

WASHINGTON NEWS LETTER

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Recapitulation

May 21-Blustering Secretary of Navy Knox yells for repeal of the Neutrality Act...
May 22-Secretary of War Stimson follows Knox's lead and denounces Neutrality Act....
May 23-Senator Wheeler, Charles Lindbergh, and Norman Thomas speak to 32,000 people at rally of the New York Chapter of the AMERICA FIRST COMMITTEE held in Madison Square Garden....
May 24-A resolution approving Herbert Hoover's plan for feeding the starving populations of Europe gets the signatures of 40 Senators....
May 25-Grand Admiral Erich Raeder, Commander in Chief of the German Navy says, "I confirm President Roosevelt's opinion that convoying means shooting."....
May 26-The President orders conscription of American men who have attained their twenty-first birthday on or before July 1, and have not previously registered....
May 27-The President proclaims unlimited national emergency....
May 28-The new liner, America, largest passenger vessel ever built in the United States, is acquired by the Navy....
May 29-Senator David Walsh, chairman of the Senate Naval Affairs committee, and Charles Lindbergh address a cheering crowd of 20,000 Philadelphians.

THE SITUATION THIS WEEK

Both before and after the event, the eyes and ears of all Washington turned to the President's "chat" delivered on Tuesday night. It was a very long speech. It was not specific. It was confusing. The NEWSLETTER was held up this week because we wanted to make some considered comments on the speech. However, after three days wait, there is still no unanimity of opinion as to just what the President really means to do in order to implement the ideas he expressed.

That it was a highly inflammatory speech is obvious. That it does not mean the immediate entrance of America in the war also seems clear.

No one can contend that Roosevelt does not hold more personal power than any other peace-time president in the history of the United States. Briefly, he has almost complete control over labor and capital including the power to suspend the provisions of laws prohibiting the eight-hour day for labor; to suspend trading on stock exchanges for ninety days; to close or take over for government use any radio station; and the power to take possession of any merchant vessels documented under United States laws. It is important to note that these powers did not go into actual effect with the issuance of the emergency proclamation. Actual assumption of any of these powers by the President must be preceded by an individual proclamation.

Government legal experts said there was no clear distinction between a "limited" and an "unlimited" emergency, and that technically the President could call into force his full powers in either case. This indicates that the President issued the proclamation in a further attempt to scare the public into a fatalistic acceptance of the Administration's drive to war. At the same time it indicated that public

opinion had expressed itself by mail and telegraph as being overwhelmingly against war, and therefore the President did not dare go all-out as far as action is concerned. It was belligerently worded, and potentially can mean war. But non-interventionists were greatly heartened to realize that the President was still listening to the voice of the people instead of blindly following the lead of powerful war-minded individuals.

Day after the President spoke, General Robert E. Wood, speaking for the National Executive committee of the AMERICA FIRST COMMITTEE said in part: "The emphasis of his speech last night was on American defense rather than saving the world. To the extent the President adheres to the actual defense of America he will have a united nation behind him. The President has no power whatever to declare war or to carry on armed hostilities without the consent of Congress. The AMERICA FIRST COMMITTEE urges all Americans, in the interest of democracy and the welfare of this nation, to do everything in their power to maintain peace and avoid participation as a belligerent by this country in the European War now raging. We shall redouble our efforts to crystallize public opinion in support of the President's pledges to KEEP AMERICA OUT OF OTHER PEOPLE'S WARS."

Same day some 50 non-interventionist senators and representatives met in Washington and pledged themselves to intensify their efforts to keep America out of war in Europe, Asia, or Africa. A good many people think it is about time Congress bestirred itself to the extent of taking cognizance of the fact that the President failed to mention Congress once in his emergency speech. The President did say that additional measures necessary to deliver the goods to Great Britain were being devised by military and naval technicians, "who, with ME, will work out and put into effect" such safeguards. Just where representative government operates in such a situation did not seem to be clear.

The reaction of the hot-for-war-now, people was interesting in the light of the President's statement that "we insist upon the vital importance of keeping Hitlerism away from any point in the world which could be used as a base of attack against the Americas." On Wednesday Hitlerism reared its ugly head in the President's home state when an interventionist group urged the AMERICA FIRST COMMITTEE to disband and stop talking. Next day, famed Washington columnist Raymond Clapper, fell a victim to Hitlerism, when his column announced that free speech can go too far, and that the actions of the non-interventionist bloc in Congress and of the AMERICA FIRST COMMITTEE "amounts in effect to encouraging sedition." Perhaps Mr. Clapper wants us to follow Canadian custom where any person who expresses a belief that Germany may win the war is now guilty of violating the "Defense of Canada Regulations", regardless of the spirit in which the remark is made.

The war boys received a terrific setback at the President's press conference late Wednesday afternoon. This conference was called to clarify the previous night's speech. The President announced that he did not intend seeking change or repeal of the Neutrality Act. Someone promptly recalled Mr. Roosevelt's clear statements in the past that the combat zone quarantine did not apply to the nation's naval vessels, which were free to go wherever they were sent. He also said that he contemplated no executive orders at present to invoke any of the broad powers conferred on him by the emergency proclamation.

Representative Gehrman of Wisconsin now has 6,000 replies from his district on the poll he is taking concerning convoys, and reports that only 3.2% of the answers are in favor of convoys. Incidentally, he has also complained from the floor of the House that representatives of Secretary of Agriculture Wickard's office have told farmers in his constituency that their market depends on convoys.

From the N.Y. Times of May 26 - "Public interest in the national emergency and in the defense program has resulted in setting new records for incoming mails and telegrams to Washington. President Roosevelt's mail alone when the last check was made the middle of last week, was averaging more than 10,000 letters, post cards and petitions daily. Never before except during Christmas week of last year, have Washington's incoming mails been so heavy as they are now, and the telegraph companies report a new peak for incoming messages. The increase of mail and arriving telegrams has been particularly marked during the last four weeks, and telegrams are now about 20 per cent greater in number than they were at any previous high record sustained for so long a time."

However, no analysis of the mail is being given out. Obviously, all groups on both sides of the war issue are contributing to this flood of mail. Non-interventionist senators and congressmen are unanimous in urging that you continue to write Washington at least once a week.

SOCIETY NOTE

"The women of England can maintain a high morale only as long as they keep their noses powdered." This is a theory being followed by the newly organized Junior committee of Bundles for Britain which has been organized in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School near Washington. The organization obtains donations from other students of powder, perfume, lipstick, hairpins, bobbypins, nail files and other toilet articles which are to be sent to English women.

IN THE NEWS

In an interview published in the New York Post last week, General Robert E. Wood stated there should be a referendum before there was any declaration of war by the United States.

The canard that the AMERICA FIRST COMMITTEE seeks the support of Coughlinites and other anti-Semitic groups was publicly buried at last week's mass meeting of the New York Chapter. Chairman John T. Flynn spotted Joseph McWilliams, a local apostle of fascism, in the audience and denounced him from the platform. Flynn said he did not know how this "stooge for Hitler" had sneaked into the audience, and added that the Committee "is not crazy enough to want the support of a handful of Bundists, Communists, and Christian Fronters who are without number, without influence, without power, and without respect in this or any other community."

Last week's poll of Colgate University students found only 17% favoring America's entry into the European War.

General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff of the Army says:

"We could have a very impressive list of armored divisions and anti-tank battalions without tanks or anti-tank guns, but at the moment we do not have enough of this critical material."

Immediately after Roosevelt's speech the President of Argentina reaffirmed the strict neutrality of his country. Next day, the Nationalist Party of Uruguay adopted a resolution in favor of strict Uruguayan neutrality.