

The Private Papers
OF
Senator
Vandenberg

EDITED BY
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WITH THE COLLABORATION OF
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was Hitler and that he could never be defeated without force of arms; that sooner or later we were bound to be in the war and that Japan had given us an opportunity."

At the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, Vandenberg's thoughts in the next few days were running along a different line. On the day after Pearl Harbor he put down in detail his reactions:

December 8, 1941

Congress declared war on Japan today — with but one dissenting vote. The Senate was unanimous. There was no other recourse — in answer to what was probably the most treacherous attack in all history.

The news of the attack on Hawaii came into Washington around 4 o'clock yesterday afternoon. I immediately issued [a press] statement. I then phoned Steve Early, White House Secretary, and asked him to tell the President that, despite all differences on other things, I would support him without reservation in his answer to Japan. Marvin McIntyre, another White House Secretary, shortly phoned me the President's thanks.

Today at 12:30 the President addressed a joint session of Congress — asking a formal declaration of a state of war. With a speed and unanimity that show how a *democracy* can function in crisis, the Resolution was through both Houses within one hour.

I made the only speech that was made in the Senate before the vote was taken there. I felt it was absolutely necessary to establish the reason why our non-interventionists were ready to "go along" — making it plain that we were not deserting our beliefs, but that we were postponing all further argument over policy until the battle forced upon us by Japan is *won*. I felt it was necessary, too, in order to better swing the vast anti-war party in the country into unity with this unavoidable decision. The Administration leaders, with typical short-sightedness, had *not* wanted it done. They wanted no speeches at all — and even tried to cut me off.

[This was almost an understatement. Senator Tom Connally of Texas, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Commit-

THAT DAY ENDED I

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... I am only grateful with the...
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Senator Tom Con-
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tee, resisted on the floor when Vandenberg arose to speak and gave in only gruffly with the remark that "of course, the Senator has a right to speak if he insists."]

But I insisted — and I was greatly pleased, when I had finished my brief statement, to have Senator Glass cross over, shake my hand, and thank me for my statement. In the course of the afternoon, 21 other Senators phoned similar messages to my office; and Majority Leader Barkley himself later said that, upon reflection, he was very glad that I had done exactly as I did.

We were no longer "free agents" after the infamous Japanese attack and Japan's Declaration of War on America. There was nothing left to do but to answer in kind. But I continue to believe that a wiser foreign policy could have been followed — although now no one will ever be able to prove it.

We have little or no information regarding the peace-negotiations which have been going on for ten days as a result of the visit of the Mikado's special emissary. It has all been secret — secret even from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Perhaps this was necessary. But I hope that some day the whole record will be laid bare. I should like to know what the *price* of peace in the Far East would have been. I have the feeling that it would have been necessary for us to yield but relatively little — and nothing in the nature of "appeasement" — in order to have pacified the Far Eastern situation; and certainly any such pacification, virtually taking Japan out of the Axis, would have been the deadliest blow we could have struck at Hitler. For example, Japan has been in Manchukuo for 15 years — despite our refusal to recognize her title under the "Stimson Doctrine" (which, by the way, Britain rejected). To recognize Japan's title in Manchukuo, speaking loosely, would be simply to acknowledge an accomplished fact which will *remain* an accomplished fact whether we like it or not. I may frankly add that I think China is big enough so that additional territorial concessions, or trade zones, might have been arranged to the advantage of China herself in return for a guaranteed peace. This is pure speculation — except as the general

notion is sustained by many conversations I have had with responsible Japs visiting America. Without condoning for an instant the *way* in which Japan precipitated hostilities, I still think we may have *driven* her *needlessly* into hostilities through our dogmatic diplomatic attitudes.

I fear this means a virtual end to our "lend-lease" aid to Britain et al. because *we are not adequately* prepared ourselves — as I have been saying for months. I fear we shall pay dearly for this lack of preparedness on our own account. I am *certain* it was worth infinitely much to Britain et al. to have us continue to remain out of the actual shooting war — and I doubt whether these values were appropriately assessed in determining what it was cold-bloodedly worth to *all* of us to take Japan virtually out of the Axis and to substantially pacify the Far East — thus permitting concentrated attention to Hitler.

But we have asked for this — and other — wars. Now we are in it. Nothing matters except *victory*. The "arguments" must be postponed.

December 11, 1941

War with Germany! War with Italy! Two declarations today! Unanimous! The news of German and Italian declarations against us reached us by radio this morning after the morning papers were out. The Committee on Foreign Relations met at 11:30 and passed upon the text of our Resolutions. The preamble proposed by the State Department describing the German action as a culmination of its long-time plan against us was rejected by the Committee in favor of a more factual statement which avoided the moot question of why we face this challenge. The Resolution was reported at 12:30. It was passed in ten minutes. A democracy *can* function when it has to.

The body of the Resolution was identical with that against Japan, and followed the precise language used in the Declaration of 1917 against Germany. It accepted "the state of war that has been *thrust* upon the United States."

That is the moot question which, as I said in the Senate on Monday, will have to be settled by the historians in some

calmer moment. The *immediate* issue may have been "thrust" upon us to repel the "thrust" without reservation to that end for the duration so far as I am concerned.

But when historic appraisal is made from a view-point preserved at that time —

Perhaps it was ultimately *inevitable* — no one can succeed in pretending that this inevitability was a result of foreign policies which we pursued. "We got it." The interventionist virtually did in his address to Congress we were right and that is all. The non-interventionist has insisted from the beginning that we should not go to war and it has done exactly what he predicted.

Perhaps, in a sense, we are right in the face of the record, but we may have been right.

I remember saying, in my speech on the arms embargo, "You cannot be the arms embargo a target for the arms embargo."

When the arms embargo was established "cash and carry" was required. When British cash failed, we traded 50 destroyers for bases for ourselves.

When the President and particularly bellicose Secretary of War insisted on all pretense to the effect that the defeat of Germany was all that was left of the war.

When we sent our ships and sent the biggest parts to help Britain in a majority of interest in "promote peace" —

cooler, calmer moment. There is no use debating it now. So far as the *immediate* issue is concerned, these wars certainly *have* been "thrust" upon us. There is nothing to do but to repel the "thrust"—forever. I shall co-operate without reservation to that end. The argument is "on ice" for the duration so far as I am concerned.

But when historic appraisals finally are made, I want my own view-point preserved against that day of judgment.

Perhaps it was ultimately inevitable that we should be involved—no one can successfully deny that thesis. But I contend that this inevitability was *certain* in the light of the foreign policies which we pursued. We "asked for it" and "we got it." The interventionist says today—as the President virtually did in his address to the nation—"See! This proves we were right and that this war was *sure* to involve us." The non-interventionist says (and I say)—"See! We have insisted from the beginning that this course would lead to war and it has done exactly that."

Perhaps, in a sense, we are *both* right. But I do not see, on the face of the record, how it can be denied that *we* certainly have been right.

I remember saying, in my speech two years ago against the repeal of the arms embargo (the first step away from neutrality): "*You cannot be the arsenal for one belligerent without becoming a target for the other.*" Well—aren't we?

We repealed the arms embargo frankly to help Britain. We established "cash and carry" frankly to help Britain. When British cash failed, we invented "lease-lend" to help Britain. We traded 50 destroyers, partially for the benefit of getting air bases for ourselves, but chiefly to help Britain. By this time, the President and his spokesmen (including the particularly bellicose Secretary of the Navy Knox) had abandoned all pretense to the contrary. They were loudly calling for the defeat of Germany—by proxy. We repealed practically all that was left of the Neutrality Act and voted to arm our ships and send them into combat zones and into belligerent ports to help Britain. By "we" I mean the Administration majority of interventionists. They said it was all done "to promote peace"—God save the mark. They

promised peace in the 1940 campaign. They were "keeping the war from our shores," we were always told. I do not question the sincerity of these interventionists. But I do question their *candor*. Certainly I question their logic — then and now. It may have been the *right* course to "help Britain." God knows I have wanted Britain to win and win conclusively. That is not the present point. The point is that we did *everything* we could — by proxy — to help defeat Germany, and said so. We finally ordered the American Navy on Atlantic patrol under orders to shoot down *any* German craft on sight; and Roosevelt and Churchill sealed what they called "The Atlantic Charter" for Germany's doom. I do not here question the *justification* of these policies — they may have been right and necessary. But I say that when, at long last, Germany turned upon us and declared war against her most aggressive enemy on earth, it is no contribution to "historical accuracy" (to put it mildly) for us to pretend to say that this war has been "*thrust upon us*."

It may not be politically expedient for the interventionists to tell the truth at the moment — because they would thus have too many anti-war promises to swallow. But if this war is worth fighting, it is worth accepting for what it is — namely, a belligerent cause which we openly embraced long ago and in which we long since *nominated ourselves* as active participants. The "thrusting" started two years ago when we repealed the Arms Embargo.

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THE WAR was not yet a week old when I received a telephone call from the British Embassy in Washington. It was a talk with Lord Halifax and was interesting but, in itself, not a very important thing. The important thing was that the British Government, through the Secretary of State, had asked the Senate in the course of an hour to pass a resolution in the State Department in a form which had been specified and more than explained. The reasons why his own government was taking this step with the leaders of Congress

March 11, 1941

At the request of Lord Halifax, I went to the British Embassy this morning at the Embassy and received a personal message which I delivered to Lord Beveridge.

I was received in one of the most beautiful rooms in the Embassy. I was sitting out upon the far side of the window out upon the street. I could not help but be impressed by the beautiful, flashing G-1000 which was in front of me. It was a woman from all quarters of the world. She was in the King's birthday suit. It was that which has happened to the