 1951 over the troops-to-Europe issue, they in effect won the war. Asia was to be championed as never before, perhaps beyond anything Taft had imagined possible. Aside from the troop issue, the only concept advanced by Taft and Hoover during the great debate that was not later acknowledged as gospel was the proposition that excessive defense spending would become self-destructive. Yet this may well have been their most significant prediction.

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## APPENDIX

### SENATE RESOLUTION 99 AS AMENDED

#### Resolved That--

1. the Senate approved the action of the President of the United States in cooperating in the common defensive effort of the North Atlantic Treaty nations by designating, at their unanimous request, General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower as Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, and in placing Armed Forces of the United States in Europe under his command;

2. it is the belief of the Senate that the threat to the security of the United States and our North Atlantic Treaty partners makes it necessary for the United States to station abroad such units of our Armed Forces as may be necessary and appropriate to contribute our fair share of the forces needed for the joint defense of the North Atlantic area;

3. it is the sense of the Senate that the President of the United States as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, before taking action to send units of ground troops to Europe under article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty, should consult the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate, the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives, and the Armed Services Committees of the Senate and

the House of Representatives, and that he should likewise consult the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe;

4. it is the sense of the Senate that before sending units of ground troops to Europe under article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty, the Joint Chiefs of Staff shall certify to the Secretary of Defense that in their opinion the parties to the North Atlantic Treaty are giving, and have agreed to give full, realistic force and effect to the requirement of article 3 of said treaty that "by means of continuous and effective selfhelp and mutual aid" they will "maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack," especially insofar as the creation of combat units is concerned;

5. the Senate herewith approves the understanding that the major contribution to the ground forces under General Eisenhower's command should be made by the European members of the North Atlantic Treaty, and that such units of United States ground forces as may be assigned to the above command shall be assigned only after the Joint Chiefs of Staff certify to the Secretary of Defense that in their opinion such assignment is a necessary step in strengthening the security of the United States; and the certified opinions referred to in paragraphs 4 and 5 shall be transmitted by the Secretary of Defense to the President of the United States, and to the Senate Committees on Foreign Relations and Armed Services, and to the House Committee on Foreign

Affairs and Armed Services as soon as they are received;

6. it is the sense of the Senate that, in the interests of sound constitutional processes, and of national unity and understanding, congressional approval should be obtained of any policy requiring the assignment of American troops abroad when such assignment is in implementation of article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty; and the Senate hereby approves the present plans of the President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff to send four additional divisions of ground forces to Western Europe, but it is the sense of the Senate that no ground troops in addition to such four divisions should be sent to Western Europe in implementation of article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty without further congressional approval;

7. it is the sense of the Senate that the President should submit to the Congress at intervals of not more than 6 months reports on the implementation of the North Atlantic Treaty, including such information as may be made available for this purpose by the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe:

8. it is the sense of the Senate that the United States should seek to eliminate all provisions of the existing treaty with Italy which impose limitations upon the military strength of Italy and prevent the performance by Italy of her obligations under the North Atlantic Treaty to contribute to the full extent of her capacity to the defense of Western Europe;

9. it is the sense of the Senate that consideration should be given to the revision of plans for the defense of Europe as soon as possible so as to provide for utilization on a voluntary basis of the military and other resources of Western Germany and Spain, but not exclusive of the military and other resources of other nations.