

## **Forming of the New System of International Relations: The Marshall Plan and Republican Party of the USA (1947-1948)**

*Radmila Sergeevna Ayriyan*

Southern Federal University, Rostov-on-Don, Russia

---

**Abstract:** New system of international relations characterized by confrontation of the USA and the USSR that went down in history as a bipolar system had been developed after the Second World War. But the process of the USA entering international arena was not easy. Farewell message of George Washington as well as Monroe Doctrine (1823) kept the USA away from taking part in solving international problems. Gradually Truman Administration manages to draw international attention to the country as superpower. The Marshall Plan itself and the process of its approval with the Congress played important role in it. At that time Republican Party was in majority in the Congress and the project was expected to be either voted down or altered with corrections to such an extent that it would be unable to solve problems in has been intended to solve. But after long and fierce discussions and showdown of the two leaders of Republican Party senators Vandenberg and Taft, it was approved by the Congress and laid the foundation for building the prosperity of Western Europe.

**Key words:** International affairs • The Marshall Plan • The Congress • Senate • Vandenberg • Taft  
• Restoration of Europe • Bipartisan system.

---

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Marshall Plan is one of the main arrangements of Harry Truman Administration after the Second World War that had determined further development of international relations. Significant attention in historiography of the Cold War was paid to analysis and interpretation of the program of European support [1, 2, 3] so in this paper this problem is not covered. Soviet historiography made us think that all decisions of the government of the USA in the period of confrontation with Soviet Union were unanimously made by the Congress and people of United States [4, 5]. But researches carried out during last two decades proves the opposite [6, 7]. Our task is to analyze the position of Republican Party concerning The Marshall Plan. Intentionally we do not account for position of Senators Democrats because their opposition was not solid.

Commitment to the principles of objectivity that presuppose rejection of established stereotypes and ideological guidelines in historical science allows us to give more grounded evaluation of the work of the

Congress in the period of development of the new system of intentional relations. It also allows us to give impartial judgment to the role of some individual senators in realization of general line of the USA in foreign policy.

Using historical method we may analyze the entire phenomenon in their interconnection. It gave us the possibility to follow the dynamics of development and maturing of foreign policy of the USA in the Congress in the new international situation.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of June, 1947, State Secretary of the USA George Marshall made a keynote speech in Harvard University. It became the starting position of realization of The Marshall Plan. He declared that the USA was intended to promote economic rehabilitation of Europe. "Our policy, told Marshall, is not directed against any country or doctrine but hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos" [8, p. 161]. It came up to the concerns of those senators and congressmen who had foreseen that the period would come when the Administration would propose to extend the programs of the Truman doctrine not only on Turkey and Greece but on the whole world when the doctrine was discussed.

The task of the President Truman was hard – to persuade the Congress with Republican majority to assign \$29 billion to realize The Marshall Plan [9, p.323].

In 1946 the Republican Party won the elections to the Congress of 80<sup>th</sup> convocation for the first time in 14 years. It was resounding triumph because the party did not only win the majority but increased its representation in Senate on 13 seats (from 38 to 51).

80<sup>th</sup> session of the Congress also differed from the previous sessions in significant strengthening of the right wing of Republican Party. Eight senators of the newcomers were strongly committed to the ideals of conservative wing of the “great old party” and not the “new republicanism” of Thomas Dewey. For example the most known ultra-conservatives James Kem (Missouri), George Malone (Nevada), William Jenner (Indiana), Joseph McCarthy (Wisconsin), John Williams (Delaware) took seats in upper chamber of the Congress and with them John Bricker (Ohio), Edward Martin (Pennsylvania), Arthur Watkins (Utah) and others drawn to the bloc of Robert Taft who was the main opponent of Truman Administration.

Whatever fraction of Republican Party senators related to according to their declarations they went on insisting on reduction of taxes and cutback of federal budget spending. Administration proposal on economic aid to European countries meant increase of state spending. Stingy Republican Congress was not ready to it. Even the founding father of bipartisan policy Arthur Vandenberg (Michigan), Chairman of Foreign Relations Committee warned against “some short-sighted attempts to interfere hasty into European affairs” [10, p.556].

The conviction grew among the congressmen that further support to Europe should have been provided only after thorough analysis of needs of Europeans and resources of American economy. Vandenberg said that the United States “cannot afford funding what doesn't bear fruits” [11, p.391].

Former President Herbert Hoover wrote the same in his letter to Styles Bridges (New Hampshire), Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee. Answering the inquiry of Bridges Hoover on June 15, 1947, put the question about support of foreign states without mentioning the Marshall Plan [12, p.205].

The Marshall Plan led to sharpen the confrontation in Republican Party. Thomas Dewey, Harold Stassen, Arthur Vandenberg, Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. and other Senators supported President Truman's general line in

foreign policy. The group of isolationist and right-wing conservatives Republicans William Jenner, John Williams, James Kem, George Malone, Joseph McCarthy and Robert Taft were in tough opposition to the Marshall Plan.

Senator Robert Taft was concerned that Europeans themselves would not make efforts to recover Europe, they simply “unite and made groundless demands” [10, p.556]. The Marshall Plan like earlier “the Truman doctrine” put Taft in embarrassing situation. On one hand being future contender to the presidency from Republican Party he could not afford condemning the support program because reputation of isolationist would not allow him to fight for presidency in coming elections in 1948. On the other hand he could not support Truman because it could have meant that he failed to find his own image in politics. But instead of him Senators Butler, Moore, Dworshak, Malone, Kem, Langer and Willson who did not concealed their isolationist views criticized and rejected The Marshall Plan. They believed that instead of growing up competitors in Europe the government should invest in development of agriculture of the USA because it had not yet recovered from the Great Depression.

On October 24, 1947, President Truman announced his decision to call a special session of the Congress to solve two problems – to stop price hike and to address the question of support to foreign states. Truman urged the Congress to act rapidly because France and Italy were in immediate peril and they would have never restored their economic and political power that was “so necessary for keeping peace on the Earth” [12, p.123-124]. He said that for the basic needs up to March 31, 1948, Europe needs about \$580 million and in total four-years program would require \$29 billion [9, p.323].

Robert Taft aggressively criticized the aims of the Congress call. He began his impressive emotional logic speech with the attack on domestic policy of Truman Administration. Inability of the right wing of Republican Party to present own alternative to foreign policy of Democrats forced them to put their stakes in domestic policy and trace the effect of all aspects of international relations in social and economic situation in the country.

Taft said that the President's policy is “a step towards creating totalitarian state” and very likely “we will be unable to return to peace with this administration. We still have taxation system of war time. We still have the budget of war time. And now we are going to have control of war time” (13, p. A4232).

He said nothing against short term extraordinary program for Italy and France. Senator objected excessive export that “is the one of the main reasons of high prices here and today” [13, p. A4233].

According to Taft’s opinion prevention of communism penetration required enforcement of air forces of the United States. He was the representative of Ohio that was in sixth place in aircraft construction but third in aircraft engine production and production of blades for aircrafts after the Second World War [14, p.346-347], so it was unsurprisingly that he proposed to fund development of air forces but not Europe.

This position was supported by many Senators including the Senator Wherry who called the speech of his colleague “brilliant” [13, p. A4232].

While attack of Taft has mainly economical character the speech of Senator William Knowland who was the leader of the group “Asia is above all” was expressly pro-Chinese. He demanded shift of foreign vector from Europe to Asia, provisioning of comprehensive aid to Chiang Kai-shek and remilitarization of Japan [15, p.62]. Almost in all his speeches Senator Knowland that was frequently called “Senator from Formosa” accused Truman Administration in inconsistency in its fight with communism: all what is done in Europe stops its penetration to the West but at the same time “iron curtain went down” in China [16, p.72].

After Taft speech his supporters started to act. Right Republicans proposed their program that fully corresponded to the aims of the Congress call. “Bill of stabilization of prices on staple commodities” written by Senator Capehart (Indiana) was proposed to solve the problem in domestic affairs. According to the bill initiative goes to business and the role of federal government is limited to the role of arbiter without a certain authority in conflict situations. Regarding international question Senator Malone (Nevada) proposed correction that provided drastic contraction of the volume of economic aid to Western Europe [17, p.204].

But eventually the counterattack of right Republicans failed – their proposals were not approved. This failure may be explained by the fact that Senator Vandenberg one of Republican leaders with high authority not only among the peers but the political opponents “after a fight with his conscience” acknowledged the necessity of The Marshall Plan. “If Europeans want to help themselves and achieve independence due to The Marshall Plan it would be a good business” [10, p.557]. Vandenberg united those Senators who wished another way for the country and for their party.

Despite the resistance of some lawmakers the Congress approved assignation of \$587 million to Western Europe as a temporal aid [13, pp.11344, 11405, 11430].

Inspired by this support on December 19, 1947, Truman asked the Congress to support assignation of \$17 billion for realization of The Marshall Plan. In his address he underlined the importance of support to the Europe and said that the aim of the program is genuine reconstruction of the continent in ruins in a limited period of time not the permanent help. Moreover he stressed that the program had been designed to minimize spending of financial and other resources of the USA as well as to reduce possible impact of the plan on the USA economy [18, p.124].

In November 1947 Senator Vandenberg wrote that if the question of funding \$500 million met such resistance when the program would be proposed as a whole “our friend Marshall will find hell on the Hill [11, p.380]. Experienced Senator had foreseen the situation that emerged just at the beginning of 80th session of the Congress when it appeared that almost all the Republicans were in the opposition.

The Truman administration and their supporters had to do something. On the opening of hearing in Foreign Relations Committee on the 8th of January the State Secretary Marshall grounded the program of restoration of the Europe as “dictated by the supreme considerations of national interests” [19, p.64].

The Foreign Relations Committee listened one by one 90 to witnesses who represented different layers of American society. Vandenberg being the Chairman was so extremely polite with all those who were against the program that as Senator Bird said “he killed the opposition with his politeness” [10, p.557].

During the hearings that lasted for a week the Republicans demanded several corrections in the program proposed by the Administration.

First correction stated the necessity of a special agency that would govern realization of the program of European restoration, coordinate the actions of the Government and eliminate “the drawbacks of the authorities” [12, p.133].

Second correction was proposed by Arthur Vandenberg who supposed that it would draw hesitating Republicans in the camp of supporters and left the Congress the possibility to control the efficiency of spending. Senator proposed to prolong the program annually for \$4-5 billion while the Administration supposed to provide \$17 billion at once for four-year period.

After receiving letter from Senator Vandenberg with the list of the Congress' requirements the State Secretary J. Marshall agreed to make changes to the program [19, p.64].

Compromises of the Administration led to unanimous approval of the Marshall Plan by Foreign Relations Committee on February 13.

Senator Vandenberg opened the debate. He reminded the Senate of the fate of Czechoslovakia and noted that the aim of the Marshall Plan is to prevent other European countries from such destiny thus preventing the Third World War [20, p.1915]. At the conclusion Senator said that if the Marshall Plan "will be successful our children and the children of our children will be grateful to us" [11, p.392].

Senate considered the bill for two weeks and all this time Taft kept on trying to significantly reduce spending. Senator from Ohio proposed correction providing the cut of \$1,3 billion from the appropriation assigned for the first year. But Arthur Vandenberg and Tom Connally (the leader of Democratic minority in Foreign Relations Committee) defended initial variant. Moreover Vandenberg criticized the Republicans led by the Chairman of Appropriations Committee John Taber when they showed their intention and capability to cut the assigned funds by 25% [11, p.396].

Tough posture on something of Vandenberg stimulated the House of Representatives to refuse cutting the funding.

As a result on March 14, 1948 the Senate approved The Marshall Plan 69 votes against 17 [20, p.2793]. 14 of the 17 votes were the Republicans' and there was no Robert Taft among them. He said that the international situation did not allow him to keep aloof [17, p.188].

Summarizing we note that analysis of debate in the Senate of the USA shows that there was no unanimity in this question. Some of them were concerned by the possibility to provoke inflation in the country, others could not understand why the aid is given to Europeans but not to Americans or the governments of Asian countries, some simply didn't want to waste of national wealth.

Despite the certain threat that Republican Congress was for realization of Truman Administration plans it played important role in acceptance of the new foreign policy of the United States. Taking into the account that on the intermediate elections to the Congress of 80<sup>th</sup> he Republicans had the majority again and the right wing of the party had straightened its position the result of Truman attempts to make the Congress accept the

program of economic aid to the Europe might be foreseen beforehand. But the good sense and authority of some of its members allowed the Congress to overcome some stereotypes and its awkwardness in making important decisions. A. Vandenberg the founding father of bipartisan approach to foreign policy was the driver of this movement.

It is not completely correct to use the words "Republicans opposition to Democratic Administration" with regard to this period. It may seem strange but just Republicans urged the government to act immediately and to repulse Soviet Union in Europe and assign funds for realization of the new American policy that stepped aside from the principles of Presidents Washington and Monroe, the policy that made significant influence on international relations in the second half of the XX century.

The article was prepared in the scope of scientific project "Between empire and nation: Russia in global context" according to the program of Development of Federal State Autonomous Educational Institution of Higher Professional Education "Southern Federal University" (2011 – 2021).

## REFERENCES

1. Hogan, M.J., 1989. The Marshall Plan: America, Britain and the Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1947–1952. Cambridge University Press, pp: 482.
2. Milward, A.S., 2006. The Reconstruction of Western Europe 1945-51. University of California Press, pp: 528.
3. Schain, M., 2001. The Marshall Plan: Fifty Years After. Palgrave, pp: 297.
4. Lavrichenko, M.V., 0000. The Marshall Plan and deterioration of agriculture of Western Europe. Gospolitizdat, pp: 216.
5. Bychkova, T.A., 1973. Discussion of the Marshall Plan in the Congress of the USA (January-March 1948). The Problems of the History of International Affairs, 5: 3-18.
6. Klimenko, O.O., 0000. The influence of the Truman doctrine and The Marshall Plan on the change of the USA policy in China in 1947-1948. The works of the Department of the New and the Newest History, 10: 72-77.
7. Khalina E.M. Jeorge Catlett, 0000. Marshall and postwar reconstruction of Western Europe (1947-1952). Thesis of Candidate Dissertation, Chelyabinsk State University, Chelyabinsk.

8. Marshall, G., 1997. Against Hunger, Poverty, Desperation and Chaos. Foreign Affairs, 76(3): 160-161.
9. Connally, T., 1951. My Name is Tom Connally. Thomas Y. Crowell, pp: 295.
10. Byrd, R.C., 1988. The Senate, 1789-1989. Vol.1. Addresses of the History of the US Senate. US Governmental Printing Office, pp: 800.
11. Vandenberg, A.H., 1952. The private papers of Senator Vandenberg. Houghton Mifflin Cambridge, pp: 598.
12. The European Recovery Programm – Basic documents and background information. Senate document #111. 1947.
13. Congressional Record. Proceedings and debates of the 80<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> session. Vol. 93. 1947. US Governmental Printing Office.
14. Economical districts of the USA. The North. 1958. State Editorial of Geographic Literature, pp: 830.
15. Vorontsov, V.B., 0000. Senator from Arkansas. International Affairs, pp: 272.
16. Dulles, F.R., 1971. American Policy toward communist China, 1949-1969. Grinswell and Grinswell, pp: 372.
17. Manykin, A.S., 1990. “Democrates era”: party regrouping in the USA 1933-1953. The Printing Office of the Moscow University, pp: 262.
18. Truman, H.S., 1956. Memoirs of Harry Truman. Vol. 2. Hodder and Stoughton, pp: 587.
19. Crabb, C.V., 1957. Bipartisan Foreign Policy: Myth or Reality. Evanston, Ill., White Plains, N. Y., pp: 644.
20. Congressional Record. Proceedings and debates of the 80<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> session. Vol.94, 1948. US Governmental Printing Office.