
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945

**Series 2: “ You have nothing to fear but fear itself:” FDR
and the New Deal**

File No. 1243

1939 September 21

**Message to Congress at Extraordinary Session to
Amend Neutrality**

This is the President's Reading Copy. He made a number of changes as he delivered this address. The mimeographed copy in this box is as he actually delivered it.

MESSAGE TO CONGRESS

SEPTEMBER 21, 1939

TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

I have asked the Congress to reassemble in extraordinary session in order that it may consider and act on the amendment of certain legislation, which, in my best judgment, so alters the historic foreign policy of the United States that it impairs the peaceful relations of the United States with foreign nations.

At the outset I proceed on the assumption that every member of the Senate and of the House of Representatives, and every member of the Executive Branch of the Government, including the President and his associates, personally and officially, are equally and without reservation in favor of such measures as will protect the neutrality, the safety and the integrity of our country and at the same time keep us out of war.

Because I am wholly willing to ascribe an honorable desire for peace to those who hold different views from my own as to what those measures should be, I trust that these gentlemen will be sufficiently generous to ascribe equally lofty purposes to those with whom they disagree. Let no man or group in any walk of life assume exclusive protectorate over the future well-being of America -- because I conceive that regardless of party or section the mantle of peace and of patriotism is wide enough to cover us all. Let no group assume the exclusive label of the peace "bloc". We all belong to it.

I have at all times kept the Congress and the American people informed of events and trends in foreign affairs. I now review them in a spirit of understatement.

Since 1931 the use of force instead of the council table has constantly increased in the settlement of disputes between nations -- except in the Western Hemisphere where there has been only one war, now happily terminated.

During these years also the building up of vast armies, navies and storehouses of war has proceeded abroad with growing speed and intensity. But, during these years, and extending back even to the days of the Kellogg-Briand Pact, the United States has constantly, consistently and conscientiously done all in its power to encourage peaceful settlements, to bring about reduction of armaments and to avert threatened wars. We have done this not only because any war anywhere necessarily hurts American security and American prosperity, but because of the more important fact that any war anywhere retards the progress of morality and religion and impairs the security of civilization itself.

For many years the primary purpose of our foreign policy has been that this nation and this government should strive to the utmost to aid in avoiding war among other nations. But if and when war unhappily comes, the government and the nation must exert every possible effort to avoid being drawn into the war.

The Executive Branch of the government did its utmost, within our traditional policy of non-involvement, to aid in averting the present appalling war. Having thus striven and failed, this government must lose no time or effort to keep the nation from being drawn into ~~the war~~.

In my candid judgment we shall succeed in these efforts.

We are proud of the historical record of the United States and of all the Americas during all these years because we have thrown every ounce of our influence for peace into the scale of peace.

I note in passing what you will all remember -- the long debates on the subject of what constitutes aggression, on the methods of determining who the aggressor might be, and, on who the aggressor in past wars had been. Academically this may have been instructive as it may have been of interest to historians to discuss the pros and cons and the rights and wrongs of the World War during the decade that followed it.

But in the light of problems of today and tomorrow, responsibility for acts of aggression is not concealed, and the writing of the record can safely be left to future historians.

There has been sufficient realism in the United States to see how close to our own shores came dangerous paths which were being followed on other continents.

Last January I told the Congress that "a war which threatened to envelop the world in flames has been averted, but it has become increasingly clear that peace is not assured". By April new tensions had developed; a new crisis was in the making. Several nations with whom we had friendly, diplomatic and commercial relations had lost, or were in the process of losing, their independent identity and sovereignty.

During the Spring and Summer the trend was definitely toward further acts of military conquest and away from peace.

As late as the end of July, I spoke to members of the Congress about the definite possibility of war. I should have called it the probability of war.

Last January, also, I spoke to this Congress of the need for further warning of new threats of conquest, military and economic; of challenge to religion, to democracy and to international good faith. I said: "An ordering of society which relegates religion, democracy and good faith among nations to the background can find no place within it for the ideals of the Prince of Peace. The United States rejects such an ordering and retains its ancient faith."

"We know what might happen to us if the United States if the new philosophies of force were to encompass the other continents and invade our own. We, no more than other nations, can afford to be surrounded by the enemies of our faith and our humanity. Fortunate it is, therefore, that in this Western Hemisphere we have, under a common ideal of democratic government, a rich diversity of resources and of peoples functioning together in mutual respect and peace."

Last January, in the same Message, I also said: "We have learned that when we deliberately try to legislate neutrality, our neutrality laws may operate unevenly and unfairly -- may actually give aid to an aggressor and deny it to the victim. The instinct of self-preservation should warn us that we ought not to let that happen any more."

It was because of what I foresaw last January from watching the trend of foreign affairs and their probable effect upon us that I recommended to the Congress in July of this year that changes be enacted in our neutrality law.

The essentials for American peace in the world have ^{not} ~~not~~ changed since January. That is why I ask you again to re-examine our own legislation.

Beginning with the foundation of our constitutional government in the year 1789, the American policy in respect to belligerent nations, with one notable exception, ~~has been~~ ^{was} based on international law. Be it remembered that what we call international law has had as its primary objectives the avoidance of causes of war and the prevention of the extension of war.

The single exception was the policy adopted by this nation during the Napoleonic Wars, when, seeking to avoid involvement, we acted for some years under the so-called Embargo and Non-Intercourse Acts. That policy turned out to be a disastrous failure -- first, because it brought our own nation close to ruin, and, second, because it was the major cause of bringing us into active participation in European wars in our own War of 1812. It is merely reciting history to recall to you that one of the results of the policy of embargo and non-intercourse was the burning in 1814 of part of this Capitol in which we are assembled.

Our next deviation by statute from the sound principles of neutrality and peace through international law did not come for one hundred and thirty years. It was the so-called Neutrality Act of 1935 -- only four years ago -- an Act continued in force by the Joint Resolution of May 1, 1937, despite grave doubts expressed as to its wisdom by many Senators and Representatives and by officials charged with the conduct of our foreign relations, including myself.

I regret that the Congress passed that Act. I regret equally that I signed that Act.

On July fourteenth of this year, I asked the Congress in the cause of peace and in the interest of real American neutrality and security to take action to change that Act.

I now ask again that such action be taken in respect to that part of the Act which is wholly inconsistent with ancient precepts of the law of nations -- the embargo provisions. I ask it because they are, in my opinion, most vitally dangerous to American neutrality, American security and American peace.

These embargo provisions, as they exist today, prevent the sale to a belligerent by an American factory of any completed implements of war but they allow the sale of many types of uncompleted implements of war, as well as all kinds of general material and supplies. They, furthermore, allow such products of industry and agriculture to be taken in American Flag ships to belligerent nations. There in itself -- under the present law -- lies definite danger to our neutrality and our peace.

From a purely material point of view what is the advantage to us in sending all manner of articles across the ocean for final processing there when we could give employment to thousands by doing it here? Incidentally, and again from the material point of view, by such employment ~~here~~ we automatically aid our own national defense. And if abnormal profits appear in our midst even in time of peace, as a result of this increase of industry, I feel certain that the subject will be adequately dealt with at the coming regular session of the Congress.

Let me set forth the present paradox of the existing legislation in its simplest terms: If, prior to 1935, a general war had broken out in Europe, the United States would have sold to and bought from belligerent nations such goods and products of all kinds as the belligerent nations, with their existing facilities and geographical situations, were able to buy from us or sell to us. This would have been the normal practice under the age-old doctrines of international law. Our prior position accepted the facts

of geography and of conditions of land power and sea power alike as they existed in all parts of the world. If a war in Europe had broken out prior to 1935, there would have been no difference, for example, between our exports of sheets of aluminum and airplane wings; today there is an artificial legal difference. Before 1935 there would have been no difference between the export of cotton and the export of gun cotton. Today there is. Before 1935 there would have been no difference between the shipment of brass tubing in pipe form and brass tubing in shell form. Today there is. Before 1935 there would have been no difference between the export of a motor truck and an armored motor truck. Today there is.

Let us be factual and recognize that a belligerent nation often needs wheat and lard and cotton for the survival of its population just as much as it needs anti-aircraft guns and anti-submarine depth-charges. Let those who seek to retain the present embargo position be wholly consistent and seek new legislation to cut off cloth and

copper and meat and wheat and a thousand other articles from all of the nations at war.

I seek a greater consistency through the repeal of the embargo provisions, and a return to international law. I seek reenactment of the historic and traditional American policy which, except for the disastrous interludes of the Embargo and Non-Intercourse Acts, has served us well for nearly a century and a half.

It has been erroneously said that return to that policy might bring us nearer to war. I give to you my deep and unalterable conviction, based on years of experience as a worker in the field of international peace, that by the repeal of the embargo the United States will more probably remain at peace than if the law remains as it stands today. I say this because with the repeal of the embargo this Government clearly and definitely will insist that American citizens and American ships keep away from the immediate perils of the actual zones of conflict.

Repeal of the embargo and a return to international law are the crux of this issue.

The enactment of the embargo provisions did more than merely reverse our traditional policy. It had the effect of putting land powers on the same footing as naval powers, so far as sea-borne commerce was concerned. A land power which threatened war could thus feel assured in advance that any prospective sea-power antagonist would be weakened through denial of its ancient right to buy anything anywhere. This, four years ago, gave a definite advantage to one belligerent as against another, not through his own strength or geographic position, but through an affirmative act of ours. Removal of the embargo is merely reverting to the sounder international practice, and pursuing in time of war as in time of peace our ordinary trade policies. This will be liked by some and disliked by others, depending on the view they take of the present war, but that is not the issue. The step I recommend is to put this country back on the solid footing of real and traditional neutrality.

When and if repeal of the embargo is accomplished, certain other phases of policy reinforcing American safety should be considered. While nearly all of us are in agreement on their objectives, the only question relates to method.

I believe that American merchant vessels should, so far as possible, be restricted from entering danger zones. War zones may change so swiftly and so frequently in the days to come, that it is impossible to fix them permanently by act of Congress; specific legislation may prevent adjustment to constant and quick change. It seems, therefore, more practical to delimit them through action of the State Department and administrative agencies. The objective of restricting American ships from entering such zones may be attained by prohibiting such entry by the Congress; or the result can be substantially achieved by executive proclamation that all such voyages are solely at the risk of the American owners themselves.

The second objective is to prevent American citizens from traveling on belligerent vessels, or in danger areas. This can also be accomplished either by legislation, through continuance in force of certain provisions of existing law, or by proclamation making it clear to all Americans that any such travel is at their own risk.

The third objective, requiring the foreign buyer to take transfer of title in this country to commodities purchased by belligerents, is also a result which can be attained by legislation or substantially achieved through due notice by proclamation.

The fourth objective is the preventing of war credits to belligerents. This can be accomplished by maintaining in force existing provisions of law, or by proclamation making it clear that if credits are granted by American citizens to belligerents our Government will take no steps in the future to relieve them of risk or loss. The result of these last two will be to require all purchases to be made in cash and

cargoes to be carried in the purchasers' own ships, at the purchasers' own risk.

Two other objectives have been amply attained by existing law, namely, regulating collection of funds in this country for belligerents, and the maintenance of a license system covering import and export of arms, ammunition and implements of war. Under present enactments, such arms cannot be carried to belligerent countries on American vessels, and this provision should not be disturbed.

The Congress, of course, should make its own choice of the method by which these safeguards are to be attained, so long as the method chosen will meet the needs of new and changing day to day situations and dangers.

To those who say that this program would involve a step toward war on our part, I reply that it offers far greater safeguards than we now possess or have ever possessed to protect American lives and property from danger. It is a positive program for giving safety. This means less likelihood of incidents and controversies which tend to draw us into

conflict, as they did in the last World War. There lies the road to peace!

The position of the Executive Branch of the Government is that the age-old and time-honored doctrine of international law, coupled with these positive safeguards, is better calculated than any other means to keep us out of this war.

In respect to our own defense, you are aware that I have issued a proclamation setting forth "A National Emergency in Connection with the Observance, Safeguarding, and Enforcement of Neutrality and the Strengthening of the National Defense within the Limits of Peace-Time Authorizations". This was done solely to make wholly constitutional and legal certain obviously necessary measures. I have authorized increases in the personnel of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard, which will bring all four to a total still below peace-time strength as authorized by the Congress.

I have authorized the State Department to use, for the repatriation of Americans caught in the war zone, \$500,000 already authorized by the Congress.

I have authorized the addition of one hundred and fifty persons to the Department of Justice to be used in the protection of the United States against subversive foreign activities within our borders.

At this time I ask for no other authority from the Congress. At this time I see no need for further executive action under the proclamation of limited national emergency.

Therefore, I see no valid reason for the consideration of other legislation at this extraordinary session of the Congress.

It is, of course, possible that in the months to come unforeseen needs for further legislation may develop but they are not imperative today.

These perilous days demand cooperation between us without trace of partisanship. Our acts must be guided by one single hard-headed thought -- keeping America out of this war. In that spirit, I am asking the leaders of the two major parties in the Senate and in the House of Representatives to remain in Washington between the close of this extraordinary session and the beginning of the regular session on January third. They have assured me that they will do so, and I expect to consult with them at frequent intervals on the course of events in foreign affairs and on the need for future action in this field, whether it be executive or legislative action.

Further, in the event of any future danger to the security of the United States or in the event of need for any new legislation of importance, I will immediately reconvene the Congress in another extraordinary session.

I should like to be able to offer the hope that the shadow over the world might swiftly pass. I cannot. The facts compel my stating, with candor, that darker periods may lie ahead. The disaster is not of our making; no act of ours engendered the forces which assault the foundations of civilization. Yet we find ourselves affected to the core; our currents of commerce are changing, our minds are filled with new problems, our position in world affairs has already been altered.

In such circumstances our policy must be to appreciate in the deepest sense the true American interest. Rightly considered, this interest is not selfish. Destiny first made us, with our sister nations on this Hemisphere, joint heirs of European culture. Fate seems now to compel us to assume the task of helping to maintain in the Western world a citadel wherein that civilization may be kept alive.^{fl} The peace, the integrity and the safety of the Americas -- these must be kept firm and serene. In a period when it is sometimes said that free discussion is no longer compatible with national

safety, may you by your deeds show the world that we of
the United States are one people, of one mind, one spirit,
one clear resolution, walking before God in the light of
the living.

Fredrik Stenske

(Original reading copy)

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September 21, 1939.

CONFIDENTIAL: To be held in STRICT CONFIDENCE and no portion, synopsis or intimation to be published or given out until the READING of the President's Message has begun in the Senate or the House of Representatives. Extreme care must therefore be exercised to avoid premature publication.

STEPHEN EARLY
Secretary to the President

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The single exception was the policy adopted by this nation during the Napoleonic Wars, when, seeking to avoid involvement, we acted for some years under the so-called Embargo and Non-Intercourse Acts. That policy turned out to be a disastrous failure -- first, because it brought our own nation close to ruin, and, second, because it was the major cause of bringing us into active participation in European wars in our own War of 1812. It is merely reciting history to recall to you that one of the results of the policy of embargo and non-intercourse was the burning in 1814 of part of this Capitol in which we are assembled.

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These embargo provisions, as they exist today, prevent the sale to belligerents by an American factory of any completed implements of war but they allow the sale of many types of uncompleted implements of war, as well as all kinds of general material and supplies. They, furthermore, allow such products of industry and agriculture to be taken in American Flag ships to belligerent nations. There in itself -- under the present law -- lies definite danger to our neutrality and our peace.

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Repeal of the embargo and a return to international law are the crux of this issue.

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The other objectives have been amply attained by existing law, namely, regulating collection of funds in this country for belligerents, and the maintenance of a license system covering import and export of arms, ammunition and implements of war. Under present circumstances, such arms cannot be carried to belligerent countries on American vessels, and this provision should not be disturbed.

To those who say that this program would involve a step toward war on our part, I reply that it offers far greater safeguards than we now possess or have ever possessed to protect American lives and property from danger. It is a positive program for giving safety. This means less likelihood of incidents and controversies which tend to draw us into conflict, as they did in the last World War. There lies the road to peace!

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Further, in the event of any future danger to the security of the United States or in the event of need for any new legislation of importance, I will immediately reconvene the Congress in another extraordinary session.

I should like to be able to offer the hope that the shadow over the world might swiftly pass. I cannot. The facts compel my stating, with candor, that darker periods may lie ahead. The disaster is not of our making; no act of ours engendered the forces which assault the foundations of civilization. Yet we find ourselves affected to the core; our currents of commerce are changing, our minds are filled with new problems, our position in world affairs has already been altered.

In such circumstances our policy must be to appreciate in the deepest sense the true American interest. Rightly considered, this interest is not selfish. Destiny first made us, with our sister nations on this Hemisphere, joint heirs of European culture. Fate seems now to compel us to assume the task of helping to maintain in the Western world citadel wherein that civilization may be kept alive. The peace, the integrity and the safety of the Americas -- these must be kept firm and serene. In a period when it is sometimes said that free discussion is no longer compatible with national safety, may you by your deeds show the world that we of the United States are one people, of one mind, one spirit, one clear resolution, walking before God in the light of the living.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

THE WHITE HOUSE,
September 21, 1939.

(September 18, 1939)

DRAFT: PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE TO CONGRESS,

Thursday, September 21st, 1939.

TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

—

On January 4, 1939 at the opening of the first session of the Seventy-Sixth Congress, it became my duty to emphasize the dangerous and disturbed state of affairs overseas.

I stated: "A war which threatened to envelop the world in flames has been averted; but it has become increasingly clear that peace is not assured." We had just emerged from the imminent danger of a general European war, but the surrounding circumstances indicated that the respite might be only temporary.

By April, new tensions had developed; a new crisis was in the making. Following the consistent policy of this Government, I then sought to open a way toward peaceful solution of the problems which threatened the peace of great areas of the world, both in the national interest of the United States, and in furtherance of the elementary instincts of humanity. You are familiar with the fact that these suggestions, and also others put forward from other

quarters,

quarters, met with no response from some of the nations interested. The period was one of transition, during which, as we now know, many nations were passing from the stage of diplomatic controversy toward outright war.

This required reexamination of our own legislation. Up to that time, this Government had dealt with the situation on a peacetime basis. By May of this year it was plain that we had to consider the possibility, - if not the probability, - of a general war in which our role would be that of a neutral.

In the light of all the information available, I myself was unable to take a hopeful view. In any event, the possibility of war was so great that prudence in the national interest required that the situation be reconsidered.

The Neutrality Act, which regulates certain activities of the United States in the event of war had first been placed upon the statute books in 1935. The circumstances were then entirely different, and it was impossible to foresee what its effect might be. The legislation was continued in force by Joint Resolution of May 1, 1937, despite grave doubts expressed as to its wisdom by many Senators and Representatives, and by the officials charged with the conduct of our foreign relations.

On July 14, 1939 I addressed a message to you, of which

the last paragraph read as follows:

"It has been abundantly clear to me
for some time that for the cause of peace and
in the interests of American neutrality and
security it is highly advisable that the Congress
at this session should take certain much needed
action."

Transmitted with that message was a statement on peace and neutrality by the Secretary of State, setting forth the point of view of this Government, particularly with reference to the arms embargo contained in the neutrality legislation. He pointed out that the effect of an arms embargo, due to the shifting circumstances of the belligerents, might find one or the other belligerent in a position of relative advantage or disadvantage; that when such condition arises due to an affirmative act such as setting up an embargo, the responsibility of this country for the advantage or disadvantage in which either belligerent may find itself, is inevitably direct. He proposed, instead, certain alternative steps better calculated towards detaching the United States from war, should war arise.

The Congress, after debate, determined to postpone action. Having in mind the grave possibilities of the

situation,

I took occasion to announce that a special session of Congress would be called, in the event that war should break out, to deal with the problem of American neutrality.

That contingency has now come to pass. On September first the German armies invaded Poland. Almost immediately thereafter, a state of war was declared to exist between Germany, Poland, Great Britain and France. The British Dominions have entered the war. A Russian army has crossed the Eastern Polish frontier. Belligerent fleets and raiders daily interrupt the sea-borne commerce on which the world relies for its support. The economic structure of the world struggles to readjust itself after a shattering blow. Those who felt and hoped last July that such a catastrophe was impossible, are now compelled to reconsider the international scene in the light of stern reality.

II

For us, and for all peaceful nations, this war is an unqualified misfortune. During many years the primary purpose of our foreign policy has been that this nation

and

and its government should strive to the utmost to aid in avoiding war. Should war unhappily come, the Government and the nation are alike bound to exert every possible effort to avoid being involved in it. The Executive branch of the Government did its utmost within our traditional policy of non-involvement, to aid in averting the present catastrophe. Having been unable to achieve this, the Government must now lose no time nor effort to keep the nation from being drawn into the war upon any pretext. To all patriotic citizens, there can be no division of purpose or effort in this righteous undertaking. The only difference can be as to methods or measures designed to accomplish the single and identical end.

It now serves no good or useful purpose for individuals or groups to impugn the motives of each other, or to assume that they alone can be trusted most effectively to serve the cause of peace, or that those who differ with them either intentionally or unintentionally aid in pushing the nation into war. All concerned, whatever position we

may

may take on the specific measures proposed, are united in the single desire to maintain and defend the peace and integrity of the United States and of the American Hemisphere. No group, no party, and no bloc, can legitimately claim to be "the party of peace" in this debate. Rather, this is a government of peace.

The differences which must now be resolved are those of method. I am sincerely convinced that the methods I now suggest to you offer the greatest possibility of avoiding involvement in war, of preventing a repetition of the history which began twenty-five years ago, and of navigating us safely past the reefs and shoals which lie ahead. Yet I am glad to believe that those who disagree with the methods here proposed have exactly the same purpose, and are no less sincere. Discriminating American public opinion can be most helpful in discouraging all imputations of desire for war; for they can only confuse the issue, and handicap the efforts of those who seek to find the wisest course.

In

In like manner, all discussion of aggression is now without purpose. It has long been realized that whoever threatened the peace of the world anywhere, endangered peace everywhere. For more than a generation seekers for world-peace have hoped to prevent war by mobilizing the weight of world opinion against aggressors, and as far back as the Hague Conference in 1907 the problem of determining an aggressor was discussed. Since the World War, this consideration has continued in many forms; during this summer, it formed part of the material which the Congress had before it. I have taken no part in this discussion, for it seemed to me that should war again engulf the world, the facts would probably foreclose the issue without action by the United States or by any nation or group of nations. I believe, today, that this surmise has proved correct. The history leading up to the present war is more open and widely understood than has been the case in any modern war. We cannot alter the cold verdict of that record. The American people, with full information, have made up their minds. Debate as to

who is the aggressor is now fruitless. The point is academic. Rather, we must now face the grim reality, and take counsel together what is best to be done.

III

The Neutrality Act now on the Statute Books was drawn up with a view to minimizing the possibility of our involvement. The central feature of this Bill is the automatic embargo of arms against all belligerents. The experiences of the past two years, coupled with a realization of its effects, have convinced me that we are more likely to keep out of war if this section is repealed and in its place there be enacted certain measures voluntarily restricting the exercise of certain American rights.

I therefore recommend that the Congress in lieu of the embargo measure enact or retain legislation which will prohibit Americans from riding on belligerent vessels, which will prohibit the granting of war credits to belligerents, which will require the transfer of title in this country to commodities purchased by belligerents and which will limit the right of American merchant vessels to enter European harbors of belligerents, where danger may result.

To those who say that this program would involve a "step toward war" on our part I reply that it offers greater safeguards than we now possess to protect American lives and property from danger. To those who argue that a change in our laws during the existence of hostilities would be unneutral, I reply that a mere return to the long held principles of international law could not by any possibility be construed as an "unfriendly act" or an "act of intervention".

The position of the Executive branch of the government is that the age-old and time-honored doctrine of international law, based on proven experience of near one hundred and fifty years, is best calculated to safeguard the nation from involvement in the existing war. The legislative policies here proposed are in harmony with that conception.

Those who oppose this proposal, express the view that thus to return to international law, which today as in the past is recognized and observed by virtually all the nations of the world, is a "step toward war".

This

This contention challenges one of the oldest and most universally practiced principles of international law, which was from the beginning designed to keep peaceful nations from being drawn into war. It would substitute the theory that nations can best promote their neutrality and safety by rigid embargoes prohibiting the sale of arms, *carried to its logical conclusion* ammunition, and implements of war to belligerents. Such a theory of neutrality would call for parity treatment of possible belligerents in peacetime and of opposing belligerents in wartime. If carried out, it would require neutrality changes from day to day and month to month and at every stage of the year both in time of peace and war.

Thus to undertake to equalize the advantages gained to a belligerent by its superiority either on land or on sea was unknown to the theory of neutrality until the enactment of the Act of 1935, and its renewal in 1937. As early as 1936, the Executive branch of the government called attention to the fact that this new doctrine constituted a dangerous departure from the age-old practice

of international law which recognizes the right of neutrals to trade with belligerents and of belligerents to trade with neutrals. The problem for us is not whether we shall help any foreign country or any group of foreign countries, or pass judgment upon or interfere in the controversies of other countries. It is rather that of so conducting our affairs and our relations with other peoples, both before and after the outbreak of war elsewhere, that we shall be more, and not less, secure; that we shall not become parties to controversies; and that our attitude and actions will encourage other people to avoid, rather than to become engaged in, controversies.

Until we return to the settled international practice, it is manifest that the United States is in the attitude of warping what is universally known as neutrality in international law so as to create advantages to one belligerent which it would not otherwise have, and to deprive opposing belligerents of advantages which they would otherwise have. Our nation is on far sounder ground when it keeps within the pale of universally recognized international law.

It is unnecessary to enumerate all of the very strong reasons in opposition to the retention of the existing embargo provision and in favor of its repeal. It is scarcely within the bounds of reason to contend that an embargo on arms, ammunition and implements of war is a safeguard against our being drawn into war, while permitting indiscriminate sale to belligerents of the entire list of materials from which these finished articles and implements are made. When to this is added the fact that goods and ships, the source of our involvement in the last World War, may freely enter danger zones at their owners' will, it is plain that the neutrality legislation must be thoroughly overhauled.

IV

In fulfillment of my constitutional duty, I now place this high problem before you, so that you in your turn may exercise your constitutional privilege of debate and determination. The strength of the democratic process is rooted in the wisdom which comes from fair discussion; in the hour of crisis, its fullest use is wise and essential. I need hardly call to your attention the peculiar

circumstances

circumstances attending this debate. Its forum is the world, rather than what is more usual, the United States alone; it is of interest to foreign governments, who naturally will scan your deliberations hoping to find matter they can use in their own interest, rather than in ours. You know how to appraise the many arguments and opinions pressed upon you from without; to differentiate between the true and sincere expression of American opinion, and the voices of self-appointed guardians of American peace whose arguments may be traced to influences from beyond our shores. Confident that our most precious instrument will be used with the responsibility, restraint and high fidelity appropriate to the gravity of the problems raised, I am certain that the country will draw from your discussions guidance toward that unity of purpose which is essential in a troubled world.

It is my belief that the people of the United States are entitled to a definitive decision embodied in a vote which expresses your conclusion. You may decide upon any one of three courses of action: adoption of the suggestions

here

here made, or choice of other methods designed to safeguard our neutrality; or inaction continuing the existing legislation. Let me express the conviction that whichever course is chosen, even that of inaction, the determination should be reached by affirmative vote rather than by a course which prevents the country from having before it the considered conclusion of its Congress.

I should like, in closing, to be able to offer the hope that the shadow over the world might swiftly pass. I cannot do so. The facts compel my stating, with candor, that darker periods may lie ahead. The disaster is not of our making; no act of ours engendered the forces which assault the foundations of European civilization. Yet we find ourselves affected; our currents of commerce are changing, our minds are filled with new problems, our position in world affairs has been altered.

In such circumstances our policy must be to appreciate in the deepest sense the true American interest. Rightly considered, this interest is not selfish. Destiny first made us, with our sister nations on this Hemisphere, joint

heirs

heirs of European culture. Fate seems now to compel us to assume the task of maintaining in the Western world a citadel and fortress wherein that civilization may be kept alive. The peace, the integrity and the safety of the Americas, must be maintained firm and serene. In a period when it is sometimes said that free discussion is no longer compatible with national safety, may you show the world that we are one people, of one mind, one spirit, one clear resolution, walking before God in the light of the living.

Second Draft

MESSAGE TO CONGRESS

SEPTEMBER 21, 1939

I have asked the Congress to reassemble in extraordinary session in order that it may consider and act on the ~~repeal of~~ ^{Government} certain legislation, which, in my best judgment, so alters the historic foreign policy of the United States that it ~~endangers~~ ^{injures} the peaceful relations of the United States with foreign nations.

At the outset I proceed on the assumption that every member of the Senate and of the House of Representatives, and every member of the Executive Branch of the Government, including the President and his ~~personal~~ associates, are equally and without reservation personally and officially, in favor of such measures as will protect the neutrality, the safety and integrity of our country and at the same time keep us out of war.

Because I am wholly willing to ascribe to those, ^{as to what these measures should be,} who ~~do~~ hold different views from my own, an honorable desire for peace, ~~that~~ I trust that these gentlemen will be sufficiently generous to ascribe equally lofty purposes to those with whom they disagree. Let no man or group in any walk of life assume exclusive protectorate over the future well-being of America -- because I conceive that regardless of party or section the

mantle

INSERT A (Page 1)

There is no such thing among the citizens of this country as a separate peace "bloc". All America, all Americans, regardless of politics or geography, form one unanimous peace party, fired with a hatred of war and a determination to keep it from this land.

The decisions that lie immediately ahead for us, however, demand the hardest kind of thinking; the most clear-headed evaluation of what our own best self-interest is, now and for the future; and the boldest pursuit of the paths which best serve that self-interest. The safety and peace of our land is now not in the keeping of our hearts but of our hard-headed judgment.

THURST

INSERT A - (Page 2)

(continuation of paragraph)

Let no group assume the exclusive label of the peace
"bloc". We all belong to it.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ - Page 2

I want X

We have done this not only because any war anywhere necessarily
hurts American security and American prosperity but because
of the more important fact that any war anywhere retards the
progress of morality and religion and impairs the security
of civilization itself.

INSERT ~~—~~ Y

For many years the primary purpose of our foreign policy has been that this nation and this government should strive to the utmost to aid in avoiding war. ^{Among other nations,} But if and when war unhappily comes, the government and the nation must exert every possible effort to avoid being drawn into ^{the} war.

The Executive Branch of the government did its utmost, within our traditional policy of non-involvement, to aid in averting the present appalling war. Having thus striven and failed, this government must lose no time ^{or} ~~nor~~ effort to keep the nation from being drawn into the war, ~~upon any theory.~~

In my candid judgment we shall succeed in these efforts.

mantle of peace and of patriotism is wide enough to cover us
all.

Franklin A.

I have at all times kept the Congress informed of events
and trends in foreign affairs. I now review them in a spirit
of understatement.

Since 1931 the use of force in ~~most~~ of the council table
has constantly increased in the ~~suspension~~ of disputes between
~~right in~~
nations -- ~~with the single exception of the Western Hemisphere~~
~~Non intervention~~
where only one war, now happily terminated, has occupied the
~~pages of history~~.

During these years also the building up of armies, navies
and ~~and~~ storehouses has proceeded with growing intensity. *But,*
During these years, and extending back even to the days
of the Kellogg-Briand Pact, the United States has constantly,
consistently and conscientiously done all in its power to
encourage peaceful settlements, to invite reduction of armaments
bring about
and to avert threatened wars. We have done this because any war
anywhere necessarily affects American security and American
prosperity adversely, and because of the greater fact that the
more decent teachings of philosophy and religion prove that
wars retard the progress of the morality and the security of
civilization.

closed when

Draft TY
We are

- 3 -

~~we are~~ proud of the historical record of the United States and of all the Americas during all these years because we have thrown every ounce of our ~~peaceful~~ influence ^{for peace} into the scale of peace.

~~I am~~ During the past year, ~~however~~, we have seen not only the continuation of destruction and conflict in the Far East, but also a series of events on the European Continent which almost of necessity so narrowed the philosophy of aggression as against the philosophy of non-aggression ~~that~~ the long-feared armed strife became a fact three weeks ago today.

I note in passing what you will all remember -- the long debates on the subject of what constituted aggression, on the methods of determining who the aggressor might be, and, ^{in fact who} indeed, in relation to past wars, on who the aggressor had been. Academically this may have been instructive ~~and~~ it may have been of interest to historians to discuss the pros and cons ~~of~~ ^{as} the rights and wrongs of the World War during the decade that followed it.

But in the light of problems of today and tomorrow discussion of responsibility for acts of aggression is ~~not calculated~~ ^{safely} ~~not~~ enlightening, and can ~~only~~ be left to future

*After writing
of the second*
historians.

Proposed about p 4 Z

There has been sufficient
realism in the United States ~~to~~
~~over time~~ to see how close to our
own shores came ~~the~~ dangerous paths
which were being followed on other
continents.

historians.

hisent 2
Last January I told the Congress that "a war which threatened to envelop the world in flames has been averted, but it has become increasingly clear that peace is not assured". By April new tensions had developed; a new crisis was in the making. Several nations with whom we had friendly, diplomatic and commercial relations had lost, or were in the process of losing, their independent identity and sovereignty.

~~International Trend~~
During the Spring and Summer the ~~transition~~ was definitely toward further acts of military conquest and ~~further~~ away from peace. As late as the end of July I spoke to members of the Congress about the definite possibility of war. I should have called it the probability of war.

Last January, also, I spoke to this Congress of the need for further warning ~~of~~ new threats of conquest, military and economic; of challenge to religion, to democracy and to international good faith. I said: "An ordering of society which relegates religion, democracy and good faith among nations to the background can find no place within it for the ideals of the Prince of Peace. The United

States

PROPOSED INSERT - PAGE 5

Insert 1

It was because of what I foresaw last January from watching the trend of foreign affairs and their probable effect upon us that I recommended to the Congress in July of this year that changes be enacted in our neutrality law.

States rejects such an ordering and retains its ancient faith."

"We know what might happen to us of the United States if the new philosophies of force were to encompass the other continents and invade our own. We, no more than other nations, can afford to be surrounded by the enemies of our faith and our humanity. Fortunate it is, therefore, that in this Western Hemisphere we have, under a common ideal of democratic government, a rich diversity of resources and of peoples functioning together in mutual respect and peace."

Last January, in the same Message, I also said: "We have learned that when we deliberately try to legislate neutrality, our neutrality laws may operate unevenly and unfairly -- may actually give aid to an aggressor and deny it to the victim. The instinct of self-preservation should

warn us that we ought not to let that happen any more."

Insp. 7 *September 1935*
The ~~sudden~~ American peace in the world have
Dinner January,
not changed in the past eight months. That is why I ask you
again to re-examine our own legislation.

Beginning with the foundation of our constitutional

government

government in the year 1789, the American policy in respect to
belligerent nations ~~has been~~, with one notable exception, based
on international law. ~~It will~~ Be it remembered that what we call
international law has had as its primary objectives the avoidance
of causes of war and the prevention of the extension of
it war. The single exception was the policy adopted by this
nation during the Napoleonic Wars, when, seeking to avoid
involvement, we acted for some years under the so-called
Embargo and Non-Intercourse Acts. That policy turned out to
be a disastrous failure -- first, because it brought our own
nation close to ruin, and, second, because it was the major
cause of bringing us into active participation in European
wars in our own War of 1812. It is ~~not~~ ^{merely} interesting ~~history~~
to recall to you that one of the results of the policy of
embargo and non-intercourse was the burning in 1814 of this ^{part of}
Capitol in which we are assembled.

Our next deviation by statute from the sound principles
~~of neutrality for 130 years. It~~
of neutrality and peace through international law was the so-
~~- only four years ago -~~
called Neutrality Act of 1935 -- an Act continued in force by

the

INSERT B (Page 7) *follow. next 2*

These embargo provisions, as they exist today, prevent the sale to a belligerent by an American factory of any completed implements of war but they allow the sale ~~to-day~~ ^{of many kinds} of many types of uncompleted implements of war, as well as ~~material~~ ^{They} general supplies, ~~and~~, furthermore, allow such products of industry and agriculture to be taken in Americens Flag ships to belligerent nations. There in itself -- under the present law -- lies definite danger to our neutrality and our peace.

// From a purely material point of view what is the advantage to us in sending all manner of articles across the ocean to have the finishing touches put on them there when we could give employment to thousands by ~~putting on the~~ ^{doing it} finishing touches here? Incidentally, and again from the material point of view, ~~we can aid~~ ^{by such employment we automatically} our own national defense,

by training our mechanics at home as skilled reserves in the ^{aid}

INSERT B (Page 7 - continued)

~~events that we ourselves are attacked at home.~~ And if abnormal profits appear in our midst even in time of peace, I feel certain that the subject will be adequately dealt with at the coming regular session of the Congress.

~~Intimate P.T.~~ Insert 2. p. 7

I now ask again that such action be taken in respect to that part of the Act which is wholly inconsistent with ancient precepts of the law of nations - the embargo provisions. I ask it because they are, in my opinion, most vitally dangerous to American neutrality, American security and American peace.

the Joint Resolution of May 1, 1937, despite grave doubts expressed as to its wisdom by many Senators and Representatives and by officials charged with the conduct of our foreign relations, ^{including myself,} I regret that the Congress passed that Act. I regret equally that I signed that Act.

On July fourteenth this year, I asked the Congress ~~do~~ ^{of} ~~to~~ ⁱⁿ the cause of peace and in the interest of real American neutrality and security to take action to change that Act.

In fact ^{again} I now ask ~~that such action be taken in respect to that part of the Act which, in my opinion, is the most vitally dangerous to American neutrality, to American security and to American peace — the embargo provisions which are wholly inconsistent with the precepts of the law of nations.~~

B > Let me set ~~forth~~ ^{the present condition of the existing legislation} in its simplest terms: If, prior to 1935, a general war had broken out in ~~any part of the world~~ Europe, the United States would have sold to and bought from belligerent nations such goods and products of all kinds as the belligerent nations ~~were~~, with their existing facilities and geographical situations, able to buy from us or sell to us. This would have been the normal practice under the age-old doctrines of

international law. Our prior position accepted the facts of
geography and conditions of land power and sea power alike
as they existed in all parts of the world. If a war in
Europe had broken out prior to 1935, there would have been
~~for example~~
no difference between our exports of sheets of aluminum and
airplane wings; today there is ~~an artificial legal~~
~~a legislative and only a~~
~~legislative difference.~~ ~~In 1935~~ Before there would have been no
difference between the export of cotton and the export of gun
cotton. Today there is. ~~In 1935~~ Before there would have been no
difference between the shipment of brass tubing in pipe form
and brass tubing in shell form. Today there is. ~~In 1935~~ Before
there would have been no difference between the export of
~~a motor truck and an armored motor truck,~~
~~unfabricated woven cloth and fabricated uniforms.~~ Today
there is. Let us be factual and recognize that a belligerent
nation often needs wheat and lard and cotton for the survival
of its population just as much as it needs anti-aircraft guns
and anti-submarine depth-charges.

Let those who seek to retain the present embargo ~~#~~
^{Up holly} position be consistent and seek ~~#~~ new legislation to cut off
~~and a thousand other things~~
cloth and copper and meat and wheat from all of the nations

at war. Let them follow through to the logical consequences of their viewpoint.

I seek, therefore, a greater consistency through the repeal of the embargo provisions, and ~~with it~~ a return to international law. I seek ~~a return to~~ the historic and traditional American policy which, except for the disastrous interlude of the Embargo and Non-Intercourse Acts, has served us well for nearly a century and a half. It has been said that return to that policy might bring us nearer to war. I give to you my deep and unalterable conviction, based on years of experience as a worker in the field of international peace, that by the repeal of the embargo the United States will more probably remain at peace than if the law remains as it stands today.
// Repeal of the embargo ~~in order that~~ international law
~~again be upheld~~ ^{and a return to} ^(D) ^C ~~is~~ the crux of this issue.

The enactment of the embargo provisions did more than merely reverse our traditional policy. It had the effect of putting land powers on the same footing as naval powers, so far as sea-borne commerce was concerned. A land power

which

INSERT C - (Page 9)

I say this because with the repeal of the embargo
it is desirable and necessary that the position of our
Government will be clearly and definitely to keep American citizens and American ships away from the
immediate perils of the actual zones of conflict.

which threatened war could thus feel assured in advance that

any prospective sea-power antagonist would be weakened.

~~Amidst its ancient
he could be denied the currency, right to buy anything anywhere.~~

~~four years ago,~~

This gave a definite advantage to one belligerent

as against another, not through his own strength or geographic position, but through an affirmative act of ours. Removal of

the embargo ~~under means~~ merely reverting to the sounder international practice, and pursuing in time of war as in time of peace our ordinary trade policies. It means that we leave to

~~the belligerent governments involved in war~~ enforcement of the time-honored rule of intercepting contraband, instead of gratuitously undertaking to intercept it ourselves. This will

be liked by some and disliked by others, depending on the view

they take of the present war, but that is not the issue. The

step I recommend is ~~that of putting~~ this country back on the solid footing of real and traditional neutrality.

~~Repeal of the embargo in order that international law~~

~~may be restored is the sum of the matter. When and if this~~
~~of the embargo~~ ^{II B} ~~is accomplished, reinforcing~~

~~certain other phases of policy~~

~~Draft~~
American ~~ambassadors~~ should be considered. They are secondary

~~to the repeal of the embargo only in the sense that nearly all~~

~~of us are in agreement on their objectives, and the principal~~ ^{only}
question relates to method.

I believe that American merchant vessels should, so far as possible, be restricted from entering danger zones. ~~The~~ ^{delimitation of} ~~war~~ zones may change so swiftly and so frequently in the days to come, that it is ~~in my judgment~~ impossible ~~to prevent~~ ^{to do this definitely} by ~~any~~ act of Congress; because specific legislation may prevent adjustment to constant and quick change. It seems, therefore, more practical to attain the objective of delimitation through action of the State ^{Administrative agencies}. Department and ~~of the President~~. The objective of restricting American ships from entering such zones may be attained by prohibiting such entry by the Congress; or the result can be substantially achieved by proclamation that all such voyages are solely at the risk of the American owners themselves.

// The second objective is to prevent American citizens ~~a~~ ^{and} ~~embassies~~ from traveling on belligerent vessels, or in danger areas. This objective can also be accomplished either

Proposed modification

Insert 3 p 12

NOTE The result of these last two will be
to require purchases to be made in
cash and cargoes to be carried in
~~kilograms~~ the purchases own ships, at the
purchases own risk.

by legislation, through continuance in force of certain provisions of existing law, or by proclamation making it clear to all Americans that any such travel is at their own risk.

The third objective, ~~calling for the transfer of title~~, in this country to commodities purchased by belligerents, is also a result which can be attained by legislation or substantially achieved through due notice by proclamation.

Dr. A. T. Brumbaugh
The fourth objective is the preventing of war credits to belligerents. This can be accomplished by maintaining in force existing provisions of law, or by proclamation making it clear that if credits are granted by American citizens to belligerents our Government will take no steps in the future

No 9 Insert 3
to relieve them of risk or loss.

Two other objectives ~~are~~ amply attained by existing law,
namely, regulating collection of funds in this country for belligerents, and the maintenance of a license system covering import and export of arms, ammunition and implements of war.

Under

Under present enactments, such arms cannot be carried to belligerent countries on American vessels, and this provision
~~should~~
~~need~~ not be disturbed.

To those who say that this program would involve a step toward war on our part, I reply that it offers far greater safeguards than we now possess or have ever possessed to protect American lives and property from danger. It is a positive program for giving safety, ~~which means detachment~~
~~from incidents and controversies tending to draw us into conflict, as they did in the last World War. There less the greater your!~~

The position of the Executive branch of the Government is that the age-old and time-honored doctrine of international law, coupled with these positive safeguards, is better calculated to protect the nation from involvement in the existing war than any other means. The Congress can take its choice of the method by which these safeguards are to be attained, so long as the method chosen will meet the needs of new and changing day to day situations and dangers.

In respect to our own defense, you are aware that I

have

have issued a proclamation setting forth "A National Emergency in Connection with the Observance, Safeguarding, and Enforcement of Neutrality and the Strengthening of the National Defense within the Limits of Peace-Time Authorizations". This was done solely to make wholly constitutional and legal certain obviously necessary measures. I have authorized slight increases in the personnel of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard, which will bring ~~make~~ all four substantially to a total of ~~still below~~ ^{bring} the maximum peace-time strength as authorized by the Congress.

// I have authorized the State Department to use, for the repatriation of Americans caught in the war zone, \$500,000 already authorized by the Congress.

I have authorized the addition of one hundred and fifty persons to the Department of Justice to be used in the protection of the United States against subversive foreign activities within our borders.

At this time I ask for no ^{other} ~~further~~ authority from the Congress. ~~Furthermore,~~ At this time I see no need for further executive

2

Jan 4 1915

These perilous days demand
co-operation between ~~one~~ ~~two~~ ~~three~~ us
without trace of partisanship. Our
acts must be guided by one single broad
thought - keeping America out of this war.
In that spirit, I

executive action under the proclamation of limited national emergency.

Therefore
~~Secondly~~ I see no valid reason for the consideration of other important legislation at this extraordinary session of the Congress.

It is, of course, possible that in the months to come unforeseen needs for further legislation may develop but they are not imperative today.

On Wednesday
Let me give you two simple assurances. First, I am asking the leaders of the two major parties in the Senate and in the House of Representatives to remain in Washington between the close of this extraordinary session and the beginning of the regular session on January third. They have assured me that they will do so and I expect to consult with them at frequent intervals on the course of events in foreign affairs and on the need for future action in this field, whether it be executive or legislative action.

Fourthly,
~~Second,~~ in the event of any future danger to the security of the United States or in the event of ~~the~~ need

[Signature]

~~for~~ any new legislation of ~~any~~ importance, I will immediately reconvene the Congress in another extraordinary session.

I should like, ~~immediately~~, to be able to offer the hope that the shadow over the world might swiftly pass. I cannot, ~~do~~. The facts compel my stating, with candor, that darker periods may lie ahead. The disaster is not of our making; no act of ours engendered the forces which assault the foundations of ~~European~~ civilization. Yet we ^{to the core;} find ourselves affected; our currents of commerce are changing, our minds are filled with new problems, our position in world affairs has been altered.

In such circumstances our policy must be to appreciate in the deepest sense the true American interest. Rightly considered, this interest is not selfish. Destiny first made us, with our sister nations on this Hemisphere, joint heirs of European culture. Fate seems now to compel us to ^{helping to} assume the task of maintaining in the Western world a citadel ^A ~~and~~ wherein that civilization may be kept alive.

The

The peace, the integrity and the safety of the Americas,—~~This~~
~~must be maintained~~ ^{Kirt} firm and serene. In a period when it is
sometimes said that free discussion is no longer compatible
with national safety, ^{by your hands} ^{of the United States}, may you show the world that we are one
people, of one mind, one spirit, one clear resolution, walking
before God in the light of the living.

MESSAGE TO CONGRESS
SEPTEMBER 21, 1939.

I have asked the Congress to reassemble in extraordinary session in order that it may consider and act on the repeal of certain legislation, which, in my best judgment, so alters the historic foreign policy of the United States that it endangers the peaceful relations of the United States with foreign nations.

At the outset I proceed on the assumption that every member of the Senate and of the House of Representatives, and every member of the Executive Branch of the Government, including the President and his principal associates, are equally and without reservation, personally and officially, in favor of such measures as will protect the safety and honor of our country and at the same time keep us out of war.

It is because I am wholly willing to ascribe to those, who may hold different views from my own, an honorable desire for peace, that I trust that these gentlemen will be sufficiently generous to ascribe equally lofty purposes to those with whom they disagree. Let no man or group in any walk of life assume exclusive protectorate over the future well-being of America -- because I conceive that regardless of party or section the mantle of peace and of patriotism is wide enough to cover us all.

I have at all times kept the Congress informed of events and trends in foreign affairs. And I now review them in a spirit of understatement.

Since 1931 the use of force in lieu of the council table has constantly increased in the solution of disputes between nations -- with the single exception of the Western Hemisphere where only one war, now happily terminated, has occupied the pages of history.

During these years also the building up of armies, navies and war storehouses has proceeded with growing intensity.

During these years, and extending back even to the days of the Kellogg-Briand Pact, the United States has constantly, consistently and conscientiously done all in its power to encourage peaceful settlements, to invite reduction of armaments and to avert threatened wars. We have done this because any war anywhere necessarily affects American security and American prosperity adversely, and because of the greater fact that the more decent teachings of philosophy and religion prove that wars retard the progress of the morality and the security of civilization.

INSERT A (BOTTOM OF PAGE #5)

But in the light of problems of today and tomorrow
discussion of responsibility for acts of aggression can
equally be left to future historians.

I am proud of the historical record of the United States and of all the Americas during all these years because we have thrown every ounce of our peaceful influence into the scale of peace.

During the past year, however, we have seen not only the continuation of destruction and conflict in the Far East, but also a series of events on the European Continent which almost of necessity so narrowed the philosophy of aggression as against the philosophy of non-aggression when the long feared armed strife became a fact three weeks ago today.

I note in passing what you will all remember -- the long debates on the subject of what constituted aggression, on the methods of determining who the aggressor might be, and, indeed, in relation to past wars, on who the aggressor had been. Academically this may have been instructive and it may be of interest to future historians to discuss the pros and cons of the rights and wrongs of the World War during the decade that followed.

But seeking to be factual in the light of the problems of today and tomorrow, I do not hesitate to say that in the war in Europe at this moment there is not and there can never be any question as to who the actual, factual aggressor was.

Last January I told the Congress that "a war which threatened to envelop the world in flames has been averted, but it has become increasingly clear that peace is not assured". By April new tensions had developed; a new crisis was in the making. Several nations with whom we had friendly, diplomatic and commercial relations had lost, or were in the process of losing, their independent identity.

During the Spring and Summer the transition was definitely toward further acts of aggression and further away from peace. As late as the end of July I spoke to members of the Congress about the definite possibility of war. I should have called probability it the ~~possibility~~ of war.

Last January, also, I spoke to this Congress of the need for further warning, of new threats of aggression, military and economic; of challenge to religion, to democracy and to international good faith. I said: "An ordering of society which relegates religion, democracy and good faith among nations to the background can find no place within it for the ideals of the Prince of Peace. The United States rejects such an ordering and retains its ancient faith."

INSERT B (BOTTOM OF PAGE 8B)

Last January, in the same Message, I suggested to the Congress that any hard and fast neutrality legislation may actually give aid to an aggressor and deny it to a victim -- and that, therefore, such laws inevitably encourage, assist or build up aggressors.

"There comes a time in the affairs of men when they must prepare to defend not their homes alone but the tenets of faith and humanity on which their churches, their governments, and their very civilization are founded. The defense of religion, of democracy, and of good faith among nations is all the same fight. To save one we must now make up our minds to save all."

"We know what might happen to us of the United States if the new philosophies of force were to encompass the other continents and invade our own. We, no more than other nations, can afford to be surrounded by the enemies of our faith and our humanity. Fortunate it is, therefore, that in this Western Hemisphere we have, under a common ideal of democratic government, a rich diversity of resources and of peoples functioning together in mutual respect and peace."

Last January, in the same Message, I also said: "At the very least, we can and should avoid any action, or any lack of action, which will encourage, assist, or build up an aggressor. We have learned that when we deliberately try to legislate neutrality, our neutrality laws may operate unevenly and unfairly -- may actually give aid to an aggressor and deny it to the victim. The instinct of self-preservation should warn us that we ought not to let that happen any more."

The fundamentals of the American peace in the world have not changed in the past eight months. That is why I ask you again to re-examine our own legislation.

Beginning with the foundation of our constitutional government in the year 1789, the American policy in respect to belligerent nations has been, with one notable exception, based on international law -- and be it remembered that what we call international law has had as its primary objectives the avoidance of causes of war and the prevention of the extension of war. The single exception was the policy adopted by this nation during the Napoleonic Wars, when, seeking to avoid involvement, we acted for some years under the so-called Embargo and Non-Intercourse Acts. That policy turned out to be a disastrous failure -- first, because it brought our own nation close to ruin, and, second, because it was the major cause of bringing us into active participation in European wars in our own War of 1812. It is not stretching history to recall to you that one of the results of the policy of Embargo and non-intercourse was the burning in 1814 of this Capitol in which we are assembled.

Our next deviation by statute from the sound principles of neutrality and peace through international law was the so-called Neutrality Act of 1935 -- an Act continued in force by the Joint Resolution of May 1, 1937, despite grave doubts

expressed as to its wisdom by many Senators and Representatives and by officials charged with the conduct of our foreign relations. I regret that the Congress passed that Act. I regret equally that I signed that Act.

On July fourteenth this year, I asked the Congress for the cause of peace and in the interest of American neutrality and security to take action to change that Act.

I now ask that such action be taken in respect to that part of the Act which, in my opinion, is the most vitally dangerous to American honor, to American security and to American peace -- the embargo provisions which are wholly inconsistent with the precepts of the law of nations.

Let me set it forth in its simplest terms: If, prior to 1935, a general war had broken out in any part of the world, the United States would have sold to and bought from belligerent nations such goods and products of all kinds as the belligerent nations were, with their existing facilities and geographical situations, able to buy from us or sell to us. Our prior position accepted the facts of ~~geography~~ geography and condition as they existed in all parts of the world. If a war in Europe had broken out prior to 1935, there would have been no difference between our exports of sheets of aluminum

and airplane wings; today there is a legislative and only a legislative difference. In 1935 there would have been no difference between the export of cotton and the export of gun cotton. Today there is. In 1935 there would have been no difference between the shipment of brass tubing in pipe form and brass tubing in shell form. Today there is. In 1935 there would have been no difference between the export of unfabricated woolen cloth and fabricated uniforms. Today there is. Let us be factual and recognize that a belligerent nation often needs wheat and lard and cotton for the survival of its population just as much as it needs anti-aircraft guns and anti-submarine depth charges.

Let those who seek to retain the present embargos' position be consistent and seek a new legislation to cut off cloth and copper and meat and wheat from all of the nations at war.

I seek, therefore, a greater consistency through the repeal of the embargo provisions. I seek a return to the historic and traditional American policy which, except for the disastrous interlude of the Embargo and Non-Intercourse Acts, has served us well for nearly a century and a half. And I give to you my deep and unalterable conviction, based

on the experience as a worker in the field of international peace,
that by the repeal of the embargo the United States will more
probably remain at peace than if the law remains as it stands
today.

10

Repeal of the embargo is the crux of the issue. When and if this is accomplished certain other phases of policy conducive to American neutrality should be considered. They are secondary to the repeal of the embargo only in the sense that nearly all of us are in agreement on their objectives, and the principal question relates to method.

I believe that American citizens in a far-flung war should refrain from traveling on belligerent vessels. This objective can be accomplished either by legislation or by proclamation making it clear to all Americans that if they do so they travel at their own risk.

The second objective is the preventing of war credits to belligerents. This can be accomplished by an Act of the Congress or by proclamation making it clear that if credits are granted by American citizens to belligerents our Government will take no steps in the future to relieve them of risk or loss.

The third objective, calling for the transfer of title in this country to commodities purchased by belligerents,

is also an objective which can be attained either by legislation or by due notice by proclamation.

The fourth objective relates to the right of American merchant vessels to enter European harbors of belligerent nations. Again, this is a matter which can be prohibited by the Congress or can be substantially avoided by proclamation that all such voyages are solely at the risk of the owners of the American merchant vessels themselves.

Fifth, the delimitation of war zones. This subject may change so swiftly and so frequently in the days to come that it is, in my judgment, impossible of permanent solution by an Act of Congress because specific legislation may readily defer constant and quick change. It seems, therefore, more practical to attain the objective through action of the State Department and the President.

To all those who say that this program would involve a step toward war on our part, I reply that it offers greater safeguards than we now possess to protect American lives and property from danger.

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-xx-

The position of the Executive Branch of the Government
is that the old-age and time-honored doctrine of international
law is better calculated to safeguard the nation from involve-
ment in the existing war than any other means.

In respect to our own defense, you are aware that I have issued a proclamation setting forth an emergency (words of title). This was done solely to make wholly constitutional and legal certain obviously necessary measures. I have authorized slight increases in the personnel of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard, which will leave all four substantially below their total peace-time strength as authorized by the Congress.

I have authorized the State Department to use, for the repatriation of Americans caught in the war zone, \$800,000 already authorized by the Congress.

I have authorized the addition of one hundred and fifty persons to the Department of Justice to be used in the protection of the United States against subversive foreign activities within our borders.

At this time I ask for no further authority from the Congress. Furthermore, at this time I see no need for further executive action under the proclamation of limited national emergency.

For this reason I see no valid reason for the consideration of other important legislation at this extraordinary session of the Congress.

It is, of course, possible that in the months to come unforeseen needs for further legislation may develop but they are not imperative today.

Let me give you two simple assurances: First, I am asking the leaders of the two major parties in the Senate and in the House of Representatives to remain in Washington between the close of this extraordinary session and the beginning of the regular session on January third. They have assured me that they will do so and I expect to consult with them at frequent intervals on the course of events in foreign affairs and on the need for future action in this field, whether it be executive or legislative action.

Second, in the event of any future danger to the security of the United States or in the event of the need of any new legislation of obvious importance, I will immediately reconvene the Congress in another extraordinary session.
(PERORATION)

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE TO THE CONGRESS
Delivered in Person by the President
The Capitol, Washington, D. C.
September 21, 1939, 2.00 P. M.

(TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:)

MR. PRESIDENT, MR. SPEAKER, MEMBERS OF THE SENATE AND
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

I have asked the Congress to reassemble in extraordinary session in order that it may consider and act on the amendment of certain legislation, which, in my best judgment, so alters the historic foreign policy of the United States that it impairs the peaceful relations of the United States with foreign nations.

At the outset I proceed on the assumption that every member of the Senate and of the House of Representatives, and every member of the Executive Branch of the Government, including the President and his associates, personally and officially, are equally and without reservation in favor of such measures as will protect the neutrality, the safety and the integrity of our country and at the same time keep us out of war. (Applause and cheers)

Because I am wholly willing to ascribe an honorable desire for peace to those who hold different views from my own as to what those measures should be, I trust that these gentlemen will be sufficiently generous to ascribe equally lofty purposes to those with whom they disagree. (Applause) Let no man or group in any walk of

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RECORDS OF READING & WRITING AND

This is a transcript made by the White House stenographer from his shorthand notes taken at the time the speech was

made. Underlining indicates words

extemporaneously added to the previously

prepared reading copy text. Words in

(parentheses) are words that were omitted

when the speech was delivered, though

they appear in the previously prepared

reading copy text.

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life assume exclusive protectorate over the future well-being of America -- because I conceive that regardless of party or section the mantle of peace (and), the mantle of patriotism is wide enough to cover us all. (Applause) Let no group assume the exclusive label of the peace "bloc". We all belong to it. (Applause)

I have at all times kept the Congress and the American people informed of events and trends in foreign affairs. I now review them in a spirit of understatement.

Since 1931 the use of force instead of the council table has constantly increased in (the settlement of) disputes between nations -- except in the Western Hemisphere where in all those years there has been only one war, now happily terminated.

During (these) those years also the building up of vast armies and navies and storehouses of war has proceeded abroad with growing speed and intensity. But, during these years, and extending back even to the days of the Kellogg-Briand Pact, the United States has constantly, consistently and conscientiously done all in its power to encourage peaceful settlements, to bring about reduction of armaments and to avert threatened wars. We have done this not only because any war anywhere necessarily hurts American security and American prosperity, but because of the more important fact that any war anywhere retards the progress of morality and religion and

impairs the security of civilization itself.

For many years the primary purpose of our foreign policy has been that this nation and this government should strive to the utmost to aid in avoiding war among (other) nations. But if and when war unhappily comes, the government and the nation must exert every possible effort to avoid being drawn into the war.

The Executive Branch of the Government did its utmost, within our traditional policy of non-involvement, to aid in averting the present appalling war. Having thus striven and failed, this Government must lose no time or effort to keep (the) our nation from being drawn (into the war.) in.

In my candid judgment we shall succeed in (these) those efforts. (Applause and Cheers)

We are proud of the historical record of the United States and of all the Americans during all these years because we have thrown every ounce of our influence for peace into the scale of peace.

I note in passing what you will all remember -- the long debates of the past on the subject of what constitutes aggression, on the methods of determining who the aggressor might be, and, on who the aggressor in past wars have been. Academically this may have been instructive as it may have been of interest to historians to discuss the pros and the cons and the rights and wrongs

of the World War during the decade that followed it.

But in the light of problems of today, (and) problems of tomorrow responsibility for acts of aggression is not concealed, and the writing of the record can safely be left to future historians.

There has been sufficient realism in the United States to see how close to our own shores came dangerous paths which were being followed on other continents.

Last January I told the Congress that "a war which threatened to envelop the world in flames has been averted, but it has become increasingly clear that peace is not assured". By April last new tensions had developed; a new crisis was in the making. Several nations with whom we had had friendly, diplomatic and commercial relations had lost, or were in the process of losing, their independent identity and their very sovereignty.

During the Spring and Summer the trend was definitely toward further acts of military conquest and away from peace. As late as the end of July I spoke to members of the Congress about the definite possibility of war. I should have called it the probability of war.

And last January, also, I spoke to this Congress of the need for further warning of new threats of conquest, military and economic; of challenge to religion, to democracy and to international good faith. I said: "An ordering of society which relegates religion, democracy and

good faith among nations to the background can find no place within it for the ideals of the Prince of Peace. The United States rejects such an ordering and retains its ancient faith" (Applause)

And I said "We know what might happen to us of the United States if the new philosophies of force were to encompass the other continents and invade our own. We, no more than other nations, can afford to be surrounded by the enemies of our faith and our humanity. Fortunate it is, therefore, that in this Western Hemisphere we have, under a common ideal of democratic government, a rich diversity of resources and of peoples functioning together in mutual respect and peace."

And last January, in the same Message, I also said: "We have learned that when we deliberately try to legislate neutrality, our neutrality laws may operate unevenly and unfairly -- may actually give aid to an aggressor and deny it to the victim. The instinct of self-preservation should warn us that we ought not to let that happen any more." (Applause)

And it was because of what I foresaw last January from watching the trend of foreign affairs and their probable effect upon us that I recommended to the Congress in July of this year that changes be enacted in our neutrality law.

The essentials for American peace, American peace in (the) this war-torn world have not changed since last January nor since last July. That is why I ask you again to re-examine our own legislation.

Go back a little; Beginning with the foundation of our constitutional government in the year 1789, the American policy in respect to belligerent nations, with one notable exception, (has been) was based on international

law. Be it remembered that what we call international law has always had as its primary objectives the avoidance of causes of war and the prevention of the extension of war.

The single exception to which I refer was the policy adopted by this nation during the Napoleonic Wars, when, seeking to avoid involvement, we acted for some years under the so-called Embargo and Non-Intercourse Acts. That policy turned out to be a disastrous failure -- first, because it brought our own nation close to ruin, and, second, because it was the major cause of bringing us into active participation in European wars in our own War of 1812. And it is merely reciting history to recall to you that one of the results of the policy of embargo and non-intercourse was the burning in 1814 of part of this Capitol in which we are assembled today.

Our next deviation by statute from the sound principles of neutrality, and peace through international law did not come for (one) a hundred and thirty years. It was the so-called Neutrality Act of 1935 -- only four years ago -- an Act continued in force by the Joint Resolution of May 1, 1937, despite grave doubts expressed as to its wisdom by many Senators and Representatives and by officials charged with the conduct of our foreign relations, including myself. I regret that the Congress passed that Act. I regret equally that I signed that Act.

On July fourteenth of this year, I asked the Congress in the cause of peace and in the interest of real American neutrality and security to take action to change that Act.

I now ask again that such action be taken in respect to that part of the Act which is wholly inconsistent with ancient precepts of the laws of nations -- the embargo provisions. I ask it because they are, in my opinion, most vitally dangerous to American neutrality, American security and, above all, American peace. (Applause)

These embargo provisions, as they exist today, prevent the sale to a belligerent by an American factory, the sale of any completed implements of war but they allow the sale of many types of uncompleted implements of war, as well as all kinds of general material and supplies. They, furthermore, allow such products of industry and agriculture to be taken in American Flag ships to belligerent nations. There in itself -- under the present law -- lies definite danger to our neutrality and our peace.

From a purely material point of view what is the advantage to us in sending all manner of articles across the ocean for final processing, final processing there when we (could) can give employment to thousands by doing it here? Incidentally, and again from the material point of view, by such employment here we automatically aid in

building up our own national defense. And if abnormal profits appear in our midst even in time of peace, as a result of (this) such an increase of our industry, I feel certain that the subject will be adequately dealt with at the coming regular session of the Congress.

Let me set forth the present paradox of the existing legislation in its simplest terms: If, prior to 1935, a general war had broken out in Europe, the United States would have sold to and bought from belligerent nations such goods and products of all kinds as the belligerent nations, with their existing facilities and geographical situations, were able to buy from us or sell to us. This would have been the normal practice under the age-old doctrines of international law. Our prior position accepted the facts of geography (and), the facts of conditions of land power and sea power and air power alike as they existed in all parts of the world. If a war had broken out in Europe (had broken out prior to) in 1935, there would have been no difference, for example, between our exports of sheets of aluminum and airplane wings; today there is an artificial legal difference. Before 1935 there would have been no difference between the export of cotton and the export of gun cotton. Today there is. Before 1935 there would have been no difference between the shipment of brass tubing in pipe form and brass tubing in shell form. Today there is. Before 1935 there would

have been no difference between the export of a motor truck and an armored motor truck. Today there is.

Let us be factual (and), let us recognize that a belligerent nation often needs wheat and lard and cotton for the survival of its population just as much as it needs anti-aircraft guns and anti-submarine depth-charges. Let those who seek to retain the present embargo position be wholly consistent. (and) Let them seek new legislation to cut off (cloth) cotton and cloth and copper and meat and wheat and a thousand other articles from all of the nations at war.

Yes, I seek a greater consistency, a greater consistency through the repeal of the embargo provisions, and a return to international law. I seek reenactment of the historic and traditional American policy which, except for the disastrous interlude of the Embargo and Non-Intercourse (Acts) Law more than a quarter of a century ago, has served us well (for nearly a century and a half.) from the very beginning of our Constitutional existence.

It has been erroneously said that return to that policy might bring us nearer to war. I give to you my deep and unalterable conviction, based on years of experience as a worker in the field of international peace, that by the repeal of the embargo the United States will more probably remain at peace than if the law remains as it stands to-

day. (Applause) I say this because with the repeal of the embargo this Government clearly and definitely will insist that American citizens and American ships keep away from the immediate perils of the actual zones of conflict. (Applause)

And so I think that repeal of the embargo and a return to international law are the crux of (this) the issue that faces us.

The enactment of the embargo provisions did more than merely reverse our traditional policy. It had the effect of putting land powers on the same footing as naval powers, so far as sea-borne commerce was concerned. A land power which threatened war could thus feel assured, assured in advance that any prospective sea-power antagonist would be weakened through denial of its ancient right to buy anything anywhere. This, four years ago, (gave) began to give a definite advantage to one belligerent as against another, not through his own strength or geographical position, but through an affirmative act (of ours) on the part of the United States. Removal of the embargo is merely reverting to the sounder international practice, and pursuing in time of war as in time of peace our ordinary trade policies. This will be liked by some and disliked by others, depending on the view they take of the present war, but that is not the issue. The step I recom-

mend is to put this country back on (the) a solid footing
of real and traditional neutrality. (Applause)

When and if -- I do not like even to mention
the word "if", I would rather say "when" -- repeal of the
embargo is accomplished, certain other phases of policy
reinforcing American safety should be considered. And
while nearly all of us are in agreement on their objec-
tives, the only questions relate(s) to method.

I believe that American merchant vessels should,
(so) as far as possible, be restricted from entering
(danger) war zones. (Applause) But, war zones may change
so swiftly and so frequently in the days to come, that it
is impossible to fix them permanently by act of Congress;
specific legislation may prevent adjustment to constant
and quick change. And it seems, therefore, more practical
to delimit (them) the actual geography of the war zones
through action of the State Department and administrative
agencies. The objective of restricting American ships
from entering such zones may be attained by prohibiting
such entry by the Congress; or the result can be substan-
tially achieved by executive proclamation that all such
voyages are solely at the risk of the American owners them-
selves.

The second objective is to prevent American
citizens from traveling on belligerent vessels, (applause)

or traveling in danger areas. This can (also) be accomplished also either by legislation, through continuance in force of certain provisions of existing law, or by proclamation making it clear to all Americans that any such travel is at their own risk.

The third objective, requiring the foreign buyer to take transfer of title in this country to commodities purchased by belligerents, is also a result (which) that can be attained by legislation or substantially achieved through due notice by proclamation.

The fourth objective is the preventing of war credits to belligerents. This can be accomplished by maintaining in force existing provisions of law, or by proclamation making it clear that if credits are granted by American citizens to belligerents our Government will take no steps in the future to relieve them of risk or loss. (Applause) The result of these last two objectives will be to require all purchases to be made in cash and cargoes to be carried in the purchasers' own ships, at the purchasers' own risk. (Applause)

Two other objectives have been amply attained by existing law, namely, regulating collection of funds in this country for belligerents, and the maintenance of a license system covering import and export of arms, ammunition and implements of war. Under present enactments, such

arms cannot be carried to belligerent countries on American vessels, and this provision should not be disturbed.

The Congress, of course, should make its own choice of the method by which these safeguards are to be attained, so long as the method chosen will meet the needs of new and changing day to day situations and dangers.

To those who say that this program would involve a step toward war on our part, I reply that it offers far greater safeguards than we now possess or have ever possessed to protect American lives and property from danger. It is a positive program for giving safety. This means less likelihood of incidents and controversies which tend to draw us into conflict, as they unhappily did (in) before the last World War. There lies the road to peace!

The position of the Executive Branch of the Government is that the age-old and time-honored doctrine of international law, coupled with these positive safeguards, is better calculated than any other means to keep us out of (this) war. (Applause)

In respect to our own defense, you are aware that I have issued a proclamation setting forth "A National Emergency in Connection with the Observance, Safeguarding, and Enforcement of Neutrality and the Strengthening of the National Defense within the Limits of Peace-Time Authorizations". This was done solely to make wholly constitutional

and legal certain obviously necessary measures. I have authorized increases in the personnel of the Army, the Navy, the Marine Corps and the Coast Guard, increases which will bring all four of them to a total still below peace-time strength as authorized by the Congress.

I have authorized the State Department to use, for the repatriation of Americans caught in the war zone, the sum of \$500,000 already authorized by the Congress.

I have authorized the addition of (one) a hundred and fifty persons to the Department of Justice to be used in the protection of the United States against subversive foreign activities within our borders. (Applause)

At this time I ask for no (other) further authority from the Congress. (Applause) At this time I see no need for further executive action under the proclamation of limited national emergency.

Therefore, I see no (valid) impelling reason for the consideration of other legislation at this extraordinary session of the Congress. (Cheers and applause)

It is, of course, possible that in the months to come unforeseen needs for further legislation may develop but they are not imperative today.

These perilous days demand cooperation between us without a trace of partisanship. Our acts must be guided by one single hard-headed thought -- keeping America out of

this war. (Applause) In that spirit, I am asking the leaders of the two major parties in the Senate and (in) the House of Representatives to remain in Washington between the close of this extraordinary session and the beginning of the regular session on January third, 1940. They have assured me that they will do so, and I expect to consult with them at frequent intervals on the course of events in foreign affairs and on the need for future action in this field, whether it be executive or legislative action.

And, further, in the event of any future danger to the security of the United States or in the event of need for any new legislation of importance, I will immediately reconvene the Congress in another extraordinary session. (Applause)

I should like to be able to offer the hope that the shadow over the world might swiftly pass. I cannot. The facts compel my stating, with candor, that darker periods may lie ahead. The disaster is not of our making; no act of ours engendered the forces which assault the foundations of civilization. And yet we find ourselves affected to the core; our currents of commerce are changing, our minds are filled with new problems, our position in world affairs has already been altered.

In such circumstances our policy must be to appreciate in the deepest sense the true American interest.

Rightly considered, this interest is not selfish. Destiny first made us, with our sister nations on this Hemisphere, joint heirs of European culture. Fate seems now to compel us to assume the task of helping to maintain in the Western world a citadel wherein that civilization may be kept alive. The peace, the integrity and the safety of the Americas -- these must be kept firm and serene. In a period when it is sometimes said that free discussion is no longer compatible with national safety, may you by your deeds show the world that we of the United States are one people, of one mind, one spirit, one clear resolution, walking before God in the light of the living.

(Applause)

STATEMENTS FILE

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September 21, 1939.

CONFIDENTIAL: To be held in STRICT CONFIDENCE and no portion, synopsis or intimation to be published or given out until the READING of the President's Message has begun in the Senate or the House of Representatives. Extreme care must therefore be exercised to avoid premature publication.

STEPHEN EARLY
Secretary to the President

(to the Congress of the United States.)

I have asked the Congress to reassemble in extraordinary session in order that it may consider and act on the amendment of certain legislation, which, in my best judgment, so alters the historic foreign policy of the United States that it impairs the peaceful relations of the United States with foreign nations.

At the outset I proceed on the assumption that every member of the Senate and of the House of Representatives, and every member of the Executive Branch of the Government, including the President and his associates, personally and officially, are equally and without reservation in favor of such measures as will protect the neutrality, the safety and the integrity of our country and at the same time keep us out of war.

Because I am wholly willing to ascribe an honorable desire for peace to those who hold different views from my own as to what those measures should be, I trust that these gentlemen will be sufficiently generous to ascribe equally lofty purposes to those with whom they disagree. Let no man or group in any walk of life assume exclusive protectorate over the future well-being of America -- because I conceive that regardless of party or section the mantle of peace (and) of patriotism is wide enough to cover us all. Let no group assume the exclusive label of the peace "bloc". We all belong to it.

I have at all times kept the Congress and the American people informed of events and trends in foreign affairs. I now review them in a spirit of understatement.

Since 1931 the use of force instead of the council table has constantly increased in (the settlement of) disputes between nations -- except in the Western Hemisphere where there has been only one war, now happily terminated.

During these years also the building up of vast armies, navies and storehouses of war has proceeded abroad with growing speed and intensity. But, during these years, and extending back even to the days of the Kellogg-Briand Pact, the United States has constantly, consistently and conscientiously done all in its power to encourage peaceful settlements, to bring about reduction of armaments and to avert threatened wars. We have done this not only because any war anywhere necessarily hurts American security and American prosperity, but because of the more important fact that any war anywhere retards the progress of morality and religion and impairs the security of civilization itself.

For many years the primary purpose of our foreign policy has been that this nation and this government should strive to the utmost to aid in avoiding war among (some) nations. But if and when war unhappily comes, the government and the nation must exert every possible effort to avoid being drawn into the war.

The Executive Branch of the government did its utmost, within our traditional policy of non-involvement, to aid in averting the present appalling war. Having thus striven and failed, this government must lose no time or effort to keep the nation from being drawn ~~into the war~~ ^{into this} ~~the war~~ ^{these} (CV).

In my candid judgment we shall succeed in ~~these~~ efforts. (CV)

We are proud of the historical record of the United States and of all the Americans during all these years because we have thrown every ounce of our influence for peace into the scale of peace. of the past

I note in passing what you will all remember — the long debates on the subject of what constitutes aggression, on the methods of determining who the aggressor might be, and, on who the aggressor in past wars had been. Academically this may have been instructive as it may have been of interest to historians to discuss the pros and cons and the rights and wrongs of the World War during the decade that followed it. B. Franklin

But in the light of problems of today ~~and~~ tomorrow responsibility for acts of aggression is not concealed, and the writing of the record can safely be left to future historians.

There has been sufficient realism in the United States to see how close to our own shores came dangerous paths which were being followed on other continents.

Last January I told the Congress that "a war which threatened to envelop the world in flames has been averted, but it has become increasingly clear that peace is not assured". By April ~~now~~ tensions had developed; a new crisis was in the making. Several nations with whom we had friendly, diplomatic and commercial relations had lost, or were in the process of losing, their independent identity and sovereignty. Lend

During the Spring and Summer the trend was definitely toward further acts of military conquest and away from peace. As late as the end of July I spoke to members of the Congress about the definite possibility of war. I should have called it the probability of war.

Last January, also, I spoke to this Congress of the need for further warning of new threats of conquest, military and economic; of challenge to religion, to democracy and to international good faith. I said: "An ordering of society which regulates religion, democracy and good faith among nations to the background can find no place within it for the ideals of the Prince of Peace. The United States rejects such an ordering and retains its ancient faith." (CV)

→ And so We know what might happen to us of the United States if the new philosophies of force were to encompass the other continents and invade our own. We, no more than other nations, can afford to be surrounded by the enemies of our faith and our humanity. Fortunate it is, therefore, that in this Western Hemisphere we have, under a common ideal of democratic government, a rich diversity of resources and of peoples functioning together in mutual respect and peace.

And so Last January, in the same message, I also said: "We have learned that when we deliberately try to legislate neutrality, our neutrality laws may operate unevenly and unfairly — may actually give aid to an aggressor and deny it to the victim. The instinct of self-preservation should warn us that we ought not to let that happen any more." (CV)

And so It was because of what I foresaw last January from watching the trend of foreign affairs and their probable effect upon us that I recommended to the Congress in July of this year that changes be enacted in our neutrality law.

To essentials for American peace in the world have not changed since January. That is why I ask you again to re-examine our own legislation.

Beginning with the foundation of our constitutional government in the year 1789, the American policy in respect to belligerent nations, with one notable exception, ~~has been~~ based on international law. Be it remembered that what we call international law has had as its primary objectives the avoidance of causes of war and the prevention of the extension of war.

The single exception was the policy adopted by this nation during the Napoleonic Wars, when, seeking to avoid involvement, we acted for some years under the so-called Embargo and Non-Intercourse Acts. That policy turned out to be a disastrous failure -- first, because it brought our own nation close to ruin, and, second, because it was the major cause of bringing us into active participation in European wars in our own War of 1812. It is merely reciting history to recall to you that one of the results of the policy of embargo and non-intercourse was the burning in 1814 of part of this Capitol in which we are assembled.

Our next deviation by statute from the sound principles of neutrality, and peace through international law did not come for ~~many~~ hundred and thirty years. It was the so-called Neutrality Act of 1933 -- only four years ago -- an Act continued in force by the Joint Resolution of May 1, 1937, despite grave doubts expressed as to its wisdom by many Senators and Representatives and by officials charged with the conduct of our foreign relations, including myself. I regret that the Congress passed that Act. I regret equally that I signed that Act.

On July fourteenth of this year, I asked the Congress in the cause of peace and in the interest of real American neutrality and security to take action to change that Act.

I now ask again that such action be taken in respect to that part of the Act which is wholly inconsistent with ancient precedents of the long of nations -- the embargo provisions. I ask it because they are, in my opinion, most vitally dangerous to American neutrality, American security and American peace.

These embargo provisions, as they exist today, prevent the sale to a belligerent by an American factory or any completed implements of war but they allow the sale of many types of uncompleted implements of war, as well as all kinds of general material and supplies. They, furthermore, allow such products of industry and agriculture to be taken in American Flag ships to belligerent nations. There in itself -- under the present law -- lies definite danger to our neutrality and our peace.

From a purely material point of view what is the advantage to us in sending all manner of articles across the ocean for final processing there when we could give employment to thousands by doing it here? Incidentally, and again from the material point of view, by such employment we automatically aid our own national defense. And if abnormal profits appear in our midst even in time of peace, as a result of ~~this~~ increase of industry, I feel certain that the subject will be adequately dealt with at the coming regular session of the Congress.

Let me set forth the present paradox of the existing legislation in its simplest terms: If, prior to 1935, a general war had broken out in Europe, the United States would have sold to and bought from belligerent nations such goods and products of all kinds as the belligerent nations, with their existing facilities and geographical situations, were able to buy from us or sell to us. This would have been the normal practice under the age-old ~~doctrine~~ of international law. Our prior position accepted the facts

The facts
- 4 -

of geography, of conditions of land power and sea power alike as they existed in all parts of the world. If a war in Europe had broken out prior to 1935, there would have been no difference, for example, between our exports of sheets of aluminum and airplane wings; today there is an artificial legal difference. Before 1935 there would have been no difference between the export of cotton and the export of gun cotton. Today there is. Before 1935 there would have been no difference between the shipment of brass tubing in pipe form and brass tubing in shell form. Today there is. Before 1935 there would have been no difference between the export of a motor truck and an armored motor truck. Today there is.

Let us be factual and recognize that a belligerent nation often needs wheat and lard and cotton for the survival of its population just as much as it needs anti-aircraft guns and anti-submarine depth-charges. Let those who seek to retain the present embargo position be wholly consistent and seek now legislation to cut off copper and steel and wheat and a thousand other articles from all of the nations at war.

Yes, I seek a greater consistency through the repeal of the embargo provisions, and a return to international law. I seek reenactment of the historic and traditional American policy which, except for the disastrous interlude of the Embargo and Non-Intercourse (~~area~~) has served us well for nearly a century and a half.

It has been erroneously said that return to that policy might bring us nearer to war. I give to you my deep and unalterable conviction, based on years of experience as a worker in the field of international peace, that by the repeal of the embargo the United States will more probably remain at peace than if the law remains as it stands today. I say this because with the repeal of the embargo this Government clearly and definitely will insist that American citizens and American ships keep away from the immediate perils of the actual zones of conflict.

(and so I think) Repeal of the embargo and a return to international law are the crux of this issue.

The enactment of the embargo provisions did more than merely reverse our traditional policy. It had the effect of putting land powers on the same footing as naval powers, so far as sea-borne commerce was concerned. A land power which threatened war could thus feel assured in advance that any prospective sea-power antagonist would be weakened through denial of its ancient right to buy anything anywhere. This, four years ago, (~~area~~) a definite advantage to one belligerent as against another, not through his own strength or geographical position, but through an affirmative act (~~of course~~). Removal of the embargo is merely reverting to the sounder international practice, and pursuing in time of war as in time of peace our ordinary trade policies. This will be liked by some and disliked by others, depending on the view they take of the present war, but that is not the issue. The step I recommend is to put this country back on ~~a~~ solid footing of real and traditional neutrality.

When and if repeal of the embargo is accomplished, certain other phases of policy reinforcing American safety should be considered. While nearly all of us are in agreement on their objectives, the only question relates to method.

I do not like ~~the word~~
mention the word "war"
I would rather say
"conflict"

I believe that American merchant vessels should, ^{so} far as possible, be restricted from entering ~~hostile~~ zones. ^{and} War zones may change so swiftly and so frequently in the days to come, that it is impossible to fix them permanently by act of Congress; specific legislation may prevent adjustment to constant and quick change. It seems, therefore, more practical to delimit ~~them~~ through action of the State Department and administrative agencies. The objective of restricting American ships from entering such zones may be attained by prohibiting such entry by the Congress; or the result can be substantially achieved by executive proclamation that all such voyages are solely at the risk of the American owners themselves.

The second objective is to prevent American citizens from traveling on belligerent vessels, origin danger areas. This can ^{also} be accomplished either by legislation, through continuance in force of certain provisions of existing law, or by proclamation making it clear to all Americans that any such travel is at their own risk.

The third objective, requiring the foreign buyer to take transfer of title in this country to commodities purchased by belligerents, is also a result which can be attained by legislation or substantially achieved through due notice by proclamation.

The fourth objective is the preventing of war credits to belligerents. This can be accomplished by maintaining in force existing provisions of law, or by proclamation making it clear that if credits are granted by American citizens to belligerents our Government will take no steps in the future to relieve them of risk or loss. The result of these last two will be to require all purchases to be made in cash and cargoes to be carried in the purchasers' own ships, at the purchasers' own risk.

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The position of the Executive Branch of the Government is that the age-old and time-honored doctrine of international law, coupled with these positive safeguards, is better calculated than any other means to keep us out of ~~wars~~ war.

In respect to our own defense, you are aware that I have issued a proclamation setting forth "A National Emergency in Connection with the Observance, Safeguarding, and Enforcement of Neutrality and the Strengthening of the National Defense within the Limits of Peace-Time Authorizations". This was done solely to make wholly constitutional and legal certain obviously necessary measures. I have authorized increases in the personnel of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard, which will bring all four to a total still below peace-time strength as authorized by the Congress.

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At this time I ask for no ~~other~~ authority from the Congress. At this time I see no need for further executive action under the proclamation of limited national emergency.

Therefore, I see no ~~valid~~ reason for the consideration of other legislation at this extraordinary session of the Congress.

It is, of course, possible that in the months to come unforeseen needs for further legislation may develop but they are not imperative today.

These perilous days demand cooperation between us without trace of partisanship. Our acts must be guided by one single hard-headed thought -- keeping America out of this war. In that spirit, I am asking the leaders of the two major parties in the Senate and ~~and~~ the House of Representatives to remain in Washington between the close of this extraordinary session and the beginning of the regular session on January third. They have assured me that they will do so, and I expect to consult with them at frequent intervals on the course of events in foreign affairs and on the need for future action in this field, whether it be executive or legislative action.

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FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

THE WHITE HOUSE,
September 21, 1939.