ASPECTS OF ISOLATIONISM

BEFORE

PEARL HARBOR

by

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PREFACE

American "isolationism" and "interventionism" have always been problems in formulating national foreign policy. This thesis is an attempt to examine and delineate the historical development of the isolationist position in one geographical area. In order to present the study, I have made an analysis of a popular, midwestern newspaper, the Chicago Tribune. This paper reflected the isolationist attitudes of that area prior to Pearl Harbor. For a reflection of an opposite editorial policy which promoted interventionism, I have read the Louisville Courier-Journal for the three months preceeding the Japanese attack. These have seemed to be valid primary sources as the popular press has usually been very effective in mobilizing, as well as reflecting, public opinion regarding foreign policies and partisan issues at home.

I discovered that the Chicago Tribune effectively used news events and ideologies ostensibly to promote American nationalism, but ultimately, promoted regionalism and isolationism. The complex use of propaganda favoring non-belligerency seems to have been particularly acute in the Midwest after the Spanish-American War and the defeat of the free silver campaign at the beginning of the twentieth century.

In this thesis, I have tried to explain the rise of isolationism in the Midwest and to indicate the importance of the Chicago Tribune as a translator of abstract and complex issues and as a promoter of

simplified concepts and symbols. The domestic and foreign situations which determined much of the content of isolationist arguments have also been included in the narrative.

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CHAPTER I

THE ISOLATIONIST IMPULSE IN THE MIDWEST PRIOR TO 1933

Prior to the Japanese attack upon Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, many Americans were involved in a great debate which focused on foreign policies. The crux of the debate was the inevitability of war and the possibility of American participation in another world conflict. On one side, the "interventionists" or "internationalists" believed that it was more vital to American democracy to assure a British victory over the Axis powers, than to stay out of the war which had been raging across Europe since 1939. They wanted to preserve American nationalism through collective action. They "believed that the eradication of Kaiserism, power politics and facism was necessary to rid the world of anti-democratic institutions and ideals."[1]

The opponents of this view upheld a traditional American position of "isolation" or "nonintervention" regarding the war and support for the Allied powers so that American democracy would be preserved. The isolationists desired the preservation of American democracy by adequate self-defence and avoidance of foreign entanglements. Each group in this great debate, was composed of extremely heterogeneous elements, and "each drew support from all regions of the coun-

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[1] Ray Allen Billington, "Origins of Middle Western Isolationism," Political Science Quarterly, LX (March, 1934), 45.

try; from different age, ethnic, and social groups; and from persons holding widely diverse economic and political views."[2] Both sides organized committees or mass pressure groups in order to stimulate support for their point of view and to direct the force of this support in the actual formulation of American foreign policy. The forces which motivated membership in these groups were complex and varied.

Historically, isolationism was more typical of American public opinion regarding foreign affairs. Most people in the nineteenth century considered political isolation from Europe to be a naturally ordained and permanent condition which was peculiarly American. Americans associated isolationism with the Founding Fathers and the heroes of the Revolution. The The nineteenth century American mentality embraced the doctrine of self-preservation as it was embodied in Washington's Farewell Address and the Monroe Doctrine. This came to be a dogma. Isolationism fed American pride and promoted nationalism. Twentieth century isolationism grew out of this nationalistic doctrine of self-preservation.[3]

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the nationalistic, patriotic dogma of isolation was challenged by many statesmen and intellectuals. Led by Alfred Thayer Mahan, Theodore Roosevelt and Richard Olney, they attacked the doctrine by using the same symbol of Americanism as a basis for closer co-operation with England and as an extension of Americanism to other more oppressed people. There should be a "patriotism of race as well as of country," so isolation

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[2]Wayne S. Cole, America First: The Battle Against Intervention, 1940-1941 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1953), p. 6.

[3]Alexander DeConde (ed.), Isolation and Security (Durham: Duke University Press, 1957), p. 4.

should be abandoned for a more internationalistic policy.[4] Americans should meet the challenge of existing as a world power. The Spanish-American war in 1898 marked the turning point in the history of American isolationism. Political isolation was no longer a fact; American imperialism was expressed in the victory over Spain and in the possession of the Philippines. While America was emerging as a world power, England's "splendid isolationism" was being challenged by German colonialism and the Japanese revolt against the old balance of power system in her victory over Russia in 1904-05. Consequently, England turned from her Continental commitments, and sought closer understanding with the United States. The concensus of American opinion shifted toward internationalism as it became more apparent that the world was advancing to a state of world war.

There was an exception to the new internationalism of the American public in the early twentieth century. Many people, concentrated in the midwestern states, agrarian and conservative by nature of their geographic and economic situation, disagreed with the conclusions of most Americans at this time. Middle Western opinion was more internationalist during the nineteeth century, while the rest of the country was complacent in its traditional isolationism. The people of the western states were habitually concerned with humanitarian and liberal causes. Because they felt they were the cradle of democracy and the promoters of that frontier individualism and liberty, midwesterners vociferiously supported the liberal uprisings that roared through Europe periodically. They supported

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[4]Richard Olney, a former Secretary of State, quoted in DeConde, Ibid.

> The Greek Revolt of the 1820's, the French Revolutions of 1830 and 1848, the Hungarian struggle for independence in the late 1840's, /as/ all aroused the westerners to violent demonstrations of approval; firery resolutions were adopted by mass meetings and legislatures, funds were collected to aid the revolutionists, and Congressmen were goaded into such violent speeches that they frequently embarrassed their neutral government. Only a few of the more rabid midwesterners advocated American intervention in the European quarrels, but all paid enthusiastic lip service to each new blow struck at established authority.[5]

These were the people who supported universal self-government in the nineteenth century, and who then switched to an isolationist, patriotic attempt to preserve their own self-government without concern for other nations in the twentieth century.

Again, the Spanish-American war marked the turning point in midwestern opinions. At first, they supported the conflict in Cuba as one between autocracy and self-rule. Many people in this area wanted to recognize Cuban independence, supply government aid to the Cubans, or even have the island confiscated by the Americans. The Chicago Tribune, a militaristic and interventionistic newspaper imitated by many other papers in the Midwest, sponsored a fund to aid the revolutionists in 1896.[6] The Tribune was representative of the influence of the press in determining the opinions of the area, regarding political beliefs as well as foreign policies. Most of the middlewestern press favored the Republican policy of imperialism. This policy was not consistent with the western attitude of isolation in the nineteenth century.

After the Spanish-American war had been won, there were two basic attitudes toward imperialism. The Republican business interests in the Midwest, solidly supported expansion, while the workers and farmers

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[5]Billington, 44.

[6]Ibid., 45.

argued that "civilization could not be transplanted, low wages would continue in the Philippines and the United States be flooded with cheap tariff-free goods to the detriment of the American workers."[7] However, the Republican party, supported by most of the press, was entrenched in the western area. Republican editors accounted for the shift from the humanitarian and internationalistic position of the section's nineteenth century attitude. This attitude had envisioned expansion as a wicked conspiracy to steal possessions, and this was a prelude to participation in a world war and the ensuing downfall of America. These Republican editors

> saw colonial possessions as the panacea for all the nation's ills; from them would stem eternal prosperity, the prestige fitting a great nation, and enlightenment for downtrodden natives of tyranny-ridden lands. They supported the Treaty of Paris with its provisions for annexation and urged a vigorous war upon Aguinaldo and his rebellious followers.[8]

The final vote on the Philippine Act revealed that sixty-four midwestern Representatives favored American colonialism, and only twenty-three were opposed, while those in the Senate voted nineteen in favor and three opposed.[9] The Republican Party had enough loyalty and influence to change the traditional attitudes of the middlewestern section. The end of the depression, combined with good harvests and the need for food in the Spanish and African war areas, resulted in a victory for the industrialists over the agrarians.

America's new imperialism revealed the shift to a more internationalist foreign policy for the nation. Although the new imperialism was supported in the midwestern section of the nation, it really indicated the transcendancy of the Republican Party there. Partisanship will

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[7] Ibid., 48.

[8] Ibid., 49.

[9] Ibid., 50.

become more important than ideology, and as a result will be a key factor in the adoption of isolationism in the Midwest while most of the other geographical sections in America become internationalist-minded.

Isolationism has been a traditional attitude of the midwestern section of America during the Twentieth century. This has usually been explained by the insulation from international affairs that such a geographic location fosters. However, there are many non-regional and socio-political factors which are correlated to the geographic explanation of isolationism in this area.[10] The turbulent domestic situation of the nation in the 1890's altered social and economic conditions in the area known as the Midwest: Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, the Dakotas, Kansas and Nebraska.[11]

The free silver crusade split the midwest into two hostile camps and prepared both groups to adopt an insular attitude toward the nation's foreign policy. By the turn of the century, the industrial-urban group was about to wrest economic supremacy from the traditional agrarian elements of the area. The other group was composed of the farmers and urban workers "who had seized on free silver as a panacea for the depression in which they had been bogged for a

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[10]Ralph H. Smuckler, "The Region of Isolationism," American Political Science Review, XLVII (June, 1953), 386.

[11]The problem of delineating the states to be included in a particular region of similar geographic characteristics was summarized by the National Resources Committee which said: "It seems to be agreed that regional boundaries are usually indefinite, being zones rather than lines. In the majority of instances, therefore, any boundaries which may be drawn will be necessarily arbitrary. It appears, however, that it is desirable to draw boundaries, providing their arbitrary nature be admitted." Regional Factors in National Planning (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1935), p. 145, quoted in Smuckler, 387.

quarter-century."[12] The men of business, industry and finance were frightened of Bryan's policy for this would lead to inflation, destruction of private property and anarchy. On the other hand, McKinley stood for sound business and for civilization. The Republican Party closed ranks to make sure that sectional chaos would not ensue with a Democratic victory.

The agrarian alliance was shattered by the growth of cities and a revival of farm prosperity and complacency. The free silver crusade forced the agrarian groups in the Midwest to conform with partisan interests. Several prejudices were promoted by the defeat of inflation. Henceforth the agrarian elements of the Midwest would hate the eastern and British capitalists. The farmers had a chronic dislike of domestic policies which favored financiers, manufacturers and traders. The farmers also opposed "large military preparedness programs, overseas imperialism, and involvement in European controversies," because of their prejudiced dislike of English capitalism and the eastern banking elements.[13] The midwestern farmers, workers and small businessmen had to rely upon a native self-sufficiency and used the American democratic system to justify their increasing isolationism. The rest of the country was caught up in a rising tide of internationalism promoted by McKinley, Teddy Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson. The violent anit-trust agitation and the Caribbean policy of the progressive era increased taxes and led many people of the Midwest to "believe that intervention was only another tool of the trusts in their battle

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[12] Billington, 51.

[13] Wayne S. Cole, Senator Gerald P. Nye and American Foreign Relations (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1962), p. 12.

against the people."[14]

Although the Republicans were dominant in the midwestern section, there was a growing sentiment for isolationism among the agrarian elements there. This shift in opinion was also due to the happy combination of farm and factory in the area which produced an economic self-sufficiency unique to the Midwest.

> Its farmers were no longer dependent on foreign or eastern markets, and its manufacturers were less concerned with international trade, for they could sell most of their produce in the rural regions at their door. The West, enjoying the prosperity of rapid expansion as it developed into a self-contained economic unit, could close its eyes to the rest of the world as could no other section.[15]

The increasing number of German and Scandinavian immigrants supplied the manpower for these factories and farms.

Ethnic isolationism arose in the section where most of these new immigrants settled. By 1914, these groups had attained political power through the progressive movement and agrarian support. The German, Irish and Scandinavian immigrants in the Midwest were naturally more pro-German and anti-British.[16] Some of these first and second generation Americans retained a partial loyalty to their homeland, while others feared that American participation in world affairs would "reawaken Old World Hatreds."[17] Many others believed that their new nation's democracy should be preserved without change, so they combined a feeling of strong nationalism with a preference for maintaining the status quo through conservative politics. While criticizing nationalism

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[14]Billington, 51.

[15]Ibid., 52.

[16]Smuckler, 386. Smuckler's research does not support the comparatively strong relationship between isolationism and national origins found in Samuel Lubell, "Who Votes Isolationist and Why," Harper's, CCII(April, 1951), 29-36.

[17]Billington, 52.

in Europe, the midwestern press invoked their own type of nationalism by seeking to insulate America from Europe. The Chicago Tribune editorialized against European "sentimental nationalism," by saying that

> A reaction from broadly human ideals to the narrow ideals of narrow nationalism is now in full swing in Europe.... The sentimental nationalism--for that is what it is--which inspired the assassination of the heir to the Austrian throne will, for a period at least, again occupy the center of the world's stage. Apparently there is good ground for such a prediction. Even the United States may not escape some of the problems created by this sentimental nationalism, for it is from the countries where this nationalism is strongest that we get the bulk of our immigrants today, and the Americanization of such aliens may prove no easy task.[18]

Most of the new Americans in the Midwest supported isolationism as a form of "Anglophobia and as a means of expressing their indignation over the Boer War."[19]

Isolationism in the Midwest became an issue of emotions and passions, rather than a political philosophy prior to World War I. The evangelical religious groups in this area added to the separateness of this section from the rest of the nation. Many of these sects were pacifistic while others were composed of single ethnic groups desiring to forget and ignore the Continental problems.[20] The emotionalism fostered by the evangelical and pietistic groups was not only typical of isolationism in the Midwest, it was also typical of interventionism in other sections of the nation. This was especially true among the financiers of the Northeast who were often "Anglophiles."

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[18]July 19, 1914.

[19]DeConde, p. 12.

[20]Billington, 52.

These men reacted to "foreign policy in the same manner as any other ethnic strain, they demanded and won support for the 'Mother Country.'"[21]

As the debate over American participation in the World War developed between 1914 and 1917, the businessmen, disgruntled farmers, immigrant voters and pacifistic churchgoers in the Midwest were happy with their geographic isolation. They considered the war "wicked, unnecessary and altogether horrible," and were glad that "we have gone no farther than we have in becoming a world power."[22] Isolationism became concomitant with indifference to foreign affairs in the Midwest. In the autumn of 1914, the Literary Digest took a poll of newspaper editors across the nation to determine their attitudes to the war, and discovered that

> In the Middle West 122 were either indifferent to the outcome of the war or pro-German, while only 13 favored the Allies. This contrasted with the East, where 44 were neutral or pro-German and 34 were pro-Ally, and the South with 56 neutral and pro-German editors against 47 supporting the Allies.[23]

Many social tendencies and economic factors accounted for this increasing division in attitudes between the Midwest and the North, South and Southwestern sections of the country. The interventionists of the northern and southern areas argued with the same symbols used by the noninterventionists of the Midwest. They invoked the same fear of militarism and respect for American tradition, only they extended these nineteenth century concepts. They argued that German militarism would destroy British sea power and the old balance of power. It would be to America's advantage to "extend the Monroe Doctrine to England,

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[21] DeConde, p. 13.

[22] Dayton Daily News, August 8, 1914; Springfield (Ohio) Daily News, July 31, 1914, quoted in Billington, 53.

[23] November 14, 1914, quoted in Billington, 54.

and embrace the foremost American power after our own.[24] Ethnic ties with England motivated many toward an internationalist foreign policy. Professor William T. Hutchinson of the University of Chicago said that "the American people are almost exclusively English in ancestry and that other immigrant groups have contributed little if anything to America's heritage of liberalism."[25] Wilsonian internationalism and Monroe's isolationism are synonomous, because both positions defend the same American ideals. As a result, the interventionist argument attempted to prove that intervention in support of England, instead of isolation from Britain was the basis of Americanism and patriotism. Internationalism forced the country and its isolationists to respond to foreign affairs, at least, and the result was the basis for the great debate between the two positions.

The South was traditionally internationalistic. This too was the result of its cultural and ethnic affinities. The English or Scottish origins of the people in the South led to its dependence upon the English nation as a source of trade and as a common inheritor of democracy united with aristocratic privilege. The Democratic Party was also traditionally strong in the South, just as the Midwest supported the Republican causes, so did Southerners cling to their party as a bulwark against the enfranchised Negroes and as a crutch for the bourbon classes. There was no opposition party to rally any political isolationist sentiment, if any did exist. The militaristic heritage of the South, and their romanticized love of the outdoors, also led the

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[24]David Lewis Einstein, quoted in DeConde, p. 14.

[25]Ibid.

people of this area to support an aggressive foreign policy.[26]

The eastern section of the nation always had a large concentration of new immigrants from the central and eastern portions of Europe, but these groups had quickly absorbed the cultural traditions of England. Public opinion of foreign issues was not always homogenous as it was in the South. The geographic location of the Northeast with its economic situation on the Atlantic seaboard made it sensitive to European affairs. However, the varied ethnic elements--the Irish, German and Italian groups--often espoused conflicting positions in the European quarrels. They almost completely cancelled out their political influence.[27] This area was primarily internationalist after the Spanish-American war and remained so for the rest of the twentieth century.

The world events between 1914 and 1919 provided a strong stimulus to the debate between the isolationists and internationalist-interventionist positions. Democratic advocates of Wilsonian idealism were using the concept of collective security and freedom of the seas to justify American participation in the World War. The more conservative Republicans stressed the negative principles of non-entanglement, non-intervention and avoidance of war altogether. The fear of war was the only principle which united isolationist attitudes. Ironically, the profound disillusionment after the war caused the blame for American involvement to be put on the conservative Republicans and the industrial

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[26]For a good summary of the isolationist-interventionist arguments in the South, see Marian D. Irish, "Foreign Policy and the South," Journal of Politics, X (May, 1948), 306-326; and Wayne S. Cole, "America First and the South, 1940-1941," Journal of Southern History, XXII (February, 1956), 36-47.

[27]DeConde, p. 16.

munition makers who sought war profits.

The Wilsonian viewpoint regarding the European situation was that the German government had "put aside all restraints of law or of humanity" in its unrestricted use of submarine warfare. In his war message of April 2, 1917, Wilson said that "Property can be paid for; the lives of peaceful and innocent people cannot be. The present German submarine warfare aginst commerce is a warfare against mankind."[28] At first, freedom of the seas was a justification for neutrality. This coincided with the moral demand of most Americans "that conduct conform to principles of abstention and impartiality."[29] Then the force of unrestricted German submarine warfare, made the moral issue into a political and an emotional one. Pre-war neutrality shifted to post-war European involvement in the Covenant. The League of Nations became the symbol and the instrument proposed by Wilson to enforce collective security. The interventionist arguments in favor of the League used the Monroe Doctrine, the traditional symbol of nonintervention, as a major support for the Covenant. One Historian said that

> The Covenant provided that the members of the League should mutually defend one another in respect of their political and territorial integrity. The Covenant was therefore the highest possible tribute to the Monroe Doctrine. It adopted the principle of the Monroe Doctrine as a world doctrine.[30]

The League of Nations and disarmament would eliminate the

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[28]Thomas Brockway (ed.), Basic Documents in United States Foreign Policy (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1957), p. 86.

[29]E.H. Buehrig, "Freedom of the Seas: 1917, 1941," Journal of Politics, VI (February, 1944), 18.

[30]David Hunter Miller, The Drafting of the Covenant (New York: Harper Brothers, 1928), p. 370.

causes of war, while allowing the United States to assume her position of world leadership. Wilson felt that the purpose of the European war was to restore lost territory to small nations, and to return them to their former status. Once this was done, the League would turn to the causes of war--Prussian militarism, secret treaties, an unbalancing of political power among nations and "international anarchy"--and upon eliminating them, turn to a new world order of collective security.[31]

The Midwest reacted to the decision of Henry Cabot Lodge and his Republicans to fight the League as a means of discrediting the Wilsonian Democrats, by supporting the amendments and reservations and delaying final decision on the League until public interest waned. The partisanship displayed by this area, and its natural affinity for isolation, swept the nation away from the internationalism of Wilson.

The liberal isolationists in the midwestern progressive tradition had argued that intervention prevented domestic reform. The post-war isolationists came to rely upon a conservative isolation in their opposition to the League, unrestricted immigration, and international disarmament. The period of the 1920's ushered in the era when the "business of America is business." The "return to normalcy" allowed the isolationists free reign to concentrate upon prosperity at home. They ignored the reformism of the earlier decade. As an ironic note to their situation; by the time of the New Deal, they had entirely reversed their progressive insistence upon domestic reform, and attacked Roosevelt's internationalism as a pretext for forcing social

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[31] L.D. B. Seaman, From Vienna to Versailles (New York: Coward-McCann, 1956), pp. 189-91, quoted in Gordon Wright and Arthur Mejia, An Age of Controversy: Discussion Problems in Twentieth-Century European History (New York: Dodd, Mean and Company, 1964), p. 139.

reform on the nation.[32]

With the defeat of the League, the internationalists turned to the Permanent Court of International Justice in an attampt to salvage something from Wilson's idealistic peace program. Even though Harding and Coolidge were favorable to the World Court, most of the nation remained indifferent or ignorant of this issue. The Senate debated the World Court in March, 1924, but most of the papers in the Midwest reflected the average citizen's opinion that such matters deserved little attention during the prosperous boom of the times. The amended protocol indicating American participation in the court was accepted by the Senate in January, 1926, with seventeen dissenting votes. "Ten of the small opposition group were from the Middle West, a disproportionate number which indicated the continued isolationism of the section," even on a non-partisan issue.[33]

The League Council found the Senate reservations unacceptable. The Chicago Tribune, typical of the midwestern press, was not unhappy when it editorialized: "The reds, pinks and yellows may rave and try to change the situation, but they will find...that the color combination loved by the citizenship of America is red, white and blue."[34] Internationalists continued to attempt a formula acceptable both to the League Assembly and the American people. The Root Plan, accepted by the League, was submitted to the American government in 1929. Hoover

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[32]DeConde, p. 20.

[33]Billinton, 59; for an opposite historiographical interpretation of the 1920 period, see William Appleman Williams, "The Legend of Isolationism in the 1920's," Science & Society, XVIII (Winter, 1954), 1-20.

[34]February 11, 1927.

took a careful survey of public opinion on the World Court issue and discovered that "sixty-six percent of the people favored the World Court, while twenty-six percent were opposed. Forty-one percent of the opposition vote came from the Middle West."[35] This was another indication of this section's isolationism, and the internationalism of the other regions of the country. Nationally, two out of three people favored participation. The Senate referred the Root amendments to the Foreign Relations Committee. These were not taken up again until January, 1935. The United States was primarily isolationist at that time and the World Court was defeated.

The defeat of the League and the ensuing disinterest in the World Court was, in some measure, due to the activity of the idealistic and liberal isolationists concentrated largely in the Midwest and scattered in other areas of the nation. The post-war, liberal isolationists opposed the League because they "believed it entangled the United States in European politics and committed the nation to a policy of force to uphold a vindictive peace and a foreign status quo," and not because of political partisanship to the Republican Party. They believed that America's freedom of action is necessary and should not be burdened by the responsibilities of world leadership. The liberal, idealistic isolationists were emotional and passionate in promoting their views because they felt that peace and self-preservation depended upon force. The conservative nationalists based their isolationism on self-interest and their own economic welfare.[36]

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[35] Billington, 59.

[36] DeConde, p. 22.

The "red scare" and the labor strikes of 1919 and 1920, combined with the middle class pursuit of pleasure, were flying buttresses to the isolationism which existed in America. The pacificsm of most Americans was a result of the disillusionment of war and all its horrors. This pacifism was also connected with a laissez-faire attitude toward government. Militarism fostered capitalistic profit and by the early thirties, many conservative isolationists and pacifists shifted the blame for war to industrial profiteering. Isolationists who had remained liberal, desired more government intervention against these capitalistic profits. The two views coalesced completely when the depression and the necessary preoccupation with domestic problems produced a new isolationism which became characteristic of the 1930's. The new isolationism was expressed in the pre-World War II neutrality legislation.

CHAPTER II

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND AMERICAN ISOLATIONIST ATTITUDES AS EXPRESSED IN NEUTRALITY LEGISLATION: 1934-1939

The isolationists of the 1930's--liberal, conservative, pacifist, agrarian and ethnic groups--all desired to stay out of any war. They advocated a "fortress theory of defense" typical of the nineteenth century isolationism of self-preservation. The conflicts in Europe and Asia could not endanger the American nation because of her geographical isolation. The fortress theory "assumed that the United States, without powerful historic enemies north or south, was an impregnable fortress protected by two gigantic moats, a fortress manned by warriors capable of repelling any attack if it should come."[1] This fortress theory gradually assumed a militaristic emphasis on force and by 1940, became the antithesis of pacifism and the liberal isolationism which was first associated with it. The conservative isolationists supported this most vehemently because it appealed to the strong symbols of nationalism and individualism. Military power and national self-interest came to predominate in an isolationism of power. The conservative and hard-headed isolationists argued in terms of blunt self-interest. The America First Committee was the apex of this position.

The America First Committee, founded in September of 1940, was organized to foster national self-preservation. This self-preservation "depended solely on America's own defensive power protecting the

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[1]Alexander DeConde (ed.), Isolation and Security (Durham: Duke University Press, 1957), p. 24.

Western Hemisphere and not on the British navy or the European balance of power."[2] The committee included many members who were Anglophobes and xenophobes (hatred of foreigners). The political dissenters of the 1930's were also included in the committee's membership.

The conservative isolationists almost won the great debate which ocurred before Pearl Harbor, because of their increasing influence from 1934 to 1941. Isolationism increased during the period and was expressed in the neutrality legislation of the mid-thirties. The Nye munitions investigation of 1934-36, foreign events of aggression, and the corresponding American reaction expressed in the neutrality acts, revealed the components and exponents of isolationism and interventionism. During the Thirties, the United States seemingly followed a policy of isolation, while it actually was forced by the pressure of foreign events into steps toward collective security.

Gerald P. Nye, Republican Senator from North Dakota, was chairman of the Senate Committee Investigating the Munitions Industry between 1934 and 1936. This was a potent force for the expression of isolationism. Nye was a key figure in the enactment of the neutrality laws during this era. By giving hundreds of speeches throughout the country, he helped to publicize and popularize non-interventionist views. Nye was representative of the agrarian and progressive tradition, because he saw economic forces and special interests as the instigators of the great war in 1914. He was not militantly nationalistic, as he

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[2] Ibid., p. 25; see Wayne S. Cole, America First: The Battle Against Intervention, 1940-1941 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1953), for an excellent analysis and summary for this era and the organization of this group of isolationists.

wanted to prevent future wars and the economic depressions that follow wars.[3]

Nye was the perfect target for the lobbying of certain pacifist groups, such as the National Society for the Prevention of War and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. The failure of disarmament conferences and the defeat of collective security gave cause and support to the pacifist position of isolationism. Dorothy Detzer, executive secretary of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, continually lobbied and urged investigation and regulation of the international munitions traffic. Herefforts to persuade Senator Nye to conduct the investigation were aided by the publication of a series of books and magazine articles in 1933 and 1934. These dealt with the "blood brotherhood," the "international ring of arms makers" who were often accused of "fomenting wars, sabotaging disarmament and inciting arms races."[4]

The munitions investigation began as an investigation into the causes of war, economic and psychological, and it assumed that "armament races, international friction and wars themselves were encouraged by munitions manufacturers and financiers in their quest for profits."[5] The collapse of prosperity with the stock market caused a "general disillusionment about the virtues of unrestrained free enterprise." Criticism of business and the concept of government

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[3]Wayne S. Cole, Senator Gerald P. Nye and American Foreign Relations (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1962), p. 3.

[4]"Arms and the Men," Fortune, IX (March, 1934), 120; and George Seldes, Iron, Blood and Profits (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1934), p. 13.

[5]Cole, Senator Gerald P. Nye . . . , p. 66.

regulation of industry for the welfare of the masses was common in these years. Consequently, the munitions investigation was popularly supported by the majority of Americans, because

> The anti-business character of the munitions inquiry was rooted in both rural and urban values and both liberal and radical patterns were present. Liberals generally hoped that the munitions inquiry would result in government control of munitions industries and big finance; radicals (both urban and rural) preferred nationalization of those industrial units required for national defense.[6]

The investigation revealed information about the activities of shadowy and mysterious figures in the international munitions business. Yet, "the witnesses did not look like bloodthirsty 'merchants of death.' For the most part they were prosperous, respected businessmen telling of their corporate organizations, their business methods and the profits and losses of their firms."[7] The committee was more interested in exposing rather than explaining, so its conclusions were emotional and far reaching. The investigators charged that there was much corruption in the huge profits of the munitions manufacturers. Chairman Nye, summing up one day's disclosures, said they presented "emphatic proof that, irrespective of the desire of the state department [at the Geneva Conference in 1925] to accomplish something worth while, it was seriously hampered by the war department and the commerce department, which was at the beck and call of the munitions industry."[8] Thus, the investigators

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[6] Ibid., p. 67.

[7] Ibid., p. 73.

[8] Chicago Tribune, December 5, 1934. The article on the committee hearings continued to relate that Herbert Hoover, Secretary of Commerce in 1925, had arranged a meeting between "gunrunners and a group of state department officials and several of the delegates to the Geneva arms conference." Hoover, at that time, had told the manufacturers that "due to the representations made by the war department, the navy department and the manufacturers committee, the United States delegates would make reservations on the proposed draft which would make it harmless to American interests."

revealed the close connections of the manufacturers with the Navy and War Departments, as well as the unscrupulous sales techniques in the exportation of munitions to the Chinese and Latin Americans.[9]

The entire nature of Nye's Committee led to a belief that America's entry in the great war was based on purely economic terms. The widespread publicity accorded the investigation unified public opinion and centered it upon the isolationist position, thereby spelling defeat for Roosevelt's efforts for an internationalist foreign policy and multilateral control of armaments. While endorsing the munitions investigation on May 18, 1934, in a message to Congress, President Roosevelt also recommended that the Senate approve the 1925 Geneva Arms Convention. This contradictory position, taken by the Administration in supporting both the Nye Committee and multilateral disarmament, resulted in the success of Nye's solution: unilateral control of armaments. The Senate approved both positions, but Senator William H. King of Utah attached a "technical reservation relating to Persia that was unacceptable to the other signatories and thus blocked American adherance to the convention."[10] America began to drift toward isolationism in this period, and in 1935, embodied this position in Neutrality legislation.

The American people were indifferent to foreign affairs. They were concerned with solving their economic depression at home and elected a Congress dominated by isolationists. American foreign policy in the 1930's was not framed in Washington, but in the foreign capitals of the world. Events abraad determined domestic attitudes and American

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[9]Divine, The Reluctant Belligerent: American Entry into World War II (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1965), p. 9.

[10]Robert A. Divine, The Illusion of Neutrality (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 67.

newspapers interpreted both public opinion and foreign events in an an effort to influence the formulation of policies.

The internationalists of the 1930's valiantly attempted to to oppose the rising tide of isolationism in the United States. The early liberal and pacifistic isolationists were rapidly becoming conservative in their opposition to Roosevelt's strong executive role in Big Government. The internationalists made a plea for the restoration of American adherance to the World Court in 1935, but were defeated by the American fear of foreign entanglements. The Senate debated the issue for the last time in January, 1935, but Father Coughlin and the Hearst press created such a storm of protest through letters and telegrams that the World Court protocol was defeated by seven votes in the Senate.[11]

Hitler's rise to power in 1933, and his subsequent revision and breaking of the Versailles settlement set the pattern for American foreign policy in the pre-World War II period. Foreign actions always led to American reaction. When Hitler announced in 1934 that Germany had secretly re-established her air force and would restore universal conscription, he dealt the death blow to multilateral disarmament and began the steps in the dissolution of the balance-of-power system. The victors of World War I did not unite in their opposition to Hitler, and Germany once again was to be one of the great European powers. This was implicit in the British treaty with Germany, signed in June, 1934, which allowed Hitler a navy one-third the size of England's.

On December 5, 1934, Ethiopian and Italian troops clashed in

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[11]Divine, The Reluctant . . . , p. 12.

an incident at Walwal in Ethiopia. Taking this incident as a chance to prove Italy's stature as a fascist world power, Mussolini demanded an unreasonable indemnity and apology from Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia. While the League Council postponed a solution of the problem by seeking arbitration, Mussolini continually sent vast numbers of Italian troops to Italian colonies near Ethiopia in preparation for war.

Almost all Americans agreed with the Nye Committee in its ultimate purpose of keeping the United States out of foreign wars. The European crisis over the aggression in Ethiopia forced Americans to debate the best means to avoid involvement. The conflict between isolationists and internationalists began in earnest in 1935, and lasted until Pearl Harbor was bombed. The solution to the debate was forced upon Americans by events and decisions made abroad.

The internationalists wanted to avoid war by collective security. Henry L. Stimson, former Secretary of State, argued that the Kellogg-Briand Pact made wars of aggression a crime. He said, in August, 1932, "This means that war has become illegal throughout the entire world." All peace-loving nations were obligated to join an international "sheriff's posse" to catch any aggressor nation. This was a moral and legal duty and it was the only certain preventative to other wars.[12]

The isolationists rejected the argument for collective security and insisted that war was inevitable. The only recourse to the United States was to end political agreements with Europe and maintain strict neutrality in reference to European problems and interests. Ironically,

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[12]Divine, The Illusion . . . , p. 1; Divine, The Reluctant . . . , p. 16.

Charles Warren, an internationalist, provided the isolationists with the best plan for America's isolation from European wars. He proposed that America surrender many of her traditional neutral rights during war situations and called for legislation to implement this proposal. Arms should be forbidden to belligerents, private bankers should be banned from loaning funds to warring states and American citizens should be prevented from traveling on belligerent ships. As long as these rights were so disregarded by the warring nations in the last war and as America was involved in the conflict in an attempt to protect them, they should be recinded as traditional neutral rights. "It is better that our citizens should run the risk of commercial loss, than that the country should be involved in a war to protect their alleged commercial rights."[13]

The ideas of an arms embargo, ban on loans and prohibition of travel on belligerent ships impressed the Secretary of State, Cordell Hull. Hull sought an analysis of the proposals by a State Department committee, which in turn, asked Warren to submit a report on his recommendations and arguments. President Roosevelt approved the report and ordered a draft bill to be made up. A conflict arose, however, over the feature of an arms embargo.

Hull's legal advisors indicated that an embargo would have to apply impartially to all belligerents if international law was to be obeyed. This was the same argument which Hiram Johnson used in his amendment to the 1933 proposal for an arms embargo. Johnson's amendment

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[13]Charles Warren, "Troubles of a Neutral," Foreign Affairs, XII (April, 1934), 391.

radically altered the nature of the embargo resolution at that time, because it proposed to transform co-operation with European collective security measures into an isolationist effort to avoid involvement in foreign wars. Roosevelt approved the amendment and gave up his effort to comply with Norman Davis's plan to co-operate with other states in the fight against aggressor nations.[14] While making a plea for a genuine disarmament agreement on May 22, 1933 at the Geneva Disarmament Conference, Davis explained what America's plans were:

> We are willing to consult the other states in case of a threat to peace, with a view to averting the conflict. Further than that, in the event that the states, in conference, determine that a state has been guilty of a breach of the peace in violation of its international obligations and takes measures against the violator, then, if we concur in the judgment rendered as to the responsible and guilty part, we will refrain from any action tending to defeat such collective effort which these states may thus make to restore peace.[15]

Although Roosevelt agreed with Davis's plans for a "collective effort" to maintain peace, he succumbed to isolationist sentiments in 1933.

The Warren report of 1935 made the arms embargo and its application a key issue in the effort to stay out of war. Davis again wanted the President to be given the power to levy an embargo only on aggressors and not on the victims of war. But just as the effort to make the United States a leader in the prevention of war failed in 1933, the similar effort of the internationalists failed in 1935. The President would not be given discretionary power: arms would be banned to the innocent as well as the guilty. The argument of the Chicago Tribune prevailed. They had editorialized: "With power to fix prices, license

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[14] Divine, The Illusion . . . , p. 54.

[15] Department of State, Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy, 1931-1941 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1943), pp. 188-89.

industries, and conscript property he might deem essential to the conduct of the war, the President virtually would be a dictator."[16]

Paradoxically, Roosevelt aided the isolationist cause by asking the members of the Nye committee to study the entire issue of neutrality in an effort to prepare adequate legislation. Although surprised, the Senators who had anticipated legislative proposals only to control munitions manufacture, began drafting three neutrality resolutions. These were introduced in Congress by Nye and Senator Bennet C. Clark of Missouri, the highest ranking Democrat on the Munitions Committee, in April, 1935. To avoid involvement in any foreign conflict, the United States would adopt the automatic devices of the Neutrality Acts.

The neutrality program was delayed in the Senate's Foreign Relations Committee because of Hull's and Davis's intervention to delay legislation on the embargo provision. The state department and the President sought a discriminatory arms embargo, but the worsening Ethiopian situation had made Congress strongly isolationist. This isolationism was encouraged by the anti-Roosevelt and anti-war arguments in the press. The Chicago Tribune said that "Automatic embargoes might be regarded as guaranties of neutrality. Nothing of the kind can be pretended for the discretionary embargo. It is a way of making war. Mr. Roosevelt opposed the automatic method and wanted the other."[17] The Senators responded to the implication that the President wanted to make war by resisting the Administration's proposal. They inaugurated a filibuster on August 20th. One Senator expressed his sentiments in

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[16] April 8, 1935.

[17] August 24, 1935.

private by saying that President Roosevelt was "riding for a fall if he insists...on designating the aggressor in accordance with the wishes of the League of Nations."[18] Roosevelt capitulated before the filibuster was three hours old. The first Neutrality Act was passed August 21, 1935 without one dissenting vote. Roosevelt suggested a few technical changes and limited the bill to a six month period, before the House approved it.

The impartial arms embargo--limited to arms, ammunition and tools of war as defined by the President--was the key provision. While signing the act, Roosevelt warned that it "might have exactly the opposite effect from that which was intended. In other words, the inflexible provisions might drag us into war instead of keeping us out."[19] Roosevelt's actions in initiating the work of the Nye committee and approving the Warren memorandum and then reluctantly signing the ensuing legislation into law, would seem inconsistent. Yet, he desired a neutrality policy to prevent any forced defense of American commercial interests. One historian, Robert Divine, reconciled the situation by pointing out that Roosevelt

> Would prefer to conduct American policy free from emotional and economic pressures and with sole regard to fundamental national interests. Most of all, he wanted flexible legislation allowing him a large degree of executive leadership.[20]

The impartial and mandatory arms embargo did not satisfy him, but always the pragmatic politician, he compromised with a six month limit, while realizing that the impartial embargo would help land-locked

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[18] Divine, The Reluctant . . . , p. 20.

[19] Department of State, p. 272.

[20] Divine, The Reluctant . . . , p. 22.

Ethiopia which had neither the shipping nor the financial resources to trade with the United States.

The Neutrality Act reflected the isolationist attitude in the 1930's. The act forced the President to levy an impartial arms embargo when war broke out between two or more nations. It also allowed the President to use his discretion to proclaim that American citizens who travel on belligerent ships did so at their own risk, and it created the National Munitions Control Board which was to license and supervise exportation of armaments from the United States. Yet, when these provisions were challenged by foreign events, they were used by the Roosevelt Administration to promote collective security and an internationalism in the United States' foreign policy.

When Italy attacked and invaded Ethiopia on October 3, 1935, Hull spoke for the Administration when he urged American business men to abide by a "moral embargo" and avoid trade with the belligerents. It was obvious that elimination of oil, copper and scrap iron would harm Italy, who was one of the major importers of these items. Hull succeeded in enforcing this "moral embargo" by threatening to publish the names of the firms which were engaged in trading and profiting with Italy.[21]

The United States supported collective security by discouraging exportation of war material, while the League of Nations failed. The League did not enforce the economic sanctions against the two belligerents and they had never placed oil or petroleum on the embargo list. Because the League chose appeasement, the United States could not

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[21] Ibid., p. 25.

pursue a bold policy of co-operation with the League. America was overtly unanimous in its isolationist stance, even though Emperor Haile Selassie warned the world that his imminent struggle with Italy may touch off a conflict that will threaten "the very existence of humanity."[22]

In February, 1936, Roosevelt reluctantly accepted a one year extension of the original six month Neutrality Act, adding a provision for a ban on loans to belligerent nations. Congress had denied the President discretionary power to control the flow of all trade with warring powers. One week after the 1936 Neutrality Act was signed, Hitler broke both the Locarno and Versailles Treaties and ordered the military reoccupation of the Rhineland.

The League Council resolved to condemn Germany for violating the treaties but did not recommend any economic or political sanctions. Instead, the "Council invited Hitler to propose a new security system for Europe." Hitler responded with reassurances that he had not planned on any more territorial claims in Europe and made a proposal for a vague, twenty-five year nonaggression pact. The British and French were not willing to risk a war, even if they were certain of winning. Hitler recognized his psychological advantages over the disillusioned victors of World War I. These developments also reinforced the isolationist sentiments of America. As Robert Divine clearly stated;

> it would have been a remarkable act offaith for the United States to embrace collective security. A strong stand by the western democracies might have permitted Roosevelt to offer American support, but British and French appeasement compelled the United States to seek security by insulating itself from Europe. The

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[22]Chicago Tribune, August 22, 1935.

> European appeasers were in a very real sense the co-authors of American neutrality policy.[23]

Besides the Italian-Ethiopian crisis and the accession of the Germans to European military and political power, the Spanish Civil War, which began on July 18, 1936, did more than anything else to promote nonintervention at home in America and even abroad. A Non-Intervention Committee, composed of twenty-five nations in Europe, tried to prevent the shipment of arms to either the Loyalists on the side of the Republic, or to the revolting members of the conservative, military Fascists. As Germany and Italy aided the Fascists, and only the Soviet Union supported the Loyalists, the European policy of nonintervention led to the success of Fascism in Spain.

The Spanish Civil War shook the American people out of their concern for domestic affairs, and their apathy toward foreign events. It became the major concern of the period. American Catholics and right-wing political organizations viewed General Franco as a savior of the Church from atheistical Communism. Other New Dealers saw the war as a conflict between Democracy and Fascist totalitarianism. Allen Hodges and Robert Graves said it could be seen in many ways:

> As Fascism versus Communism, or Totalitarianism versus Democracy, or Italy and Germany versus England and France, or Force versus Liberty, or Rebels versus Constitutional Government, or Barbarism versus Culture, or Catholicism versus Atheism, or the Upper Classes versus the Lower, or Order versus Anarchy--however one's mind worked.[24]

As a result of popular interest in the Spanish conflict, Roosevelt wanted to co-operate with the western democracies, but he could not do so openly because of the isolationist strength in Congress. Again, the

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[23]Divine, The Reluctant . . . , pp. 29-30, 31.

[24]Quoted in Marvin Barrett, The Years Between: A Dramatic View of the Twenties and Thirties (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1962), p. 170

Administration adopted a moral embargo on war materials for either side of the civil conflict in Spain. This met with approval from both the interventionists and the isolationists, as America was co-operating with the European democracies and was staying out of war as well. On January 7, 1937, the moral embargo was legislated into law.

The Spanish arms embaro led to Congressional consideration of permanent neutrality legislation. The problem of making it permanent in 1937, without endangering prosperity, and still promoting peace was enormous. The Neutrality Act of May 1, 1937, extended indefinitely the former provisions and American citizens were forbidden rather than warned against taking passage on any belligerent ships. The President had no chance to stop the threat of aggression in Europe by using his discretion in restricting trade to certain items, thereby favoring one nation or the other. He was almost trapped into an enveloping, blind defense of neutral rights. The cash and carry feature which was to be included in the Act, however, did allow for some compromise on this vital issue.

Bernard Baruch provided this compromise between the advocates of internationalism and isolationism. Writing in 1936, he proposed a cash and carry policy for international trade. He argued that the transportation, not the sale, of goods to belligerents involved the nation in the risk of war. He pointed out the irony of American embargoes and limitations of trade. If economic boycotts were put into effect by the United States, this nation would be participating in war no matter how one looked at it. In order to avoid the destruction of American property and the loss of American lives, he proposed the cash and carry principle. "We will sell to any belligerent anything except

lethal weapons, but the terms are 'cash on the barrel-head'and come and get it."[25]

Baruch solved the problem of maintaining the high rates of profit and prosperity without the risk of involving the United States in war. But it would never produce the "genuine neutrality" sought by Senator Nye and his followers. It would favor the nations with sea power and penalize their opponents and it would create the type of ecomomic ties that Nye deplored. The isolationists felt that

> Wealthy nations that controlled the sea could stimulate a war boom in the United States and thus create a powerful American interest in the outcome of any war in progress. Yet despite these drawbacks, the cash-and-carry plan offered an attractive alternative to a nation that wanted peace, but not at any price.[26]

The cash and carry provision of the 1937 Neutrality Act was temporary and would expire in two years, while the other provisions in the Act were permanent. It did give the President discretionary authority to place all trade with belligerents under this formula. The opinion of the nation allowed Roosevelt to succeed in his compromise. The nation chose to prescribe set rules: these were then proclaimed abroad so that potential aggressors could easily prepare for American reaction instead of anticipating active American leadership.

By the fall of 1937, foreign events again forced a reaction on America's part. The Japanese had invaded China; the Fascists had achieved some major victories in Spain; the Germans, Italians and Japanese agreed to co-operate in the Rome-Berlin Axis and in the Anti-Comintern Pact. The President of the United States turned from his

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[25]Bernard Baruch, "Neutrality," Current History, XLIV (June, 1936), 43.

[26]Divine, The Illusion . . . , p. 166.

preoccupation with solving the domestic depression and turned his attention upon the formulation of a more vigorous foreign policy. He had succeeded in his compromise with neutrality and presidential power to regulate trade, but now attempted to stop the drift toward isolationism as foreign events became more ominous.

While addressing a large audience during ceremonies dedicating a bridge in Chicago on October 5, 1937, President Roosevelt revealed his new interest in foreign affairs. In his best sonorous voice, he said,

> The Peace-loving nations must make a concerted effort in opposition to those violations of treaties and those ignorings of humane instincts which today are creating a state of international anarchy and instability from which there is no escape through more isolation or neutrality. . . . There is a solidarity and interdependence about the modern world . . . which makes it impossible for any nation completely to isolate itself from economic and political upheavals in the rest of the world. . . . When an epidemic of physical disease starts to spread, the community approves and joins in a quarantine of the patients in order to protect the health of the community against the spread of the disease. . . . War is a contagion, whether it be declared or undeclared. . . . We are determined to keep out of war, yet we cannot insure ourselves against the disastrous effects of war and the dangers of involvement.[27]

This famous "Quarantine" speech naturally released a storm of protest in most of the press which was predominantly isolationist at this time. The Chicago Tribune reported that Chicagoans found themselves

> the center of a world-hurricane of war fright. President Roosevelt came to Chicago to bless the bridge that spans two delightful and peaceful park systems. He talked war. . . . The President clearly stated that the United States might be compelled to enter alliances with peace-loving nations to curb more warlike peoples.[28]

In the same issue of this paper, the editors said that "Mr. Roosevelt announced a new foreign policy for the United States. It would be more

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[27] Joseph Alsop and Robert Kintner, American White Paper: The Story of American Diplomacy and the Second World War (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1940), pp. 90-91.

[28] October 6, 1937.

accurate to say that he readopted the foreign policy of Woodrow Wilson, the policy which . . . was overwhelmingly rejected by the American people after the war."

Surprisingly enough, however, the notion that America should be concerned about the epidemic of war did receive some approval. "Even in the Middle West the majority of editorials were sympathetic," with the obvious exception of the Tribune. Unfortunately, Roosevelt was unable to give substance to his radical statements. He was evasive when questioned about the significance of the speech to American foreign policy and made no new military or political commitments to prevent the steps toward war.[29]

Since 1935, Representative Louis Ludlow, an Indiana Democrat, had been trying to introduce an amendment to the constitution which would require a popular referendum before Congress could declare war. This isolationist measure was slowly gaining support because many pressure groups were lobbying for it. The opponents of Roosevelt, frightened by his "Quarantine" speech in Chicago, rallied to pass the amendment. Their cause was aided by a Gallup poll taken in the fall of 1937. Sixty-five per cent of the people wanted even stricter neutrality laws, while only twenty-nine per cent wanted the President to be given a free hand in foreign policy. Seven out of ten Americans wanted Congress to obtain the approval of the people before declaring war.[30] The amendment received enough votes to be presented in the House by January of 1938.

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[29]Divine, The Reluctant . . . , p. 45.

[30]Q. Howe, "American Foreign Policy and Public Opinion," Yale Review, XXXI (December, 1941), 316.

The Ludlow referendum was an affront to Roosevelt's leadership in foreign affairs. It implied a distrust of the President and it would undermine the Administration's efforts to stop the spread of aggression in the world. Consequently, Roosevelt had to stake his prestige and political influence by opposing the amendment. Nearly half of the House Democrats had signed the petition to bring the proposal to the floor, and Roosevelt rolled out the "pork barrel" of patronage to win as many as he could to his side. The President declared that the referendum would "encourage other nations to believe that they could violate American rights with impunity."[31] The amendment was defeated in the House by a very narrow vote. The President's prestige was saved, but that was all. The nation was still strongly isolationist no matter how much they praised his aggressive "Quarantine" speech.

The Munich Conference of September, 1938, marked the climax of appeasement in Europe and the high point of American isolationism. Britain and France allowed Germany to occupy the Sudentenland area in Czecheslovakia in four stages, while a fifth zone would be disposed of by an international commission. Chamberlain and Daladier sacrificed the German Czechs and their land in a futile attempt for "peace at any price." The most serious crisis had been met, but with appeasement and isolationism on the part of the democratic nations.

Soon most Americans began to realize the seriousness of Hitler's aggression. The protest against isolationism began to swell after Munich until the outbreak of the European war in September, 1939, and the great debate between the isolationists and the interventionists was resumed in earnest until December 7, 1941, when Japan decided America's

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[31]Department of State, p. 401.

foreign policy.

The support for the internationalist position was aided by Germany's invasion of Czechoslovakia in violation of the Munich agreement in March, 1939. Many American's were awakened from their legalistic and moralistic dream of automatic neutrality by the harsh reality of modern aggression. The Chicago Tribune was an exception. It represented the traditional isolationist reaction to the news, when it placed the blame for Hitler's aggression on France and Britain. This paper editorialized:

> These developments were implied in the Munich agreement, although at the time France and Great Britain endeavored to soften the actual bluntness of the surrender by professions of concern for the Czecho-slovakians and promises that they would receive financial aid and the guaranty of their restricted frontiers. Nothing came of this. . . . Our government will have to do a great deal of distortion to find a crusade against despots growing out of Germany's eastward ambitions. People who hoped for better things will continue to regret that Czecho-slovakia was the victim, but the further progress of Hitler's program does not now, involve countries which, left to themselves, would evolve and maintain a different and better form of government than the one rolling down on them.[32]

However, the President shared the indignation which swept the rest of the nation and began to work toward revision of the neutrality legislation.

The key articles which needed to be re-examined were the arms embargo and extension of the cash and carry principle. The latter item expired on May 1, 1939. The President did not want to impose cash and carry in the Pacific, for it would benefit Japan and not China, the victim of aggression in the view of most Americans. The arms embargo needed to be repealed because raw materials and the implements of war were needed by the democracies of Europe.

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[32]March 15, 1939.

After much controversy between isolationist and interventionist Congressmen, the 1939 Neutrality Act was passed in November. It allowed American exporters to ship arms, ammunition and war implements to belligerents, but all of this trade with the European nations would be conducted in foreign ships. The title to the cargoes must be signed over to the purchaser before the goods left the United States. American ships and American-owned cargoes were permitted to go to all belligerent ports, but American vessels were not permitted to carry arms, ammunition or implements of war to these ports. This was a far cry from the original neutrality envisioned by Charles Warren in 1934.

The repeal of the arms embargo and the adoption of the limited cash and carry principle forced America into confronting the situation of the world in 1939. The switch to internationalism had begun with this implicit support for England and France. Yet, the American people did not directly commit themselves to intervention in the war after September of 1939. Foreign events during th initial years of the Second World War shaped the course of the great debate between the two hostile camps of isolationists and internationalists, just as they did during the 1930's.

The news of the European arena, as it was reported and interpreted by the American press, also helped shape the controversy over American entry into the Second World War. American neutrality had already began to dissolve in the acid of dissent.

CHAPTER III

THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE AND ISOLATIONIST PROPAGANDA: 1939-1941

A democracy means that ultimate policy decisions are made indirectly by the people after a period of free public discussion. Government servants hesitate to act without almost unanimous public support. Hence, civil servants, while promoting public discussion, are influenced by public opinion. This opinion is most often expressed by the press because a newspaper articulates an attitude and communicates it to the civil servants, as well as to the people who read the paper. The newspaper, then, takes an important pivotal position in affecting public opinion and effecting foreign policy. It does this by molding that public opinion and aiming its support toward certain decisions.

The newspaper performs its role in this sense by utilizing symbols which may or may not represent the true situation. Because most people are not in direct contact with events, they make their decisions on public policy only when the event is pictured for them in terms of familiar political symbols. Propaganda is the process of manipulating symbols in order to affect the opinions of a group.[1]

The newspaper is one of the most important propaganda tools, but its ultimate influence is difficult to ascertain. While many might read the paper, just as many might disagree as agree with the editorial policies and news treatment. Nevertheless, if the press is unable

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[1]Quincy Wright, A Study of War, II (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), p. 1095.

to make converts on an issue, they often are able "to increase the intensity of belief of those who agree with the general policy of a paper." It can make people act who before merely believed, and it can weaken the belief of those who oppose its policies.[2] In this limited way the isolationist press, typified by the Chicago Tribune, was significant prior to America's participation in World War II.

The Tribune's editorial policy and news treatment was always deliberately controversial. "The World's Greatest Newspaper" had fostered a policy which has always

> made the Tribune loved, hated, admired, feared, quoted, denounced, attacked, but never ignored. The stand of the Tribune is a matter of daily gossip, not only throughout the United States but in Europe. Notwithstanding this, every reader seems to consider that every editorial is written directly at him. The same identical statement which he has passed over in all other papers arouses his bitter resentment in the Tribune because he cannot bear to have "his" paper disagree with him.[3]

This was the newspaper which became one of the most famous enemies of the Roosevelt Administration in the 1930's. It went to great lengths to discredit the Government's actions in various decisions. The Chicago Tribune was also synonymous with isolationism.

Every important change in the world situation which might influence the cause of isolation was interpreted for the reader from the isolationist standpoint. Colonel McCormick, the publisher of the Tribune, gave the most vociferous support to the anti-Roosevelt coalition which was organized into the national noninterventionist

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[2]William Cecil Rogers, "Isolationist Propaganda: September 1, 1939 to December 7, 1941," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of Foreign Relations, University of Chicago), p. 36.

[3]Book of Facts (Chicago: The Tribune Company, 1921), p. 29, quoted in Warren Jenkins, "The Foreign Policy of the Chicago Tribune: 1914-1917," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of History, University of Wisconsin, 1942), p. 15.

pressure group, the America First Committee.[4] This was because the outbreak of the European war was responsible for bringing about a coalition of many forces which opposed Roosevelt on the assumption that he was maneuvering the nation toward participation in that war. Between 1939 and 1941, the coalition was composed of many different groups, the Communists before the Russian-German Nonaggression pact was broken; as well as

> ex-President Hoover and his followers among the Republicans; certain liberal Democrats such as Wheeler who did not wish to plow every fourth American boy under; Coughlinites; a majority of Catholics possibly; Roosevelt haters, who would have opposed the Second Coming of Christ if Roosevelt had been for it; altogether a strange coalition. The coalition opposed Roosevelt at every step of his effort to bring the maximum American support to the Allied Cause.[5]

The Chicago Tribune's editorials, cartoons and news coverage were used to discredit the Roosevelt administration and to glorify the isolationist stance. According to this newspaper's editorials, American intervention was being planned by the New Deal in order to establish a communistic dictatorship. Those who favored intervention were called wealthy "colonials," "Reds" and "New Dealers." However, eighty per cent of the American people opposed war and intervention because they felt America could not be attacked. Consequently, prior to September, 1939, the Tribune was representative of American public opinion throughout the nation, and not just in the Midwest, as it was after that date.

The Tribune's political cartoons were even more obvious in presenting Anti-Roosevelt propaganda, because they conveyed an idea with few words and portrayed simple nuances of humor or hate. The cartoons

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[4]Robert Edwin Bowers, "The American Peace Movement: 1933-41," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of History, University of Wisconsin, 1949), p. 395.

[5]Ibid., p. 394.

allowed for a great contrast between good and evil while presenting a situation which was familiar to the reader. Political symbols were most effective in a cartoon.

In its treatment of the news, the Tribune not only buried or left out news which was incompatible with its beliefs, but twisted them frequently until the event was almost unrecognizable.[6] Not only did the Tribune distort news items, but it often treated stories that other papers hardly considered worth while. "The strategy of the Tribune was to present as little domestic news as possible that would give aid and comfort to the interventionists and as much as possible that would help the isolationist cause."[7] As a result, the news-stories consisted of slanted accounts of isolationist activities, the actions of the Administration and of interventionist groups. Usually the reporter was the only authority and source of the article. The news column was the most effective tool for propaganda, because most people do not recognize the effort to influence their beliefs, but take the information as "fact."[8]

In the twenty seven month period between the outbreak of war in Europe and Pearl Harbor, the Chicago Tribune used news events to articulate eight propaganda arguments by certain, standard techniques. These were the most obvious Tribune arguments: the anti-interventionist activities; the support-for-isolation arguments; the nationalistic upholding of our-ideals-and-traditions policy; the disillusionment-with-the-last-war as proven by the munitions investigations; we-can-defend-America fortress theory; and the war-and-its-aftermaths-are-bad

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[6] Rogers, p. 45.

[7] Ibid., p. 46.

[8] Ibid., pp. 42-47.

arguments.[9] These arguments were presented with various propaganda devices. The name-calling device connoted negative feelings to a person or event, while the glittering-generalities device was a positive form of name-calling. The names cause acceptance rather than rejection of the person or event. The transfer device attempted to carry over the "authority, sanction or prestige of something we revere and respect to something [the propagandist]. . . would have us accept."[10] The testimonial device was the endorsement of a program by a famous group or person, while the plain-folks device, typical of the Midwest, was the use of symbols which suggest that events and people were normal and "regular." The card-stacking device used false logic rather than symbols to argue with "under or over emphasis, fact dodging, lies, censorship, distortion, omissions, half-truths, and so forth." And finally, the band-wagon technique tried to assume that a person or event was widely supported and widely believed.[11]

There was usually a close correlation between the arguments and the propaganda techniques in the Tribune. The anti-foreign and the anti-Administration arguments often appeared with the name-calling technique, while the anti-interventionist argument always was demonstrated by name-calling. The fortress-defense argument was used with the card-stacking device, and the traditions-and-ideals argument used the transfer technique about ninety per cent of the time.[12]

The Chicago Tribune represented the isolationism which was prom-

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[9] Ibid., pp. 40-41.

[10] Ibid., p. 178.

[11] Ibid., pp. 178-79.

[12] Ibid., p. 41.

inent in the Midwest.[13] During the first two months of the European war, this paper developed the major arguments and employed the various propaganda devices to strengthen isolationist beliefs, win converts and weaken the interventionist position. This was a large task, because sixty-two per cent of Americans wanted to give aid short of war to the Allies. Forty-six per cent of the people thought there was a good chance that America might enter the war, but only sixteen per cent wanted to participate directly. After much debate in 1939 over the repeal of the arms embargo, the interventionists maintained their advantage. They were greatly aided by the German bombing of English cities. Throughout the pre-Pearl Harbor period, only twenty-one to twenty-five per cent of Americans were opposed to the principle of intervention and could be considered isolationist.[14]

Even though the isolationists were a minority after the European war began, they had ample opportunity to influence those people who were in favor of aiding the Allies short of war and not opposed to intervention as a principle. This influence was only on specific issues, however. As such, the isolationists, under the leadership of Senator Borah in Congress, forced the interventionists to abide by cash and carry when the arms embargo was repealed in the 1939 Neutrality Act. The United States had merely returned to the tradition of international law whereby neutral states were allowed to sell munitions to either side.

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[13]Thomas Andrew Bailey, in The Man in the Street: The Impact of American Public Opinion on Foreign Policy (New York: Macmillan Company, 1948), p. 300, told of a journalist traveling in the Midwest, who reported in 1939, that "One gets the feeling that men are waiting with shotguns to shoot down the first propagandist who mentions Belgian babies."

[14]"Gallup and Fortune Polls," Public Opinion Quarterly, IV (1940), 85.

Ironically, although the isolationists lost this battle, the Administration was forced to advertise neutrality revision as the best way to keep America out of war. At this point, in 1939, more Americans wanted to stay neutral than to help the Allies. Later, public opinion reversed these two sentiments, as the Axis powers achieved one victory after another.

After the first two months of the European war, the German "blitzkrieg" seemed nothing more than a "sitzkrieg," or "phony war." During this "phony war" period, Roosevelt made every effort to insulate America from the European conflict. In September, 1939, he had arranged for a Panamanian Conference with twenty-one states from the Americas to insure that the Western Hemisphere would be neutral. They created a neutrality belt for three hundred miles out to sea around both South and North America, with the exception of Canada. Yet, because none of the belligerents recognized this belt, the American Navy cooperated with Great Britain in combating the German submarine activity in the zone.[15] American neutrality was always to be pro-British because of interventionist attitudes on the part of the Administration.

The "phony war" was slightly jarred when Russia invaded Finland on November 30, 1939. The isolationists and interventionists joined together in support of tiny Finland and the "struggle for all of Western civilization" against the "ruthless savagery" and "sheer brutality" of the Soviet Union.[16] But the Administration avoided invoking the neutrality provisions against the Russians, and refused

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[15]Robert A. Divine, The Reluctant Belligerent: American Entry into World War II (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1965), p. 76.

[16]Chicago Tribune, December 2, 1939.

military aid to the Finns. This attitude of aloofness continued until the "blitzkrieg" swept across Denmark, Norway, the Low Countries, and France, after April, 1940. By June of that year, seventy-eight per cent of the American people wanted to give more aid to the Allies. The defeat of the English at Dunkirk and the fall of France gave the initiative to the interventionists in America. President Roosevelt made the nation's policy clear, when he said:

> Overwhelmingly we, as a nation, are convinced that military and naval victory for the gods of force and hate would endanger the institutions of democracy in the Western World, and that equally, therefore, the whole of our sympathies lies with those nations that are giving their life blood in combat against these forces.[17]

The turning point had been reached; America was no longer isolated from the European conflict. Roosevelt promised to send England and France all available material aid in their struggle against Mussolini and Hitler, in an address to the graduating class at the University of Virginia, on June 10, 1940. The interventionists were winning the great debate.

When France fell, the isolationists either argued that intervention was useless because the war was over, or that Hitler posed no real threat to an America separated from Europe and Japan by two oceans. They advocated a strong defense for America by increasing the nation's armament manufactures if they were conservative and militaristic (as the British and Roosevelt haters were). The idealistic peace groups were naturally isolationist, but were opposed to militarism of any sort. These groups were gradually assimilated into the more conservative isolationist groups who tried to face the military situation in the world realistically.

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[17]Department of State, Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy: 1931-1941 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1943), p. 547.

Both groups, conservative and pacifist, argued against intervention because of the cost of war. Especially after the exchange of destroyers for English bases in September, 1940, they stressed the cost in terms of money, and the ensuing loss of democratic and Christian values. They spoke out against any aid of this sort, because it would lead to bloodshed. The isolationists incited an increase in the defense appropriation in September, however, as the amount was raised from two billion dollars to over ten billion.[18]

The cost of defense was also a concern for the interventionists who were growing more numerous and influential as the "blitzkrieg" advanced through Europe. In order to arouse and mobilize public opinion more effectively, William Allen White and Clark Eichelberger formed a new pressure group favoring intervention. Both men had been largely responsible for organizing public support for the repeal of the arms embargo in 1939. Their organization, The Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies, indicated the shift of American opinion in favor of internationalism. In May, 1940, White had declared:

> As one democracy after another crumbles under the mechanized columns of the dictators, it becomes evident that the future of western civilization is being decided upon the battlefield of Europe. . . . The time has come when the United States should throw its material and moral weight on the side of the nations of western Europe, great and small, that are struggling in battle for a civilized way of life.[19]

Thus, the White committee was also responsible for the larger defense appropriation the following September, as many prominent citizens rallied to support the western democracies.

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[18] Rogers, pp. 20-21.

[19] Walter Johnson, The Battle Against Isolation (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944), p. 69.

The presidential campaign in the summer of 1940, revealed the attitude of most Americans regarding the war. The Republicans met in convention in the middle of June. The Chicago Tribune and Congressional isolationists attempted to get the Republicans to insert a "peace plank" in their platform. They wanted to infer that the Democrats were the "War Party," and themselves the "Peace Party."[20] However, the convention nominated Wendell Willkie, who was strongly interventionist, even though he used many of the isolationist arguments in his campaign, just as Roosevelt did. Both the Republican and the Democratic candidates avoided conducting the campaign,though, on a peace or war basis. Roosevelt would have agreed with Willkie, who said on June 18, 1940,

> I want to repeat what I have said on several previous occasions, that despite our whole-hearted sympathy for the Allied cause, we must stay out of the war. . . . We do not intend to send men from the shores of this continent to fight in any war. We shall not serve the cause of democracy and human freedom by becoming involved in the present war; we shall serve that cause only by keeping out of the war.[21]

The winner,as well as the loser of the Presidential election in 1940, went to the people with the same arguments: war is horrible; no Americans will be killed in it; and America will stay out of it, but we must be sympathetic to the Allied cause if we wish to preserve our American heritage and the whole of western civilization. The interventionists played on American sentiments, which had always favored isolation and neutrality, to promote an active aid to the Allies which inevitably not be short of war. The concept of aid to the Allies and making this aid short of war, was inherently contradictory.

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[20]Rogers, p. 21.

[21]J. M. Gillis, "American Inquisition: Persecution of Isolationists," Catholic World, CLV (July, 1942), 388.

After the fall of France, and the Battle of Britain had begun, many peace advocates, who disagreed with the Administration and with the isolationists, turned to Charles Beard's theory of "continentalism." Because international peace obviously could not be secured, they attempted to achieve a position midway between "too much internationalism and too much nationalism." They did not reject world co-operation, but they agreed with Beard, who pointed out how easily foreign policy could be made the instrument to stifle domestic wrongs under a blanket of militarist chauvinism in America.[22] The continentalists desired Americans to "till their own garden" and avoid imperialism. Actually, this was an invocation of traditional American isolationism.

The Battle of Britain convinced many of the pacifists that Hitler would win. It was not until after the presidential election, that most were forced to agree with the majority of the American public, that it was more important to defeat Germany than to keep out of the war.[23]

In September, 1940, Congress reflected the growing interventionist spirit because it passed the first peacetime military conscription measure, and allowed Roosevelt to trade fifty old destroyers to England in exchange for military bases in the Western Hemisphere. William Allen White's Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies had been agitating for the transfer throughout July and August of 1940. Churchill had requested the destroyers the previous May, because the German submarine warfare had been extremely effective. Roosevelt hesitated to grant the request because Congress had decreed in the

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[22] Bowers, p. 409.

[23] Howe, 320.

naval expansion bill in June, that the President could not "transfer military equipment to a foreign country until the Chief of Naval Operations certified that it was not essential to the defense of the United States.'"[24] Roosevelt did not want to provide the Republicans with a campaign issue over violation of neutrality. To strengthen the President, the White committee encouraged its members to write Congress and the President urging the transfer. They sponsored mass rallies and printed advertisements in newspapers stating "Between Us and Hitler Stands the British fleet!"[25] In August, they sponsored a radio speech by General John J. Pershing, the old American commander in World War I, who said,

> America will safeguard her freedom and security by making available to the British or Canadian governments at least fifty of the over-age destroyers, which are left from the days of the World War. If the destroyers help save the British fleet, they may save us from the danger and hardship of another war.[26]

The Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies overcame Roosevelt's legal problems by suggesting that Britain turn over eight naval and air bases in the Western Hemisphere and promise never to surrender its fleet to Germany. The Chief of Naval Operations finally declared the destroyers "surplus on the grounds that the acquisition of a series of bases meant a net strategic gain for the United States."[27] This marked the end of American neutrality. The United States was openly aligned with England in the war against Germany, in the status of a nonbelligerent.

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[24] Divine, The Reluctant . . . , p. 90.

[25] Johnson, p. 100.

[26] Ibid., p. 102.

[27] Divine, The Reluctant . . . , p. 90.

The executive order for the destroyer trasfer was announced on September 4, 1940. This aroused an isolationist response. The following day saw the creation of the America First Committee in Chicago by R. Douglas Stuart, Jr., and General Robert E. Wood, a Yale Law School student, and the Chairman of the Board of Sears Roebuck and Company. While a student at Yale, Stuart had organized support of various groups to oppose the increasing interventionist trend of the nation. After recruiting General Wood, he proclaimed the principles of the new isolationist committee:

1. The United States must build an impregnable defense for America.
2. No foreign power, nor group of powers, can successfully attack a prepared America.
3. American democracy can be preserved only by keeping out of the European war.
4. "Aid short of war" weakens national defense at home and threatens to involve America in war abroad.[28]

These principles found advocates throughout the nation, but the majority of members and chapters appeared in the Midwest. "Nearly two-thirds of the membership was located within the three hundred mile radius of Chicago which includes Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, Michigan, and parts of Ohio, Missouri, Minnesota, and Iowa."[29] The members of America First all argued that the European war was a battle for power and Britain was fighting to preserve her empire, not to defend democracy. They were sympathetic with England's plight, but said that America could not solve Europe's balance-of-power problems. They denied that Britain was America's first line of defense as the White committee had insisted throughout the summer of 1940.[30] America First predicted that American democracy and

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[28]Wayne S. Cole, America First: The Battle Against Intervention, 1940-1941 (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1953), pp. 15-16.

[29]Ibid., p. 30.

[30]Ibid., p. 37.

freedom would be lost if the United States entered the war. Consequently, the isolationist position centered about the conservative arguments that America should solve its own problems at home and perfect its systems of free enterprise and democracy.

Because the organization of America First was loosely structured, with the only common aim of promoting non-involvement, various speakers and pamphlets used a multitude of arguments. These arguments centered on the steps which the Roosevelt Administration were taking as America became involved in the war. Two bulletins were issued from Chicago in an attempt to coördinate the isolationist fight. A daily bulletin, carrying progress reports, directives and encouragement, was sent to all chapters. The other bulletin, called "Chapter Chatter," was intended to create a fraternal feeling within the organization, and communicated new and original ideas on the fight against involvement. A third bulletin, issued from Washington, was called "Did You Know?" This contained interventionist activities on Capitol hill. "The bulletins were the life-blood of the organization," for they gave the isolationists coördination and encouragement.[31]

Most America First chapters were autonomous and independent, as this allowed for a larger membership. In order to begin a chapter, a person had only to state that he was not a fascist or communist and agree to abide by the principles enunciated by the founders. The vagueness of such requirements made it possible for many subversive elements to infiltrate the chapters and speak in the name of America First. Because of such subversive elements, the public began to disapprove of the entire organization. Just prior to Pearl Harbor, many members

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[31] Rogers, p. 110.

disassociated themselves from the group.[32]

The efforts of America First centered around the lend-lease issue. The members of this group made a concerted effort to clarify the issues facing the American people at the beginning of 1941. On December 17, 1940, Roosevelt had described his plan "to eliminate the dollar sign" in aiding Great Britain at a press conference. On December 29, the President gave a fireside chat over the radio wherein he explained that America would be the "great arsenal of democracy." He dramatically stated that

> In a military sense Great Britain and the British Empire are today the spearhead of resistance to world conquest. They are putting up a fight which will live forever in the story of human gallantry. . . . Our national policy is not directed toward war. Its sole purpose is to keep war away from our country and our people. . . . We are planning our own defense with the utmost urgency; and in its vast scale we must integrate the war needs of Britain and the other free nations resisting aggression. . . . We must be the great arsenal of democracy. For us this is an emergency as serious as war itself. We must apply ourselves to our task with the same resolution, the same sense of urgency, the same spirit of patriotism and sacrifice as we would show were we at war. We have furnished the British great material support and we will furnish far more in the future.[33]

General Wood, Chairman of America First, described this fireside chat as "virtually a personal declaration of war on Germany." After Roosevelt asked Congress to implement the idea of extending credit to England by appropriate legislation, Wood declared that Roosevelt "wants a blank check book with the power to write away your manpower, our laws and our liberties." America First chapters flooded Washington with protests against a lend-lease concept.[34]

The Lend-Lease Bill, numbered H.R. 1776, was introduced in

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[32] Ibid., p. 112.

[33] S. Shepard Jones and Denys P. Myers (eds.), Documents on American Foreign Relations (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1941), pp. 23-25.

[34] Cole, p. 43.

Congress on January 10, 1941. It was to give the President authority to "sell, transfer title to, exchange, lease, lend, or otherwise dispose of" any defense article to the "government of any country whose defense the President deems vital to the defense of the United States."[35] At committee hearings, both isolationists and interventionists argued their positions on this matter. Some supported the principle of lend-lease on the theory that it would keep us out of war while others advocated it on the theory that it would get us in. Most believed that it meant that "we could hire the British to kick Hitler for us if we only paid them enough."[36]

Between December 29 and March 11, when the bill was finally passed, the isolationists employed every propaganda technique and method available. The propaganda centered on three appeals: the bill meant dictatorship, American participation in the war, and England did not really need financial help. The isolationists in Congress were primarily Republicans from the Midwest, although Senator Burton Wheeler, a Democrat, led the fight against H.R. 1776. Even though the majority of Congressmen and Americans approved of all out aid to England, the minority group of Senators attempted to delay passage of the bill and utilize the vocal minority outcry which America First had focused to defeat the legislation. The President wanted this minority to have unlimited freedom of discussion before he embarked on a policy of all out aid to Germany's enemies. National unity was vital to effective Presidential leadership, and the controversy over lend-lease revealed the need for caution in this area. The dissenting minority could not

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[35]Department of State, pp. 601, 605, 607.

[36]Q. Howe, "American Foreign Policy and Public Opinion," Yale Review, XXXI (December, 1941), 320.

form a coalition with the Southern Democratic Senators, because they were strongly pro-intervention, so they adopted delaying tactics in the debate. Senator Burton Wheeler accused the Administration of wanting to plow under every fourth American boy, while Senator LaFollette said if lend-lease was passed it would leave Americans with only one word--"Je."[37]

The Administration received the authority it wanted, but the two month delay in passing the bill increased the degree of organization and agitation of the isolationists. After Congress appropriated seven billion dollars to allow the flow of supplies to England, the isolationists became increasingly bitter and stuck to their crystallized, limited, and negative propaganda appeals. They had lost their chance to win more converts to their cause by not using a conciliatory approach to the situation. They became more and more frustrated as the country moved closer to participation in the war. With lend-lease, the isolationist press and America First groups were extremely bitter in their use of strong, negative symbols which centered upon various incidents in the news, and Roosevelt's stronger grasp of executive leadership.[38]

The problem of convoying ships was concomitant with lend-lease. War material had to be delivered as well as furnished. The German submarines had developed the wolfpack technique to penetrate the British convoys. Merchant shipping losses for the English rose from 320,048 tons in January, 1941, to 653,960 in April.[39] The Committee to Defend

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[37]Chicago Tribune, February 25, 1940.

[38]Rogers, p. 27.

[39]Divine, The Reluctant . . . . p. 108.

America by Aiding the Allies had been calling for American convoys in mid-March. Senator Wheeler had warned that after lend-lease was passed, "the warmongers in this country would cry for convoys, and everyone recognizes the fact that convoys mean war."[40] The isolationists tried to precipitate the issue of convoys before the public or the Administration was ready to deal formally with it. Senator Charles W. Tobey of New Hampshire introduced an anticonvoy resolution on March 31, 1941.

America First sponsored a massive letter-writing campaign to prevent convoying in April and May. German submarines had been operating closer to Greenland since March 25, so Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox and Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson advised Roosevelt that convoying was a necessity. Fearing Congressional hostility to using the Navy for convoys, Roosevelt compromised and authorized "the extension of naval patrols beyond the three-hundred mile neutrality belt out into the mid-Atlantic." He did not define the activities of the patrols, nor did he make the decision public. However, the next day, April 9, Roosevelt did announce the American occupation of Greenland and the construction of air and naval bases to prevent Hitler from using the area as a supply depot for submarines. When the President ordered the patrols not to shoot at German submarines, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee tabled Senator Tobey's anticonvoy resolution.[41] The isolationists were able to prevent the use of American ships for convoy duty, but not through legislation.

In June, 1941, Crete fell, and Russia was surprisingly attacked

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[40] William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, The Undeclared War: 1940-1941 (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1953), p. 443.

[41] Divine, The Reluctant . . . . , pp. 109-110.

by Germany. The communist isolationists forgot about the "imperialist" war and demanded convoys. Their defection did not really affect America First, because the conservative Roosevelt-haters, Anglophobes, and Russophobes had dominated the organization since January, 1941. Most Americans reluctantly accepted Russia as an Ally and opponent of Hitler, and continued to support lend-lease as a form of all out aid short of war. Fifty-six per cent of the population supported convoying to protect American war materials according to a Gallup poll printed in Time magazine at this time.[42] The same poll revealed that sixty-one percent approved of the American occupation of Iceland which was announced by Roosevelt on July 7. He had justified this as an effort to prevent the Germans from occupying that island.

The President was so encouraged by the support for American occupation of Iceland, that he almost decided to use American naval units in the Atlantic for limited convoy duty, but only as far as that island. He still hesitated because the isolationist propaganda against convoying was prolific and apparently indicated the division of public opinion on the issue.

The isolationists were heartened by the House rejection of draft extension in August, 1941. The original Selective Service Act had been adopted the previous August with a one year time limit for all conscripted men. It also contained a provision that the "selectees" would not be stationed outside the Western Hemisphere. Many Representatives had promised their constituents that they should get their military obligation over with because it would last only one year. They managed to defeat an extension of service by only one vote. An amendment

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[42]Rogers, p. 31.

was passed which set an eighteen month limitation to service.

The draft issue encouraged the isolationists to begin a campaign against an American Expeditionary Force which had been rumored about for some time. At the International Amphitheater in Chicago, Miss Dorothy Thompson, newspaper columnist and a vocal member of the groups striving for American entry into the war, made an interesting speech which indicated the same use of bitter symbols in the debate surrounding the possibility of an expeditionary force. She began her speech before three-thousand persons at a rally sponsored by the Fight for Freedom Committee by reading a telegram from an organization of American mothers. The mothers said they did not want their sons to become members of a second "A.E.F." to fight in Europe, Asia, or Africa. They asked Miss Thompson whether she was in the pay of the communist party, and charged that the present national Administration had done more harm to the country than Hitler ever could do. Miss Thompson replied: "You, who picket the White House, you black crows, and send out petitions for the impeachment of your President, you know and I know you are being paid--paid by the people who have no other idea than to spread dissension. If you are mothers, God help the human race." The Chicago Tribune carried the story in an unsigned article on the front page and added that "while Miss Thompson was speaking, communist handbills were being distributed outside the International Amphitheater where the meeting was held," thereby implying that the American mothers were right in their charges against the interventionist Miss Thompson.[43] The Tribune was also quick to print an answer to Miss Thompson in the next issue. Mrs. Grace Keefe, secretary of We, the

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[43]November 20, 1941.

Mothers, Mobilize for America, wrote a reply calling Miss Thompson hysterical. Mrs. Keefe stated:

> While Miss Thompson is willing to give a million American boys to to defeat Hitler, her own son (born to her and Sinclair Lewis, the novelist, from whom she is seeking a divorce) will not be called upon to make good on her offer, since he is only 11 years old. But he'd probably be a captain if he got into the army, like Jimmy and Elliott Roosevelt. If Miss Thompson loved America more than she hates Hitler, she wouldn't be so hysterical.[44]

Both interventionists and isolationists utilized propaganda techniques in the great debate prior to Pearl Harbor.

The arguments surrounding a possible American Expeditionary Force served to reinforce Roosevelt's caution in co-operating with England. The British convoys were under much pressure by September, 1941. Russian supply shipments had to pass around the Norwegian coast, occupied by the Germans, to reach Murmansk. Unless the American navy shared the escort duty, England would lose the battle of the Atlantic by default. On September 4, the United States Ship Greer was fired upon by a German submarine. This provided Roosevelt with an excuse to instigate actual convoy duty as far as Iceland. In his "shoot-on-sight" speech, September 11, the President declared that American "patroling vessels and planes will protect all merchant ships--not only American ships but ships of any flag--engaged in commerce in our defensive waters."[45]

Germany was busy in the Russian campaign, and until the end of October, there were no more incidents comparable to the Greer attack. The isolationists were rapidly dwindling as the nation prepared to enter the war. Their bitterness against Roosevelt and the British became more

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[44]November 21, 1941.

[45]Department of State, p. 742.

obvious, and the most famous spokesman for isolation turned to attack the Jews as war-mongers. Charles Lindbergh's anti-semitic speech in Des Moines on September 11 was reported by the Chicago Tribune, but they stressed the anti-Roosevelt content of the speech. Lindbergh said that the Jews in America were agitating for war and their activities posed a great threat to the United States. He pointed to their "large ownership and influence in our motion pictures, our press, our radio, and our government."[46]

This speech created a flurry of protest. Many resigned from America First when the organization refused to condemn Lindbergh, while the interventionists hastened to endorse the President's policies and denounce the isolationists. The interventionist Louisville Courier-Journal editorialized that Lindbergh was spreading "the same old Nazi propaganda of defeatism, of national disunion, of dictatorship on the part of President Roosevelt and of Jewish subterfuges that are being used to get the nation into war. . . ."[47]

By October, most Americans were ready to amend the Neutrality Act by allowing merchant ships to be armed. On October 9, Roosevelt asked Congress to repeal Section VI of the Neutrality Act, which had prohibited the arming of merchant ships. He also implied the necessity for the repeal of the limit on combat zones so that U.S. ships could escort war materials to their destinations.

In the middle of the debate in the House over the arming of merchant ships, the Kearney, an American destroyer, was torpedoed with

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[46]Chicago Tribune, September 12, 1941.

[47]November 1, 1941.

a loss of eleven men.[48] The House responded by patriotically voting to arm American ships by the margin of 259 to 138. The public then proceeded to demand that the Senate repeal the entire Neutrality Act, but Roosevelt cautiously stuck to repealing only the ban on American ships entering war zones.

On October 31, another American naval destroyer, the Reuben James, was torpedoed and seventy-seven men were listed as missing. The following day, the arch-isolationist Chicago Tribune declared that "The vessel, which presumable was struck by a Nazi submarine, is being treated by the administration as an expectable casualty of an undeclared war between the United States and Germany." The Tribune also lauded a speech by Senator Wayland Brooks, a Republican from Illinois, which "stopped an attempt by the war party in the Senate to whip up an emotional frenzy over the sinking . . . and stampede the Senate into an immediate vote on repeal of the neutrality act."

As the debate over revision of the Neutrality Act progressed, the isolationists relied upon propaganda speeches and letters to Congressional leaders. These activities were prominently displayed and encouraged by the isolationist papers, especially the Chicago Tribune.[49] On November 5, The Tribune carried an article reporting the radio broadcast of Representative Clair E. Hoffman, a Michigan Republican, who

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[48] Chicago Tribune, October 17, 1941.

[49] On November 10, 1941, this newspaper said: "Many readers who wish to protest to their congressmen against the scrapping of the neutrality act have requested THE TRIBUNE to publish the names of the representatives who this week will debate and then vote on senate amendments which permit American merchant ships to enter belligerent ports. THE TRIBUNE herewith responds to these requests by listing the names of the downstate prepresentatives along with the counties in their didtricts and the address to which letters or telegrams may be sent to them. . . ."

charged that

> Mr. Roosevelt has misrepresented naval incidents; that his shooting orders to the navy, the conscription law, the lend-lease bill, and the drive to emasculate the neutrality act have convinced millions of Americans of his insincerity; his purpose is not peace but aggressive war; to accomplish that purpose he will not hesitate to use any and all means at his command.

Besides stressing the anti-Roosevelt propaganda, the Tribune emphasized the war-mongering of a "twenty per cent minority" who attempt to silence the "anti-war eighty per cent."[50] The anti-foreign element of isolationism was also utilized by the Tribune. Colonel Robert R. McCormick, the Editor and Publisher of this paper, was quoted therein as declaring that "whoever invented the idea that there is a mother country of the United States had an imagination that dwarfed Shakespeare's."[51]

However, the interventionist press also used anti-foreign propaganda, but directed it towards Germany and Japan. The Louisville Courier-Journal quoted the Democratic Senator from Florida, Claude Pepper as asserting:

> We're going to persecute Hitler if it takes to the end of time, . . if the navy is needed we'll send that, if the army is needed we'll send that, if the air force is needed we'll send that. . . . If Kurusu has come with a message of repentance we'll welcome him. If he's come with a threat, we'll throw him back in the Pacific. . . . If we don't watch those little yellow men of the East they will try to stick a stilleto in our back but we'll choke them to death if they move.[52]

The publicity the press accorded to the debate over repeal of the Neutrality Act revealed the interventionism of the South. Here, even the Republicans, led by Wendell Willkie, petitioned Congress to take prompt action. A Columnist in the Courier-Journal, A.R. Anderson,

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[50]November 10, 1941.

[51]November 19, 1941.

[52]November 24, 1941.

wrote that

> It is a very old national habit of ours, that is also a well-founded personal habit with many of the individuals who live in America, to meet danger by the simple expedient of taking our guns along, and the arming of our merchant ships is merely the extension of an old personal habit into a national policy. It's all very simple, both in its contemplation and the reasonable solution of the problem. We are threatened and we propose to meet the danger with overwhelming force, just as we solve all of our other problems.[53]

The interventionists argued that armed merchant ships would be a "typically American" solution. The entire policy of the Administration was designed to keep America out of war, and simultaneously sustain the right of the nation to send its ships anywhere, regardless of Hitler's actions and threats. They argued that the existing neutrality law impeded America's policy of aiding Hitler's enemies.[54]

The isolationists said the neutrality law was already dead because of Roosevelt's activities. If American vessels continued to be allowed in submarine infested waters, more incidents would occur and America would officially be at war. The Tribune accused Roosevelt of repudiating every argument he used to pass the Neutrality Act in 1939. They editorialized, on November 7, 1941, the day before the Senate repealed the armament and war zone ban, that

> Freedom of the seas has never meant that a neutral could convoy munitions of war to a belligerent. Our warships are engaged in sea warfare with the Germans. Our naval vessels are under orders to protect war shipments in the zones far outside the Western Hemisphere. By subterfuge, deceit, and direct violation of the law our war administration has made the United States a belligerent, although the law to the contrary stands upon the books and until amended or repealed should be paramount. . . . It is the expectation of the Roosevelt war party that when the toll has mounted and the casualty lists are longer, there will be no further resistance to the sacrificial entry of the United States into a war wherever it may be found.

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[53]November 1, 1941.

[54]Louisville Courier-Journal, November 8, 1941.

However, even with the Senate repeal, the Tribune saw the "close vote as a mandate to move slowly." The House approved the action by a vote of only eighteen votes on November 12. Senator Burton K. Wheeler complained that "the victory was won by pressure from political bosses all over the country and by the allurement of White House patronage."[55]

The isolationist battle was over, nonetheless. They had warned that a series of incidents would lead to war and that is what happened. Their arguments were correct, but America had voted for war. Their arguments were correct, but they were ridiculed and even declared unpatriotic as America entered the Second World War.[56]

The ever increasing isolationism of the Midwest and the Chicago Tribune was ended one morning, December 7, 1941, when Pearl Harbor was attacked. The Tribune replaced the motto "Save Our Republic" on its masthead, with Stephen Decatur's slogan, "Our Country, Right or Wrong." On December 8, as the shocked country realized that its attempts at neutrality had completely failed, public opinion rallied behind the sentiments of Burton Wheeler: "The only thing now is to do our best to lick hell out of them."[57]

Both isolationists and interventionists had used the same techniques in their propaganda. They commonly believed that America

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[55]Chicago Tribune, November 13, 1941.

[56]The Louisville Courier-Journal, November 24, 1941, contained this item: "Senator Soaper Says: 'An anti-interventionist oration in the Senate had an audience of two fellow solons. This is not 100 per cent isolation, but it is close.'" For criticism of isolationist patriotism prior to Pearl Harbor and after, see /J.M.Gillis/ "American Inquisition: Persecution of Isolationists," Catholic World, CLV (July, 1942), 385-89.

[57]Louisville Courier-Journal, December 8, 1941.

could extend material aid to the Allies without becoming embroiled in the conflict. They naively believed that the Neutrality Act would be enforced automatically and American democracy would prevail. They maintained a militant position in the Pacific when they had no military strength to enforce it, while they offered appeasement and hesitation to the Allies on the Atlantic. The midwestern attitudes represented the last attempt by Americans to keep their nation insulated from foreign affairs. The Second World War forced America to take her place as a world leader. Isolationism was dead in the Midwest.

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