

Weekly News Analysis

### Fear of Foreign Entanglement Brings Return to Isolationism

By Joseph W. La Bine

EDITOR'S NOTE—When opinions are expressed in these columns, they are those of the news analyst, and not necessarily of the newspaper.

#### Domestic

Since President Roosevelt's "quarantine" speech at Chicago in October, 1937, U. S. public opinion has veered sharply and outspokenly against dictators, meanwhile making new friends for France, Britain and China. Washington's traditional policy of isolation and neutrality has well-nigh gone by the boards, thanks to Nazi Jew-baiting, Japan's threat to U. S. interests in China and dictator inroads throughout South America. Most heated U. S. speechmaker against Adolf Hitler has been Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, whose tirades presumably reflect White House sentiment.

Long-awaited reaction against foreign entanglement took root only a month ago when congress discovered the administration was sponsoring military plane sales to France and Britain. Today the issue of isolation is growing by leap and bound, not only as a question of foreign policy but as a political football headed for the 1940 presidential election. In less than one late February week enough shots were fired to constitute a definite trend:

"Wicked Dictatorships." To Pittsfield, Mass., went William R. Castle, assistant chairman of the Re-



REPUBLICAN CASTLE  
More concentration, less chatter.

publican national committee, once U. S. envoy to Japan, later a Hoover undersecretary of state. Said Mr. Castle, before a 40 and 8 (American Legion) society: "There is still so much work . . . to keep this the best possible country . . . that our officials would do well to confine themselves to this task instead of spending so much time talking about wicked dictatorships and the dangers of war. We certainly want none of their philosophy . . . but . . . if that philosophy is what other nations want it is not for us to attempt to prevent it."

Nye Again. An irreconcilable pacifist, North Dakota's Sen. Gerald P. Nye saw red when he learned of the French-British plane sales, rushed to his office and drafted a bill. Its gist: Military and naval officers could bar export of any planes developed in the U. S. until they determined that the craft are not needed exclusively for American defense.

One reason for the bill was testimony that Mr. Roosevelt had ignored high military-naval officials in making the foreign deal. Another reason is Senator Nye's fear of an ultimate U. S. desire to sell planes to Germany, Italy, Japan or any other nation, thus producing a "vicious circle." Next day it became apparent the "vicious circle" had already been created internationally. A member of the civil aeronautics authority reportedly told the senate military affairs committee that Germany was willing to sell fighting planes to—of all nations—France. Reasoning: France would thereby become dependent on foreign plane factories, committing national suicide in case of war with Germany.

Foreign Trade. Among important loans of the federal-sponsored Export-Import bank was one to China for \$25,000,000, financing sale of 1,000 trucks for obvious military use. Fearful lest this constituted a dan-

#### PEACE?

RIOT—Resigning because France failed to ratify a 1936 treaty granting the land independence, Syrian Premier Jamil Mardam Bey touched off street clashes.

REVOLT—While President Oscar Benavides was away Peruvian Interior Minister Gen. Antonio Rodriguez attempted to seize the government, was slain.

REBELLION—Held responsible for 220 deaths in eight months of race rioting, Ba Maw's cabinet was ousted in Burma, replaced by a coalition government.

REPERCUSSION—Fighting terroristic bombings by the outlawed Irish republican army in Eire and Great Britain, Eire's parliament authorized the death penalty for the perpetrators.

gerous commitment, congress thought twice when the Export-Import bank—due to expire June 30—came up for two years' extension. Argued Michigan's Rep. Jesse P. Wolcott: "This bank can get us into a situation which may involve us in any European or Asiatic conflict . . . It is a dangerous thing to have this power lying around." Argued Ohio's Sen. Robert A. Taft: "The government shouldn't be in the export business." Passed by the house after vigorous debate, the extension bill could expect a chary reception by the senate.

Meanwhile the U. S. chamber of commerce lifted its eyebrows over a report that 25 American industrialists would join a British-German cartel to regulate competition in world markets and offset a threatened trade war. The state department knew nothing about it and was far from enthusiastic.

But—, While one branch of U. S. opinion obviously swung to isolation, another branch stuck out its neck by virtue of a long-standing, thoroughly accepted American creed, the Monroe doctrine. Illustrating how any U. S. interest in South America leads to international complications in the world of 1939 were two developments: (1) The civil aeronautics authority prepared to fight German, Italian, French and Dutch air services for supremacy in South America; (2) Dr. Raul Ribeiro, Brazilian economist, offered U. S. capitalists a chance to invest in a mining development project for his country, with possible exchange of Brazilian ore for American-made munitions.

#### Europe

All European crisis since 1930 have been started by scheming Italy and Germany. With Europe well on its way to another nervous breakdown scheduled for mid-March, signs now indicate that Britain and France, lovers of peace and the status quo, may at least be blamed—if not responsible—for the spring crisis.

Underlying every potential European development is the Spanish war, whose early termination will leave Italy free to pursue Mediterranean territorial demands against France. This, because a Franco victory in Spain is an Italian victory, giving Il Duce more Mediterranean power. It would jeopardize not only France's colonies, but Britain's "lifeline" to the Far East.

By now the Paris-London "axis" has at least three reasons to decide on an aggressive course which may decide Europe's future:

(1) Unconfirmed but persistent reports of French-Italian clashes on the Libya-Tunisia border (see map) jibe with announcements that Italy's Libyan garrisons are being increased. Tunisia is one French territory specifically demanded by Italy, unofficially. Reports say Fascist troops penetrated Tunisia at a spot 25 miles southeast of the first French fortified zone, just as Italy's Marshal Pietro Badoglio visited Libya to inspect frontier



LIBYA AND TUNISIA  
Is this the next battleground?

ports. Meanwhile Rome reports indicate 1,000,000 men will be under arms this spring.

(2) Germany has started mobilization for annual war games, accompanied by renewed grumblings against "war scares" by western democracies.

(3) Chancellor Hitler, Premier Mussolini and Generalissimo Franco are scheduled to meet soon for a decision on Spain's future, and, presumably, the future course of an enlarged European Fascism.

Viewing these three developments the British parliament has approved an extra \$2,000,000,000 armament appropriation, starting a new international munitions race which Prime Minister Chamberlain admits might "lead to the bankruptcy of every country in Europe." At the same time London has agreed on plans for an expeditionary force to help France in case of war. Meanwhile both London and Paris have been making desperate last-minute efforts to win Franco.

German-Italian reply to these "warlike threats" will probably be to hold their troops in Spain until France grants African concessions. Thus perplexed, London and Paris must either use a whip lash, thereby provoking a new crisis, or permit the most serious blow to democratic prestige thus far inflicted. If they planned the latter course there would be little justification for today's frenzied rearmament.

#### Asia

Japan's thinly veiled ambition is to drive westerners out of China. Until this year the white man was oppressed only insofar as he stood in the way of Tokyo's marching armies. But Japan looks covetously and angrily on such prosperous developments as Shanghai's international settlement, Britain's Hong Kong crown colony and France's Indo-China. Already Hong Kong has been isolated by Jap conquest of Canton, her gateway to China. More recently British territory along the Hong Kong-Canton railroad was bombed. Farther south Japan seized independent Hainan



PREMIER HIRANUMA  
Is international settlement next?

island despite an agreement with France. This accomplished, munitions shipments into China through French Indo-China might be blocked.

Latest and craftiest Japanese plan is seizure of the Shanghai international settlement, only non-Jap area left in the city and an unwilling haven for Chinese guerrilla warriors. In the past 18 months 88 political murders have been committed there, most victims being puppet Chinese governmental officers in Japanese pay. Latest victims were Chen Lo, foreign minister for the Central China government in Nanking, and Marquis Li Kuo-chieh, grandson of China's great statesman, Li Hung-chang.

Life is cheap in the Orient and loss of a few puppets would be small for control of the Shanghai international settlement. Though backed only by rumor, there is growing belief that Chinese murders may have been "planted" by Tokyo as an excuse to march in and keep peace, conveniently setting an important precedent.

Whether true or not, the belief jibes with retaliatory action taken in Tokyo. Up before a turbulent meeting of the diet rose Lt. Gen. Seishiro Itagaki, minister of war, to declare he was "convinced of the necessity to take an effective measure of self-defense" in the international settlement. Later, in extraordinary session, the cabinet placed official approval on such action when Premier Baron Kiichiro Hiranuma declared the terrorism "compels Japan to take fundamental measures to maintain peace and order."

Meanwhile Premier Hiranuma could see that his newest drive to close China's open door would meet stubborn resistance. From London came bitter protest against the Hong Kong bombing. In Shanghai the international police redoubled their efforts and prepared to resist a threat on the settlement. To the south, at lazy Haiphong, Indo-China, France was angry enough to junk her Japanese agreement just as Japan had junked it, opening her gateway to supplies for sorely pressed Chinese troops.

#### Business

U. S. efforts to reconcile heavily taxed business have proceeded since "Uncle Dan" Roper was replaced as commerce secretary by Harry Hopkins. After initial promises Mr. Hopkins settled back in silence for two months of study to learn what made his heretofore ineffectual department tick.

Some hint of more reconciliation was contained in President Roosevelt's pre-vacation remark that business need fear no more taxes. More hint was found in the speech of Secretary of War Harry Woodring, who stepped from his military shoes to tell the Democratic Women's National council that he hoped soon to see an end of "spending and taxing" if private business will take the initiative.

Even before Secretary Hopkins left for Des Moines to make his "policy speech," Washington knew pretty well what an obviously revitalized commerce department intended to do. Main points in the Hopkins program: (1) Develop the heretofore unimportant business advisory council; (2) promote re-employment to slash WPA rolls; (3) study taxes and their effect on business; (4) attempt to succeed where the labor department had failed, in settling the feud between the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

#### People

Tom Mooney, recently pardoned labor leader, has been admitted to a San Francisco hospital.

● Capt. Fritz Wiedemann, Adolf Hitler's personal adjutant and new German consul to San Francisco, has as his announced purpose the "promotion of good will."

#### Bruckart's Washington Digest

### In U. S. Alone of All World Is There Real Freedom of Speech

Disturbing Signs Recently Indicate All Is Not Well; Administration Tirades Against Press Become Frequent; Concerted Effort to Get Rid of Critics.

By WILLIAM BRUCKART  
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WASHINGTON.—One of America's greatest and most glorious traditions is the jealousy with which its citizens guard the right of free speech and a free press. There is no nation in the world now, and there never has been one, where such freedom for expression of opinion is accorded as we have in the United States. For proof, if proof be needed, simply take the old atlas and examine the countries, one by one, and abundant evidence will be found. Here, alone in all of the world, can an individual or a group have its untrammelled say.

There have been some signs lately, however, that are disturbing. I do not mean to over-emphasize them by a discussion of them, but the greatest lesson that I have learned is that the American people will correct conditions, or prevent their development, if they know what the facts are and find them adverse.

During the last several months, there have been frequent tirades against the press of the nation. Some of the denunciations have come from President Roosevelt in reply to press criticism of some of his policies. Other administration spokesmen have followed the President's lead. Notably among them, and certainly the most vicious, is the secretary of the interior, Harold L. Ickes, who seems, in this instance, to be the lord high chief verbal executioner of opposition writers and newspapers.

Mr. Roosevelt's recent assertion that some newspaper owners are deliberately misrepresenting the facts and Mr. Ickes' assertion that "our newspapers are not as free as they ought to be in a democracy" constitute serious accusations, even after one forgets how constantly Mr. Ickes gets out on a limb. It seems to me, therefore, that there ought to be some clarification of the situation. It might be asked, and properly, I believe, why Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Ickes do not point out those newspapers that are charged, in effect, as plain liars.

#### Administration Seeks to Get Rid of the Critics

Now, to turn abruptly from one phase of the situation to another, attention should be directed to the recent bill introduced in the senate by Senator Wheeler, the Montana Democrat. The bill proposes reorganization of the federal communications commission, the agency that controls radio. Radio, of course, is the "free speech" just as the newspapers are the "free press" that is one of the guarantees of the national Constitution.

There can be no doubt that the federal communications commission is shot through with dissension. There is no doubt that it has developed one of the worst messes in government supervision of any industry. It is a shameful situation, and there appears to be no solution except to get rid of the bulk of the personnel, from the commissioners on down the line, until all trouble makers have been eliminated. I have written frequently in these columns that the best law can be destroyed by selection of huns to administer it; and the general appraisal here is that the members of the federal communications commission are a pretty sickly lot of government officials. The appointments the commission has made also do not constitute a list of mental giants.

Well, you ask, how does this have anything to do with President Roosevelt's denunciation of the newspapers. Where does it touch free speech that may be adverse to the New Deal administration?

The answer lies in a belief, now held by a great many observers in Washington, that somewhere in the administration is a concerted effort to get rid of the critics. There is little political pressure that can be exerted upon the newspapers, because they will speak their views through their columns, but with the radio, government supervised, licensed, a weighty club over its head at all times, the situation is different.

#### Radio News Commentators Eliminated From Air Waves

Some things have happened lately that bear re-counting. Just as an example, and to cite only one case, Boake Carter is off of the air as a news commentator. He was a severe, and, at times, a vindictive critic of the New Deal. Dr. Stanley High, recently wrote in the Saturday Evening Post that Carter was kept out of new contracts by the administration.

There have been frequent recurrences of the rumor, too, that W. J. Cameron, who speaks for the Ford Motor company, was marked by administration trouble shooters as a speaker who ought to be eliminat-

ed from the air waves. Mr. Cameron continues on the air. Gen. Hugh S. Johnson, former NRA boss, is a pain in the neck for the New Deal as well, but nothing has happened to him, yet.

Other rumors of the type could be mentioned, but I was asked how any body in the government would dare to interfere. The same letter asked how such ends could be achieved.

A few paragraphs earlier, I referred to governmental supervision, licensing, etc. That is the answer to the question. Any radio station gets a license for only a short period. Renewal of that license depends, according to law, upon compliance with federal communications commission regulations and the law's provisions. This would seem to leave only a limited discretionary power. It is a case, however, like the army officer making an inspection of a buck private's barracks: if he wants to find dirt, he will find it. In the case of the radio station, its owners live in dread of censure—and, I suspect, they are generally amenable to suggestions from headquarters in Washington.

#### President's Trusted Adviser Drafts Reorganization Bill

So, to link the Roosevelt denunciation of newspapers and the Wheeler radio bill, one has only to know that Chairman Frank McNinch, the President's most trusted radio adviser, largely drafted the Wheeler reorganization bill. That measure, it should be added, reduces the communications commission to a membership of three. There would be "administrative assistants" appointed for each of the major types of communication, and, thus, one individual becomes czar of radio, another of wire communication and so on. And, while the members of the commission must be named "by and with the advice and consent of the senate," the administrative assistant may be anyone who has the necessary political pull.

I repeat that the statements related above represent the belief of a good many persons.

One of the swift changes that has taken place in this country is the switch in the attitude of the bulk of the newspapers. It will be recalled that when Mr. Roosevelt and the New Deal took over the government, there were so few editorial criticisms of the President's program that any outcry was negligible in effect. The corps of news writers who attended the President's twice-a-week press conferences accepted his statements without equivocation, or without question. It was a press relationship more friendly than any other President ever had.

Then, some of the New Deal ideas proved flops and editors started asking questions. Their Washington correspondents searched deeper than just official handouts. It was about this time that the personnel of various agencies for "press relations" began to undergo expansion. Time after time, well known correspondents were hired, and they could not be blamed because the jobs were lucrative. I was offered one. By coincidence, of course, the quantity of "statements for the press" increased, accordingly.

#### Once He Laughed at Them, But Things Have Changed

A few years ago, Mr. Roosevelt dealt with the few editorial criticisms in masterful fashion—by laughing about them. That was the attitude of most department and agency heads. But things have changed now to the extent that editorial criticisms and unfriendly stories, or stories that include information beyond the handouts released from government sources, become the subject for vitriolic attack from government quarters.

I have no idea how long the campaign against the press may run. It surely has plenty of momentum now, and there is plenty of money available for "press relations" work. Mr. Ickes said that the modern newspapers can "dish it out but cannot take it." I wonder if Mr. Ickes "can take it" after dishing it out.

It has been my conviction always that the best censorship that America can have is the censorship of the newspaper reader and, more recently, the censorship of the radio listener. No newspaper can go on and on when its columns carry untruthful or unsound material. The radio can not go on unless its programs are proper and popular, because it continues to be easy to turn off the switch and silence the speaker. Nor are we, in this country, compelled to listen to some demagogue in Washington or in a state capital.

And all of this leads up to the question: is there an attempt being made at censorship? If there is, it is time for us all to know about it. © Western Newspaper Union.

#### SAFETY TALKS

##### Can It Be the Climate?

THERE'S something about western climate—! But Rocky Mountain and Pacific Coast chambers of commerce will file an indignant disclaimer that the climate had anything to do with this. The National Safety Council's report on 1937 shows a solid block of 11 western states, excepting Utah, had higher accident death rates for the year than any other group of states in the country. Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, Nevada, Arizona, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado and New Mexico—in each of these states an average of more than 100 persons, per 100,000 of population, suffered accident deaths in 1937. Utah barely escaped the "100 or more" group with an average of 99.4.

Florida (chambers of commerce please note) and Delaware were the only other states with an average of 100 or more accident deaths per 100,000 of population last year. Florida's average was 105.6, and Delaware's 105.7. Nevada's average of 137.6 deaths was the highest reported by any state. Rhode Island's average of 55.9 deaths was the lowest.

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QUICK RELIEF FOR ACID INDIGESTION

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