

trade in "strategic" materials with the Sino-Soviet bloc, all U.S. military and economic assistance would be cut off to them. The list of strategic items, moreover, was to be determined arbitrarily by the United States, and (until executive branch protestations prevailed) action to cut off aid was intended by the congressional authors and supporters of the legislation to be automatic and irrevocable. After bitter battles over the so-called Kem amendment to the pending foreign aid legislation—there was a compromise whereby action to discontinue aid must be taken in the case of shipment of designated atomic energy and military items (arms, ammunition, and implements of war)—but aid could be reinstated if the President deemed that the offending nation would thereafter comply with the embargo. Or if the items were of a "primary strategic nature" the President could continue aid if he determined that the discontinuance of aid "would clearly be detrimental to the security of the United States."¹ These provisions remain in controlling legislation up to the present day—but attempts to remove or diminish Presidential discretion have been numerous in the troubled years of this program up to the present.

In many sectors of U.S. public and congressional opinion, the Western European countries trading modestly in this period with the European bloc and Communist China, were variously held to be profiteers, ingrates, or foolishly insensitive to the threats of the worldwide Communist conspiracy. Particular criticism was leveled against the British—heightened because of their additional involvement in East-West trade through their extensive worldwide shipping—and against the West Germans, considered to be hedging their bets against possible Communist takeover of Central Europe. Considerable apprehension was volubly expressed concerning the alleged hunger of the Japanese for a trade rapprochement with the vast potential market of Communist China. And as major potential East-West trade exchanges of a compensation transaction and barter nature were bandied about in the international press—considerable anxiety was felt regarding possible overdependency of this or that Western country on the Soviet bloc as a source of supply or as a market. There was, in short, an atmosphere of suspicion on the East-West trade issue between the United States and the European countries * * * and this was conclusively embodied in U.S. legislation from the very outset.

A third aspect of congressional oversight—which happily has not persisted to the present day—related to the administrators of the trade control programs themselves. At a very early period, the economic warriors of the United States were sometimes extolled as sterling characters who ingeniously thwarted the devious designs of the Soviets and exposed their worldwide machinations. At a later period—especially during the reign of terror of Senator Joseph McCarthy—many of these same people became suspect security threats or alleged fellow travelers or Communist dupes if they (or the administration) showed any possible weakness in fervor and effectiveness, or took a policy stand on East-West trade other than of uncompromising opposition. These circumstances doubtlessly had some influence on the persistent rigidity of policies in this field up to the present time.

¹ Defense Assistance Control Act 1951—title I (Battle Act).