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### Democratic Party and Foreign Policy

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2-13  
Speech by Senator Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.)  
Pomona College, Claremont, California  
For Release 11:00 A.M., Pacific Standard Time  
Thursday, December 15, 1955

### THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND FOREIGN POLICY

I presume that I am speaking to a group made up largely of Democrats. In any event, I hope that I am. I read somewhere that most of the young people in the country think of themselves as Democrats and I think that is a good thing for the country. I admit, however, to some bias in the matter.

We Democrats do have the distinction of possessing the youngest member of the Senate, Russell Long of Louisiana who is, I believe, 37 years old. Lest we be accused of being the captive of American youth as well as American labor unions, however, let me hasten to add that we also have the distinction of numbering in our ranks the oldest member of the Senate, Theodore Green of Rhode Island. Senator Green admits to 89.

Since I am talking essentially to an audience of Democrats and since I have been asked to speak on foreign policy, I have fused the two factors into the subject of the Democratic Party and Foreign Policy. Those of you who veer towards the Republican party, if you have not reformed by the end of my talk, may still find the time not wasted. You will at least have an inside track on the strategy of your opposition.

Any party in the opposition, when it attempts to deal with questions of foreign policy finds itself at a serious disadvantage in an election year. Its choices are limited. It can engage in a ruthless partisanship, dressed up with the slogans and salesmanship of Madison Avenue in the hope of making votes.

Or it can engage in a "me-toism" in the expectation that it will get credit and votes for the achievements which have been made under the administration of the majority party.

Some members of the Republican party have done both in the past. They have engaged in "me-toism" when a democratic administration was leading the nation safely through the greatest war in history and through the terrible chaos of the early postwar years. When the going became tough abroad and after Mr. Dewey's defeat in 1948 for the Republicans at home, the tactics shifted. They became increasingly ruthless and increasingly irresponsible. *This* They culminated in the unbelievable distortions, the disreputable innuendoes and the shameless misrepresentations of the campaign of 1952.

I hope that the Democratic Party in 1956 will adopt neither the alternative of "me-toism" or acquiescence in the misconduct of foreign policy by the Republican Administration or the alternative of ruthless irresponsibility. There is a third way. The way of responsible opposition. It is the way, I believe which the Democratic Party has sought to pursue in Congress during the past three years both when we have been in a minority and in a majority in both houses of Congress.

I prefer the term responsible opposition to bipartisanship. The word almost bipartisan has been abused/beyond recognition. Responsible opposition in foreign relations, as I see it, means simply exercising the restraints of good citizenship in matters which affect the nation's vital interests when we deal with other nations. It means avoiding the temptation to seek political capital out of difficulties in foreign relations.

It does not mean, however, an end to criticism and debate of foreign policy. On the contrary, it means the most vigorous public discussion of any and all issues which arise in the foreign field. It means an unremitting and unflinching search for facts and ideas which can guide us in dealing with our problems abroad.

Responsible criticism is more than a right of the opposition. It is also an obligation under our system of government. Foreign policy is to a large extent made and carried out by the Executive Branch. But Congress is the indispensable balance. We cannot remain silent for the sake of a misunderstood by-partisanship if the Executive Branch carries out policies which in our responsible judgment are not in the best interests of the nation.

We cannot abandon a free and continuous search for improvement in the conduct of foreign affairs anymore than in domestic affairs without destroying the essence of America's greatness. By the same token, however, we cannot permit political interest rather than national interest to motivate the search without undermining the future of the country. To a considerable extent political interest did dominate the opposition during the last Democratic Administration and it accounts in part for the serious predicament in which we now find ourselves in our relations with other nations.

There is a school of thought which holds that it is the business of political parties to get votes. Having been elected to office on a number of occasions, sometimes by margins too close for comfort, I could not be more in agreement with that concept. But whatever its business, the purpose of a

political party, whether in a majority or a minority, is to serve the interests of the people of the United States. I have no fear for the future of the Democratic Party so long as it has as its primary concern the interests of the American people.

Within that framework, there is a vast field for the responsible opposition to exercise its critical faculties and its creative ability in foreign relations, in this election year no less than in any other year. We cannot, however, ignore that framework. We cannot abandon the restraints of good citizenship without doing serious damage to the nation and, therefore, in the long run, to our own party. At no other time in our history has there been a greater need for vision, boldness, and positive action in American foreign policy than today.

In the past few months I visited some of the problem areas of the world. I was in Southeast Asia. In addition, I traveled extensively in Europe and North Africa. I tell you frankly I am disturbed by the ominous trends in our world affairs. But I am disturbed even more by the failure of our Government to counteract these ominous trends.

The Soviet diplomatic offensive, dramatized at Geneva last July, has made great gains. In many respects Soviet intentions were grossly miscalculated. Many took at face value the preachments of peaceful coexistence by Khrushchev and Bulganin. The failure of the Geneva Foreign Ministers' Conference in October, the venturous thrust of Soviet Russia into the Middle East, and the equally bold Soviet thrust into Southeast Asia exemplified by the travels of Messrs. Khrushchev and Bulganin, have had a sobering affect upon the minds of the all-too-optimistic in the Administration. The experience of the past few months

suggests that the "Geneva Spirit" generated by the Soviet Union last July seems to have been a purposeful tactic to reduce Western vigilance and to soften the neutral areas in preparation for a determined Soviet diplomatic effort at penetration.

The Soviet Union appears to be succeeding in this effort, at least for the present. The Western Allies and the Administration here at home, are cutting armaments even before agreements on disarmament have been achieved. Communist arms and munitions are pouring into Egypt while, simultaneously Soviet economic influence is penetrating the Middle East. Messrs Khrushchev and Bulganin, the travelling salesmen of the Soviet Union have blazed a trail of success from Afghanistan through India to Burma and back.

These Soviet successes are disturbing in themselves. More disturbing however, is the fact that when taken together they represent a massive gain in the momentum of Soviet diplomacy. Despite bold terms like "massive retaliation", this Soviet diplomatic offensive has been met with nothing but a "massive inertia". Some of the fault I realize lies in the unfortunate illness of the President. That is not, however, in my judgment the principal reason for our difficulty.

I think what is happening -- why we are approaching a dead end in foreign relations -- is this. The United States, beginning with the containment policy in 1947-48 gradually put together a durable foreign policy with which to curb the danger to freedom represented by communist totalitarianism. It was

built by the cooperation of both parties under a Democratic Administration. It was compounded of new and bold ideas and concepts. It was carried out with vigor and by great dedication to duty. The fruits of that effort were to be seen in the great structures of peace and defense which were standing when the present Administration entered Washington. Despite much election campaign oratory to the contrary what had already been constructed under a Democratic Administration was not dismantled by the successor Republican Administration.

Leaders were changed; the Administrative machinery was severely damaged, civil servants were terrorized into inertia but the foreign policies themselves were, in the main, continued. They are continued because for the most part they were the best available answers to our problems. The Republicans forgot their promises of liberation of Eastern Europe. They coined some new phrases and they "unleashed Chiang" but the world and our foreign policies <sup>went</sup> ~~went~~ on about the same as ever.

The fact is that foreign policy can be no more positive, no more dynamic than the ideas of the people who make it. And for almost <sup>three</sup> ~~four~~ years we have had dynamic and dangerous Republican words but no new Republican ideas. There is in the Department of State a policy planning staff whose principal function is to give creative directions to our foreign policies. So far as I have been able to determine not a single new thought of any consequence has come out of that body in the past three years.

We have reached a point after three years when the energies inherent in past policies are becoming exhausted. That, I believe, more than any other single factor, explains the mounting difficulties which are closing in on us abroad.

While the Russians have moved boldly and with determination in their diplomacy, those responsible for foreign policy in this country have turned their backs on new ideas which might lead to progress and development in our foreign relations. In the past three years the Administration has, to a great extent, reaped the harvest of the great and creative decisions of previous administrations.

The Marshall Plan, the Point Four Program and others were bold strokes in foreign policy. They required positive action. They required also a willingness to entertain new and challenging ideas.

A final characteristic of foreign policy, under the present Administration is that it is plagued by factionalism. It is elementary that to have an effective foreign policy there must first of all be a measure of unity, especially unity in the party that holds the reins of government. For ~~four~~<sup>three</sup> years we have witnessed a spectacle of open and extreme factionalism. During the first two years, the new Administration pursued with great difficulty a course of attempting to reconcile these irreconcilable factions. Only with the election of a Democratic Congress in 1954 was the President able to get a measure of real support for the constructive aspects of his program in foreign affairs.

Our need today is for a foreign policy that is grounded in a moral conscience, a conscience that cares for the welfare of mankind. We have had enough of policies of pious platitudes which provide nothing but an escape from facing hard and unpleasant facts.

We need a policy that is receptive to new ideas, a policy that is not afraid of new ideas. The great actions for peace and reconstruction in the postwar world have now become so commonly accepted that we often fail to realize that they contained bold, new ideas never before conceived in American foreign policy. New international situations are crowding in upon us and we must have a constant stream of new ideas to deal with them.

We need a policy of strength and positive action. It needs to be made with quiet courage and determination not with loud words and empty promises.

And more than anything else, we need a foreign policy of freedom. In the spirit of democracy and enlightenment, we need a policy that is not the product of a single man or which depends on a single man for its execution. We need a policy that stems from the inspiration of the American people and commands their continuing support.

American foreign policy in short needs vision, coupled with persistence. For months the Administration has been at a loss to deal with the new Soviet challenge. As far as anyone can determine, the Administration has no thought-out immediate or long-range policy. It has no practical plan to meet this Soviet challenge. Declarations of intentions are many, but where is the plan?

A vacuum of thought seems to have settled upon the Administration, and this vacuum threatens to seriously impair our interests as a nation. Lethargy and indecision prevail where clear thinking is required; inaction dominates where energy and drive are needed. The end result is: Our foreign policy is a policy without drive, a policy stricken with a poverty of ideas.

The challenge to all of us, as Americans, is to restore the drive and to end the poverty.