

*The United States and the War*

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# America and the War

## *Three Points of View*

### **I—Keeping Our Friends from Defeat**

**by YATES STIRLING**

*Rear Admiral, U.S.N., Retired*

**W**OULD THAT the United States could remain neutral in this war without seriously jeopardizing her future security. My serious thought on that important subject has made me most doubtful of the possibility.

As I see it, the effects of the neutrality laws passed by the Congress for the splendid purpose of keeping this country out of all wars will be, in the particular case of the present war in Europe, harmful to the vital interests of the nation and very probably fatal to the future security of the Americas.

My opinions are solely my own and do not reflect those of the service in which I have served for forty-eight years.

I believe that the operation of these neutrality laws will disregard many most vital factors involved in that issue for us. The laws do not take into account the well-recognized sympathy of our people toward Great Britain and France in this great struggle nor their almost openly expressed hope that those nations will succeed in remaining in possession of the seas. We must not close our eyes to the fact that these so-called neutrality laws greatly weaken the war power of the two nations, Great Britain and France, who all along have kept the Americas safe from the would-be aggressive actions of the dictators.

We are perfectly aware that Great Britain and France urgently need our war munitions and, while commanding the seas, could obtain them from us under the rules of international law if it were not for our specific laws forbidding their sale. Hitler's Germany, on the

other hand, being able to obtain all needed supplies from Soviet Russia, will not require them from the United States, even if she could obtain them, which she could not. Therefore, the operation of the neutrality laws, in virtually denying our war supplies only to those belligerents who are in a position to transport them overseas, enormously increases the chances of a Hitler victory.

In consequence, the effect of our neutrality laws actually makes our attitude an unneutral one toward Great Britain and France and might be said to make us unwittingly an ally of Hitler.

Our war fleet today is concentrated in the Pacific Ocean, while the Atlantic, where are our largest cities and the greater part of our industrial activities, is left open to attack by sea. Has that fact any significance? Yes, because the United States has been putting its trust in the sea power of Great Britain to give us the security in the Atlantic Ocean that our *one-ocean* navy finds itself unable to give. Yet, in spite of that advantage, we pass and put into effect neutrality laws that may, by weakening British and French war power, bring a defeat to this power on the seas, thus depriving the United States of her former security in the Atlantic.

Let me remind the reader that a Hitler victory on the seas will bring Germany's sea frontiers to our Atlantic coast line. Does any American doubt that Hitler, if he could, would seize the Panama Canal and our West Indies islands and, besides, enforce political

and economic control by Germany over the continents of America? Would it be reasonable to expect that our fleet at its present strength, single-handed, could succeed in defeating a German sea power that had vanquished Great Britain on the seas?

There is not the slightest doubt that America dreads an overturn of the situation on the seas, for she seems to be convinced that, if this should happen, a victorious Hitler will not overlook the wealth in the American continents. Such an overturn of sea power is possible because of German submarine and air power, aided by our neutrality laws.

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**T**HE LAST WAR was for the avowed purpose of world domination by Germany. To accomplish that, British sea power first was to be destroyed. In the present war, Hitler's object is the same as was the Kaiser's. If the United States was correct in entering the last war, at a time when British defeat on the seas seemed imminent through the inhuman operation of the submarine, then those identical reasons — our security and even our life as a free nation — again may force us into the war. Our neutrality, in my opinion, will be assured only when we positively know that Great Britain can keep command of the seas without our active support.

Illogically enough, framing neutrality laws for the purpose of keeping the nation out of war may make the need for the United States to go into the war to safeguard her future security even more likely. Our neutrality laws are a gift to Germany of considerable war value on land and sea and in the air, and their operation actually may contribute materially to bring about the very thing they were intended to avoid.

I maintain that this war is but a continuation, in every particular, of the last one, which was not satisfactorily finished. There is the same enemy, and the war is for the selfsame purpose. If, then, we enforce our neutrality laws, thus weakening Great Britain and France in their effort to win, and if, when we know that Hitler's Germany will surely vanquish Great Britain on the seas, we yet decide to maintain our neutrality, regardless of the fatal consequences to us, how shall we give answer to these words?

If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders' fields.

When Great Britain has lost the sea to Germany, then for the defense of America we shall require a navy and air force large enough to defend our Country in both oceans at once. We are a long way from having such a navy today.

As in the World War, Germany hopes to wage a war of attrition on the seas with her submarines. That war will be unrestricted. We should realize now that all rules of international law on the seas will be violated by German submarines and air forces to accomplish that end.

Germany, led by Hitler, forced this war on Great Britain and France. We know of the technical efficiency of the armed forces of Germany and refuse to believe that Hitler would take his nation deliberately into a war that he believed he could not win. In my recent book, *Sea Duty*, I wrote that Hitler would force the war to save his prestige with the German people, when he discovered that Great Britain and France would refuse to make further concessions to his mad demands. We must take it for granted that Germany is prepared by land and trusts that her submarines and their ruthless tactics will defeat Great Britain on the seas, especially as we have told Hitler through our neutrality laws that we intend to remain neutral.

The United States today must feel that her security is in the gravest jeopardy and will be even more dangerously threatened through the operation of the neutrality laws. Repeal of these laws might so strengthen the war power of Great Britain and France that the grave decision for our active help to defeat Germany would not have to be made.

Let us recall that in the last war, while supplying war munitions to the Allies, we did not make our decision to enter the war until the defeat of the Allies was almost accomplished. Owing to our delay, many more lives were sacrificed by all the nations engaged. These are grave questions to ponder. The war is on. How will it end? Shall we be forced to take part, not to save democracy but to save the Americas from spoliation? Shall we fight with the aid of allies against Hitler or fight a war alone after a Hitler victory?

# II—Selling Arms: a Step toward War

by **WILLIAM E. BORAH**

*United States Senator from Idaho*

**E**UROPE IS AGAIN in the midst of war. The President of the United States has issued proclamations to the effect that in this war this nation shall be neutral. But we all realize that laws and statutes and proclamations are not and will not be sufficient to maintain successfully a policy of neutrality. Only the united will of the people can accomplish this difficult task.

If we can succeed as a people, especially in the midst of conditions such as now exist, in establishing here upon this Western continent a great neutral power, a power standing not for force, not for cruelty and injustice but for peace, for fair dealing among nations, for reason and justice, we will not only have added honor to our own nation, happiness to our own people but we will have rendered to all nations and to all peoples a service far greater than it will ever be possible for us to render by joining any nation or nations in carrying on war.

Force is gradually undermining and destroying freedom everywhere. If we are not going to surrender wholly to a world governed by force, then we must establish somewhere a great power which speaks for and represents in act and deed the things which make for reason and justice. It is an effort worthy of a great and free people.

We are met on the threshold of all debate, of all consideration of this subject of neutrality, with the statement often delivered — and with an air of finality — that we cannot be neutral, that Europe is so near to the United States owing to modern inventions and the mingling of business affairs, that neutrality is impracticable, if not impossible.

This seems to me a spineless doctrine. It is not the doctrine inherited from our forebears. If it were true, we should be the most ill-fated nation on earth instead of being, as we had long supposed, the most favorably circumstanced of all nations.

How near was Europe, how smotheringly

close was the European system, when Washington announced his policy of neutrality and published it to an astonished and enraged Europe? He thought neutrality both wise and practicable; in fact, he believed that such a policy was indispensable to a free America. Yes, how close was Europe to the United States at that time?

The United States was really looked on then by European powers as a part of the European system. In fact, this continent might be said to have been at that time geographically a European-controlled continent. Our entire northern frontier was heavily garrisoned by European regulars. The Indians were being used by European powers to harass our people. All Europe mocked at the idea that this young republic would long remain an independent government. We were in actual contact — physical, political, and spiritual — every day of our lives, with Europe, and were affected likewise daily by the domination of the European system. But Washington declared we should in future be neutral with respect to European conflicts. And, had he not so declared, does anyone doubt the devastating effect on freedom, on liberty, on this republic?

But we have no alternative, it is in effect declared, after these 150 years of self-government; we must go, in some way or other, into all these controversies, brawls, and wars of Europe. It is useless, we are told, to try to avoid this fate.

Though these wars are not our wars, though they are wars brought on through the manipulation and unconscionable schemes of remorseless rulers whose national policies are not our policies, though their crimes are not our crimes, still, we have no alternative (so it is urged) but to sacrifice the wealth, the homes, the savings, and the lives of our people whenever conflicts arise.

Although our people have sought peace and now seek peace, still we must make war be-

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cause European governments maintain an eternal saturnalia of human sacrifices. Though the law of our land banishes racial and religious persecution from our common country, still, because Europe is "near," we must join in racial and religious conflicts and sacrifice our people over conditions which our forebears long since rejected.

Though we seek no people's territory, nevertheless, because Europe is "near," we must sacrifice the savings of our people and the sons of our mothers in this endless imperialistic strife. Though we would take no part of the loot which was divided up at the close of the World War, we are now called on to ensure the title to a vast amount of that loot. What a fateful doctrine to propose!

### II

**T**HE PROBLEM of maintaining neutrality under present conditions lies closer home. It is presented by the proposal to repeal the arms-embargo act.

To those who are advocating repeal of this act, I submit these questions: Is it not your main purpose in securing repeal to enable us to furnish arms, munitions, and implements of war to one group of nations and to deny them to another group of nations — which groups are now in mortal combat? And is not this laying the foundation for intervention — in fact, is it not intervention — in the present European war? Is it not your purpose to take sides through the authority which will be available when the embargo law is repealed?

I further submit: Do you think the time has come when, for reasons of humanity or of national defense, we should take our place in another European war?

I feel we are really considering in this debate the broad question of whether we are justified as a people in intervening in this conflict and meeting the issues as they are being presented on the battlefields of Europe, for we cannot escape that destination if we move along the lines now proposed.

At the time this law was passed and this policy of neutrality was established, there was no war of any moment anywhere. Germany and Britain were on comparatively friendly terms. Both as a matter of morals and as a matter of international law, as a sovereign right, we had the undoubted right to establish

this policy of declining the sale of arms, munitions, and implements of war to any nation engaged in war. It is now proposed to repeal entirely this provision of the law. It is proposed to repeal it to enable this government to furnish arms to one side and withhold them from the other. The proposal for repeal is based on the program of taking sides.

Undoubtedly, as I say, we had a right to pass the law and undoubtedly we have a right to repeal the law. But, when we couple the repeal with the announced and declared program of furnishing arms and munitions to one side and withholding them from the other, our program unquestionably constitutes intervention in the conflict.

The talk in Washington is no longer of merely furnishing arms. It is said that we must prepare to fight. One of my colleagues, a most able and sincere Senator, urged publicly a few nights ago: "Let us give up this dream of impartiality, therefore of neutrality. It is better to take sides and fight." He was uttering boldly what is now heard from the same sources whence came originally the agitation for furnishing arms.

If, in a few months, we can tear up this law which the nation almost unanimously approved, how long do you think it will take to put across the proposition of sending our young men into the trenches — once we have intervened?

The President has called a special session of Congress for the purpose of removing the embargo on arms, munitions, and implements of war. There are some of us who want to keep the old law — who insist that the sale of arms to all nations engaged in war shall continue to be prohibited. The only question in controversy, the only point of difference that I know of, is the question whether we shall sell arms or not sell arms. The supporters of repeal are anxious to put an embargo on ships going to war zones, on loans to all nations engaged in war; they are anxious to prohibit our citizens from traveling in war areas — all this and more is to be done in the name of neutrality, in an effort to keep us out of war. But we observe here that there is a sudden break in the matter of the embargo — the most threatening and disturbing of all factors, the one most calculated to get us into trouble. The embargo is not to apply. What is the significance of this?

# III—Strengthening the Neutrality Laws

by **KEY PITTMAN**

*United States Senator from Nevada*

**I**T IS VITALLY IMPORTANT that every American understand the attitude of Congress toward foreign wars and the legislation that will be enacted by Congress at this special session. Numerous petitions and communications that have deluged members of the Senate clearly demonstrate that these petitions either are based on ignorance of the intent of Congress or are the result of vicious organized foreign propaganda.

For instance, most of these communications contain demands such as, "No cash and carry," or, "Don't repeal the embargo on arms, ammunition, and implements of war." Many of our citizens may even have been led to believe that it was the intention of the President to urge and of Congress to enact a repeal of all neutrality legislation, before the submission to the Foreign Relations Committee of the United States Senate the joint resolution proposed as a substitute for the House joint resolution passed by the House at the last session of Congress. There exists now, since the substitute proposal has been introduced and widely published in full in the newspapers and elsewhere, no reasonable excuse for any misunderstanding on this point by any intelligent citizen of the United States. Nor, of course, is there any excuse for the continuance of false propaganda.

The proposed substitute joint resolution, which I had the honor, on behalf of the majority of the Foreign Relations Committee of the United States Senate, to propose as a substitute for the House legislation, does not repeal our neutrality legislation. On the contrary, by mandatory provisions, it vitally strengthens our neutrality legislation.

The strongest provision in the proposed substitute is the "carry" provision. It is new and it is mandatory. It has never existed in any other law. It is known as Section two (a). It says:

Whenever the President shall have issued a proclamation under the authority of Section one (a)

[meaning when he shall have issued a proclamation that a state of war exists] it shall thereafter be unlawful for any American vessel to carry any passengers or any articles or materials to any state named in such proclamation [meaning by "state" any state that the President shall have proclaimed under Section one (a) as being in a state of war].

Now what did the old cash-and-carry provision provide with regard to "carry"? It was found in Section two (a) — and let us remember that this law expired by its own terms on May 1, 1939, and that there is now no law with regard to this subject. Section two (a) of the old law provided:

Whenever the President shall have issued a proclamation under the authority of Section one of this Act [meaning the proclamation that a state of war exists] and he shall thereafter find that the placing of restrictions on the shipment of certain articles or materials in addition to arms, ammunition, and implements of war from the United States to belligerent states . . . is necessary to promote the security or preserve the peace of the United States or to protect the lives of citizens of the United States, he shall so proclaim, and it shall thereafter be unlawful . . . for any American vessel to carry such articles or materials to any belligerent state.

It will be observed from a consideration of this language that absolute discretion was vested in the President as to whether he should permit our American ships to carry all kinds of articles and materials to a belligerent country, except arms, ammunition, and implements of war. He could permit our vessels to carry to belligerents scrap iron, steel, every kind of metal, oil, gasoline, cotton, and every other kind of raw material, because such materials are not described in existing law under the definition of arms, ammunition, and implements of war. These last-named articles were all described as contraband of war by the belligerents during the World War — that is, they were described as articles that would aid the enemy in the conduct of war — and therefore, under international law, they could be confiscated or destroyed. The question whether they were going to the enemy or to a neutral

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the belligerent determined for herself, and there was no remedy during the existence of the war.

### II

**G**REAT BRITAIN and Germany have already issued their contraband lists for the present war. These lists are not limited to those few manufactured articles that we have defined as arms, ammunition, and implements of war; but they include the raw materials that the President now has the power to permit our vessels to carry to belligerents. From the actions of the German Government so far in the present war, it is conclusively evident that the German Government intends to pursue the same policy as in the World War with regard to the submarining of neutral merchant vessels engaged in commerce with its enemies.

I am satisfied that President Roosevelt would not permit American vessels to be destroyed, with the consequent loss of the lives of our American seamen, if carrying of any goods to belligerents would develop such results. However, Section two (a) of the proposed substitute is intended to be a permanent law and to control every President who may ever be elected to office. What may be the sentiments, the prejudices, the soundness of judgment of future Presidents no one can know. Without regard, however, to these considerations, such vast and dangerous discretion is unnecessary and unwise.

May I call attention also to the fact that we have greatly increased the penalties for the

violation of Section two (a) with regard to American ships, with regard to transportation in and through combat areas, and with regard to financial transactions. We not only make the owner of the ship liable to the penalty but, in the case of a corporation or association or partnership, we make the officers and directors of such corporation, association, or partnership liable to such penalty.

In other words, we have put teeth in our proposed neutrality law.

The only legitimate issue left is whether we should repeal the section of existing law providing for the embargo on arms, ammunition, and implements of war as defined in the act.

The Congress of the United States has no intention of permitting our country to become involved in this European war. The Congress of the United States intends to remove every cause that might impel it to declare war. If a belligerent country imposes on us by conducting warfare in our coastal waters, we will repel such impositions. It is not necessary that we go any further. If, by reason of these acts of safety on the part of our government, any government were so foolish — and I do not believe any government would be so foolish — as to declare war against us, it would not injure us but it would eventually destroy the government that made such declaration. Our strategy would not be to send our soldiers to fight abroad. We should conquer through our economic and financial power and through our indomitable navy.

