

"American Foreign Policy"
Sen. Arthur H. Vandenberg
Address to the Senate
Washington, D.C.
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Mr. President, I shall detain the Senate less than thirty minutes. I desire to speak about some phases of foreign policy. Because of the solemnity of the subject itself, I ask the indulgence of my colleagues that I be permitted at least to make my preliminary statement without interruption.

Mr. President, there are critical moments in the life of every nation which call for the straightest, the plainest, and the most courageous thinking of which we are capable. We confront such a moment now. It is not only desperately important to America, it is important to the world. It is important not only to this generation which lives in blood. It is important to future generations if they shall live in peace.

No man in his right senses will be dogmatic in his viewpoint at such an hour. A global conflict which uproots the earth is not calculated to submit itself to the dominion of any finite mind. The clashes of rival foreign interests, which have motivated wars for countless centuries, are not likely suddenly to surrender to some simple man-made formula, no matter how nobly meditated. Each of us can only speak according to his little lights--and pray for a composite wisdom that shall lead us to high, safe ground. It is only in this spirit of anxious humility that I speak today. Politics, in any such connection, would be as obnoxious at home as they are in manipulations abroad.

Mr. President, we still have two major wars to win. I said "We." That does not mean America alone. It means the continued and total battle fraternity of the United Nations. It must mean one for all and all for one; and it will mean this, unless somewhere in this grand alliance the stupid and sinister folly of ulterior ambitions shall invite the enemy to postpone our victory through our own rivalries and our own confusion. The United Nations, in even greater unity of military action than heretofore, must never, for any cause, permit this military unity to fall apart. If it does, we shall count the cost in mortal anguish, even though we stumble on to a belated, though inevitable victory. And, getting down to what Mr. Churchill would call the bare bones of the matter, this is an obligation which rests no less upon our allies than upon us, and no less upon us than upon our allies. First things must come first. History will not deal lightly with any who undermine this aim ere it is achieved. Destiny will one day balance any such ghastly accounts.

We not only have two wars to win, we also have yet to achieve such a peace as will justify this appalling cost. Here again an even more difficult unity is indispensable. Otherwise we shall look back upon a futile, sanguinary shambles and--God save the mark--we shall be able to look forward only to the curse of World War III.

Unfortunately, Mr. President, the morale of unity in war is often threatened by sharply clashing and often disillusioning disclosures which threaten this unity in peace. The two considerations cannot be dissociated. President Roosevelt correctly said in his annual

message that "the nearer we come to vanquishing our enemies the more we become inevitably conscious of differences among the victors." He also correctly said that "nations like individuals do not always see alike or think alike, and international cooperation and progress are not helped by any nation assuming that it has a monopoly of wisdom or of virtue." That applies to us. It applies to each of our allies. But when "differences among the victors"--to use the White House phrase--when "differences among the victors," before they have clinched their victory, threaten both the victory and the peace, the hour cannot much longer be postponed when any such trends shall be reversed. We shall not reverse them by our silence upon the issues that are clearly involved; nor, and I say it with great respect, shall we reverse them merely by a generalized restatement of the high aspirations revoiced in the recent presidential message. Certainly we shall not reverse them by a snarling process of international recrimination in which every United Nations capital tries to outdo the other in bitter back-talk about the infirmities of each. Such bickering is dangerous--over there or over here. It is water on the Axis wheel. Again I agree wholeheartedly with President Roosevelt when he says:

We must not let such differences divide us and blind us to our more important common and continuing interests in winning the war and building the peace.

On the other hand, I hold the deep belief that honest candor, devoid of prejudice or ire, is our greatest hope and our greatest necessity; and that the government of the United States, above all others, is called at long last to exercise this honest candor not only with its allies but also with its own faithful people.

I hesitate, even now, to say these things, Mr. President, because a great American illusion seems to have been built up--wittingly or otherwise--that we, in the United States, dare not publicly discuss these subjects lest we contribute to international dissension and thus encourage the very thing we all need to cure. But I frankly confess that I do not know why we must be the only silent partner in this grand alliance. There seems to be no fear of disunity, no hesitation in Moscow, when Moscow wants to assert unilateral war and peace aims which collide with ours. There seems to be no fear of disunity, no hesitation in London, when Mr. Churchill proceeds upon his unilateral way to make decisions often repugnant to our ideas and our ideals. Perhaps our allies will plead that their actions are not unilateral; that our president, as Bevin said, has initialed this or that at one of the famous Big Three conferences; that our president, as Churchill said, has been kept constantly "aware of everything that has happened"; in other words, that by our silence we have acquiesced. But that hypothesis would only make a bad matter worse. It would be the final indictment of our silence--the final obituary for open covenants. We, of course, accept no conception that our contribution to unity must be silence, while others say and do what they please, and that our only role in this global tragedy is to fight and die and pay, and that unity for us shall only be the unity which Jonah enjoyed when he was swallowed by the whale.

I hasten to say that any such intolerable conception would be angrily repudiated by every American--from the president down to the last citizen among us. It has not been and is not true. Yet it cannot be denied that our government has not spoken out--to our own people or to our allies--in any such specific fashion as have the others. It cannot be denied, as a result, that too often a grave melancholy settles upon some sectors of our people. It cannot be denied that citizens, in increasing numbers, are crying: "What are we fighting for?" It cannot be denied that our silence--at least our public and official

silence--has multiplied confusion at home and abroad. It cannot be denied that this confusion threatens our unity--yes, Mr. President, and already hangs like a cloud over Dumbarton Oaks. So I venture to repeat, with all the earnestness at my command, that a new rule of honest candor in Washington--as a substitute for mystifying silence or for classical generalities--honest candor on the high plane of great ideals--is the greatest contribution we can make to the realities of unity at this moment when enlightened civilization is our common stake.

Let us not mistake the meaning of unity. Unity does not require universal and peremptory agreement about everything. It does not demand a meeting of all minds now in respect to all the minutiae of a postwar world which will take years to stabilize. The president is wholly right in pleading for tolerance upon this score and in warning that we must not expect what he calls perfectionism overnight. Here in the Senate we do not have perpetual agreement between the two sides of the aisle, but we have never failed to have basic unity when crisis calls. The unity I discuss is the overall tie which must continue to bind the United Nations together in respect to paramount fundamentals. We had it once in the original spirit of the Atlantic Charter, and we must get it back again before it is too late.

When Mr. Churchill spoke in the British Parliament last December 15, defending his own current course in Greece and Mr. Stalin's proposed partition of Poland, he said:

There is no doubt that when the time comes the United States will make its own pronouncement upon these matters, bearing in mind, as it will, the practical aspects which these matters assume and also how much failure on the part of the three greatest powers to work together would damage all our hopes for the future structure of a world government which, whatever else it might fail to do, will at any rate be equipped with all powers necessary to prevent outbreak of future war.

I do not like one of the implications in this quotation. It seems to say that unless we acquiesce in these self-serving unilateral arrangements now being made by great European powers, we shall be the scapegoats to be made responsible for the next war. I would respond categorically to any such abortive thesis by saying that, regardless of the future structure of a world government, an unjust peace, built upon the age-old frictions of international power politics, is the most fatal of all threats which our hopes for the future can possibly confront. But that is not the reason I use the quotation at this point. Of ever greater importance is the other implication--namely, that the United States has not spoken; that her official attitude is not dependably recorded; and that, until she does speak, the world cannot find its bearings.

There is no doubt--

(says Mr. Churchill)

--that when the time comes the United States will make its own pronouncement.

When the time comes. Mr. President, is the time not here right now?

If it is, Mr. President, what shall we say that we have not already said in the Connally resolution in the Senate and the Fulbright resolution in the House and in the presidential utterances?

It seems to me, Mr. President, that the first thing we must say, beyond misunderstanding, is that we have not altered our original commitments; that we have not lowered our sights; that we have not diluted our dedications; that we are not fighting to pull ancient chestnuts out of alien fires; that the smell of victory is not an anaesthetic which puts our earlier zeals to sleep. We still propose to win this war, come what may. We are fighting to defend America. We still propose to help create the postwar world on a basis which shall stop aggressors for keeps and, so far as humanly possible, substitute justice for force among free men. We propose to do it primarily for our own sake. We still propose also, to substitute justice for force--if we can--in writing the peace which terminates this war when we deal with the victims of Axis tyranny. That is the road to permanent peace. We still propose that none of the United Nations shall seek aggrandizement, territorial, or otherwise--though conceding that all change is not necessarily aggrandizement. We still propose, outside the Axis, that there shall be no territorial changes which do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the people concerned. Similarly we still propose to respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live. We still propose to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them, if it lies within our power.

In a word, Mr. President, it seems to me that the first thing we must do is to reassert, in high places, our American faith in these particular elemental objectives of the so-called Atlantic Charter, which was officially issued as a signed document by the State Department on August 14, 1941; which was officially communicated to the Congress as a signed document by the president of the United States in his message of August 21, 1941; which was embodied in a joint resolution of all the United Nations on January 1, 1942; which was commemorated by the president on August 14, 1943 in a proclamation on the second anniversary of its "signing"--his word--which had a tragic sinking spell when its formal authenticity was amazingly depreciated in a White House press conference a fortnight ago, but which the president re-embraced in his message of January 6, 1945.

I am sure the president did not anticipate the shocking results of his recent almost jocular, and even cynical, dismissal of the Atlantic Charter as a mere collection of fragmentary notes. It jarred America to its very hearthstones. It seemed to make a mere pretense out of what has been an inspiringly accepted fact. It seemed almost to sanction alien contempts. It seemed to suggest that we have put too much emphasis upon a fighting creed which did not deserve the solemnity which we have been taught to ascribe to it. Coming at a particularly critical moment when these pledges seemed to be at least partially paralyzed in Moscow--and when even Mr. Churchill's memory about the charter was proving to be admittedly fickle--the president's statement was utterly devastating in its impact. He has since sought to repair this damage. I hope he has succeeded. With justification he reminds us in his annual message that there are no rules of easy application--of the charter--to each and every one of this war-torn world's tangled situations. He now says correctly and bravely, "We shall not hesitate to use our influence--and use it now--to secure so far as is humanly possible the fulfillment of these principles." That is the indispensable point. These basic pledges cannot now be dismissed as a mere nautical nimbus. They march with our armies. They sail with our

fleets. They fly with our eagles. They sleep with our martyred dead. The first requisite of honest candor, Mr. President, I respectfully suggest, is to relight this torch.

The next thing we need to do, Mr. President, if I may be so bold, in this spirit of honest candor, is to appeal to our allies, in the name of reason, to frankly face the postwar alternatives which are available to them and to us as a means to preserve tomorrow's peace for them and for us. There are two ways to do it. One way is by exclusive individual action in which each of us tries to look out for himself. The other way is by joint action in which we undertake to look out for each other. The first way is the old way which has twice taken us to Europe's interminable battlefields within a quarter century. The second way is the new way in which our present fraternity of war becomes a new fraternity of peace. I do not believe that either we or our allies can have it both ways. They serve to cancel out each other. We cannot tolerate unilateral privilege in a multilateral peace. Yet, that seems to be the fatalistic trend today. I think we must make our choice. I think we must make it wholly plain to our major allies that they, too, must make their choice.

I hasten to make my own personal viewpoint clear. I have always been frankly one of those who has believed in our own self-reliance. I still believe that we can never again--regardless of collaborations--allow our national defense to deteriorate to anything like a point of impotence. But I do not believe that any nation hereafter can immunize itself by its own exclusive action. Since Pearl Harbor, World War II has put the gory science of mass murder into new and sinister perspective. Our oceans have ceased to be moats which automatically protect our ramparts. Flesh and blood now compete unequally with winged steel. War has become an all-consuming juggernaut. If World War III ever unhappily arrives, it will open new laboratories of death too horrible to contemplate. I propose to do everything within my power to keep those laboratories closed for keeps. I want maximum American cooperation, consistent with legitimate American self-interest, with constitutional process, and with collateral events which warrant it, to make the basic idea of Dumbarton Oaks succeed. I want a new dignity and a new authority for international law. I think American self-interest requires it. But, Mr. President, this also requires wholehearted reciprocity. In honest candor I think we should tell other nations that this glorious thing we contemplate is not and cannot be one-sided. I think we must say again that unshared idealism is a menace which we could not undertake to underwrite in the postwar world.

Now, I am not so impractical as to expect any country to act on any final motive other than self-interest. I know of no reason why it should. That is what nations are for. I certainly intend that intelligent and loyal American self-interest shall be just as vigilantly and vigorously guarded as is amply obvious, from time to time, in their own behalf by the actions of our allies. The real question always becomes just this: Where does real self-interest lie?

Here, Mr. President, we reach the core of the immediate problem. Without remotely wanting to be invidious, I use one of many available examples. I would not presume, even under these circumstances, to use it except that it ultimately involves us. Russia's unilateral plan appears to contemplate the engulfment, directly or indirectly, of a surrounding circle of buffer states, contrary to our conception of what we thought we were fighting for in respect to the rights of small nations and a just peace. Russia's announced reason is her insistent purpose never again to be at the mercy of another German tyranny. That is a perfectly understandable reason. The alternative is collective

security. Now, which is better, in the long view? That is the question I pose. Which is better, in the long view, from a purely selfish Russian standpoint: To forcefully surround herself with a cordon of unwillingly controlled or partitioned states, thus affronting the opinions of mankind as a means of postwar protection against a renaissance of German aggression, or to win the priceless asset of world confidence in her by embracing the alternative, namely, full, and wholehearted cooperation with and reliance on a vital international organization in which all of us shall honorably participate to guarantee that Axis aggression shall never rise again? Well--at that point, Russia, or others like her, in equally honest candor, has a perfect right to reply, "Where is there any such alternative reliance until we know what the United States will do? How can you expect us to rely on an enigma?"

Now we are getting somewhere. Fear of reborn German aggression in years to come is at the base of most of our contemporary frictions. It is a perfectly human and understandable fear on the part of all neighboring nations which German militarism has twice driven to the valley of the shadow within one generation. Fear of reborn German aggression in years to come is the cause assigned to unilateral plans for Russian postwar expansion. Fear of reborn German aggression is the reason assigned to the proposed partition of Poland. Fear of reborn German aggression gave birth to the Anglo Soviet agreement of 1942, the Soviet-Czechoslovak agreement of 1943, the Franco-Soviet Treaty of 1944, and to similar unilateral and bilateral actions inevitably yet to come. Fear of reborn German aggression is our apple of discord. This Second World War plagues the earth chiefly because France and Britain did not keep Germany disarmed, according to contract, after World War I. In other words, when we deal with Europe's fear--her justified fear--of another rebirth of German military tyranny in some future postwar era, we are at the heart of the immediate problem which bedevils our Allied relationships.

I propose that we meet this problem conclusively and at once. There is no reason to wait. America has this same self-interest in permanently, conclusively, and effectively disarming Germany and Japan. It is simply unthinkable that America, or any other member of the United Nations, would allow this Axis calamity to reproduce itself again. Whether we Americans do or do not agree upon all the powers that shall reside in an ultimate international council to call upon us for joint military action in behalf of collective security, surely we can agree that we do not ever want an instant's hesitation or doubt about our military cooperation in the peremptory use of force, if needed, to keep Germany and Japan demilitarized. Such a crisis would be the lengthened shadow of the present war. It would be a direct epilogue to the present war. It should be handled as this present war is handled. There should be no more need to refer any such action back to Congress than that Congress should expect to pass upon battle plans today. The commander in chief should have instant power to act, and he should act. I know of no reason why a hard and-fast treaty between the major allies should not be signed today to achieve this dependable end. We need not await the determination of our other postwar relationships. This problem--this menace--stands apart by itself. Regardless of what our later decision may be in respect to the power that shall be delegated to the president to join our military force with others in a new peace league--no matter what limitations may commend themselves to our ultimate judgments in this regard, I am sure we can agree that there should be no limitations when it comes to keeping the Axis out of piracy for keeps. I respectfully urge that we meet this problem now. From its stern many of today's confusions, doubts and frustrations. I think we should immediately put it behind us by conclusive action. Having done so, most of the reasons given for controversial unilateral

and bilateral actions by our allies will have disappeared; and then we shall be able, at least, to judge accurately whether we have found and cured the real hazard to our relationships. We shall have dosed ranks. We shall have returned infinitely closer to basic unity.

Then, in honest candor, Mr. President, I think we have the duty and the right to demand that whatever immediate unilateral decisions have to be made in consequence of military need--and there will be such even in civil affairs--they shall all be temporary and subject to Final revision in the objective light of the postwar world and the postwar peace league as they shall ultimately develop. As President Roosevelt put it in his annual message:

During the Interim period, until conditions permit a genuine expression of the peoples' will, we and our allies have a duty, which we cannot ignore, to use our influence to the end that no temporary or provisional authorities in the liberated countries block the eventual exercise of the peoples' right freely to choose the government and institutions under which, as free men, they are to live.

I agree to that. Indeed, I would go further. I would write it in the bond. If Dumbarton Oaks should specifically authorize the ultimate international organization to review protested injustices in the peace itself, it would at least partially nullify the argument that we are to be asked to put a blank-check warrant behind a Future status quo which is unknown to us and which we might be unwilling to defend.

We are standing by our guns with epic heroism. I know of no reason why we should not stand by our ideals. If they vanish under ultimate pressures, we shall at least have kept the record straight; we shall have kept faith with our soldier Sons; and we then shall clearly be free agents, unhampered by tragic misunderstandings, in determining our own course when Berlin and Tokyo are in Allied hands. Let me put it this way for myself: I am prepared, by effective international cooperation, to do our full part in charting happier and safer tomorrows. But I am not prepared to guarantee permanently the spoils of an unjust peace. It will not work.

Mr. President, we need honest candor even with our foes. Without any remote suggestion of appeasement--indeed, it seems to me that it is exactly the contrary--I wish we might give these Axis peoples some incentive to desert their own tottering tyrannies by at least indicating to them that the quicker they unconditionally surrender the cheaper will be unconditional surrender's price. Here again we need plain speaking which has been too conspicuous by its absence, and, upon at least one calamitous occasion, by its error.

Mr. President, I conclude as I began. We must win these wars with maximum speed and minimum loss. Therefore we must have maximum Allied cooperation and minimum Allied frictions. We have fabulously earned the right to be heard in respect to the basis of this unity. We need the earliest possible clarification of our relations with our brave allies. We need this clarification not only for the sake of total Allied cooperation in the winning of the war but also in behalf of a truly compensatory peace. We cannot drift to victory. We must have maximum united effort on all fronts. We must have maximum united effort in our councils. And we must deserve the continued united effort of our own people.

I realize, Mr. President, in such momentous problems how much easier it is to be critical than to be correct. I do not wish to meddle. I want only to help. I want to do my duty. It is

in this spirit that I ask for honest candor in respect to our Ideals, our dedications, and our commitments, as the greatest contribution which government can now make to the only kind of realistic unity which will most swiftly bring our victorious Sons back home, and which will best validate our aspirations, our sacrifices, and our dreams.