

THERE IS STILL TIME

Dear Friends:

And so they have maneuvered America, over the grave of the Unknown Soldier, back to April 1917. We are asked to make a decision when we had thought we had already made our decision. A generation of Americans had yearned to spare its sons the wild tragedy of another world war, another AEF, another parade of Gold Star Mothers. But pick up the papers, turn on the radio, and everywhere you meet the fine, tumultuous, empty words again. They ask us to choose when we have already chosen. They call us to war.

But we have answered the question they now pose. Was it yesterday that a man stood before the men and women of this land and said: "And while I am talking to you, fathers and mothers, I give you one more assurance. I have said this before, but I shall say it again, and again, and again: your boys are not going to be sent into any foreign wars." The people believed those words—those were *their* words. They elected the man who uttered them President of the United States. They gave him a mandate—of peace.

Until a few days ago the overwhelming majority of the people believed that the President was a straightforward man. But during the past days they have seen his political companions come before the microphone to tear at the hearts and minds of America. Stimson, Knox, Pepper, Wickard, the whole grisly line-up, called upon our sons to die. They used different words but it was the old, evil refrain. And America knows they talked for the President. Today the fathers and mothers of America look thoughtfully at their sons and think: "We are betrayed again." They think back to another President they elected under the slogan "He kept us out of war."

The hucksters of disaster cannot dare to use the word "war," but they use every euphemism their speech writers can devise. And the chief one is the word "convoy." We are asked to agree to "convoys." But when was it—yesterday?—that the President said that convoys mean war. Everybody in America knows that, hence the "apathy" of the people, hence the need of the Administration to "educate" the people; "to rouse the nation." (And again Washington is using weasel words: they say "apathy" when they mean "opposition.")

The American people have come to understand what we have warned for months: that the abandonment of neutrality, the steps "short of war" would lead us to war. Was it not our own President who once said: "The United States . . . can play only one role; through a well ordered neutrality to do naught to encourage the contest. . . ." But these words have been repudiated since September 1939. Step by treacherous step, we have been led to the brink.

But the President is not America. He has abandoned America. The people still stand for peace. They witness, horrified, the bombing of London, the bombing of Berlin. They know that the swastika on the *Luftwaffe* is the insignia of Hitlerism; but the marking on the Royal Air Force is not the insignia of democracy. Not even Churchill, the prose-poet, can reconcile the word "royal" with the word "democracy."

Again, at the risk of Attorney General Jackson's displeasure, we ask leave to quote once more from the President. (We trust, Mr. Jackson, that *that* is not "subversive"?) "We could get," our President said in his first term, "a world accord for peace immediately if the people of the world could *speak for themselves*. Through all the centuries of recorded history and down to the world conflict of 1914 to 1918, wars were made by governments. . . . They [the people] wondered . . . whether the people themselves could not some day prevent governments from making war . . . to propose in this newer generation that from now on war by governments shall be changed to peace by peoples."

Precisely. Though the President has long repudiated these words, we stand by them. The people of America must *speak for themselves*! *Burn up the wires to Washington, shower the President, your senators and congressmen with letters, demonstrate, join the peace vigil before the White House. Tell your neighbors to do likewise; your families, your union brothers. There is still time.*

It is not in the stars that our sons die once again by torpedo, by bomb, by gas, by bayonet. The President was beloved by the millions when he spoke the words of peace. He has turned traitor on those words—the noblest aspirations of our people. In the phrase of a Republican colleague of his, they were but "campaign oratory." But we, the people, meant them, mean them. *We* meant it when he said, "war by governments shall be changed to peace by peoples."

THE EDITORS

THE CONVOY CONSPIRACY

It was a week of high drama, a crucial week in Washington. The President's dilemma. Why he called off his speech. How many ships really were sunk? A firsthand report by Joseph Starobin.

We deliberately decided not to revise Mr. Starobin's article when the last minute news came in that the President had called off his speech to the Pan American Union. We think that this latest development emphasizes the accuracy of our editorial two weeks ago—"Where the War Stands"—and it confirms our correspondent's description of the acute crisis confronting the administration.—THE EDITORS.

Washington.

BY THE time these lines are read, the President should have delivered his speech to the Pan American Union. It is to be the climax of a whole series of boasts and blasts, of yelps and imprecations, of brazen *pronunciamientos* which have been emanating from administration spokesmen in such bewildering volume during the last fifteen days. The most considered judgment is that the President will lay it on thick. In truth, unless he intends to sound anti-climactic after Secretary Stimson's demand for convoys last week, he will have to beat all the drums and tilt the brass instruments high into the air. The speech to the White House Correspondents dinner some weeks ago was intended, as people say here, to "kick the American people in the pants." It is probable, therefore, that what Mr. Roosevelt intends to do this week is to bat the American people over the head. It is a remarkable commentary on the crisis which confronts the administration that the best language to describe their intentions must be borrowed from the vocabulary of cave-men.

But the plain fact is that the men who are running the show in Washington are confronted with a most serious crisis. If our Founding Fathers had provided for a more parliamentary form of government, this is the sort of crisis which might already have forced a couple of Cabinet members to resign. One or two under-secretaries might have jumped into the Potomac by now. Here and there, somebody's mistress would have been found poisoned in an obscure boudoir. And the chief of state would have been fighting for his political life.

The situation can be put as follows: after a full year of a most concentrated "educational" campaign, systematically encouraged from the White House with the energetic co-operation of the newsreels, the radio, the Gallup polls, the press, the pseudo-liberal intelligentsia, the American people still aren't terribly keen about getting into the war. Nobody is losing any love for the draft. There are no demonstrations for the tax program, and nobody is really excited about convoys. Mr. Herbert Hoover is understating the case when he admits that the nation is very much divided. The very best that can be said from

the administration's point of view is that people are reluctantly resigned, apathetic to the Roosevelt crusade. To be more accurate, the White House is being deluged with mail against war and against convoys every day of the week. I heard one wisecrack that letters were coming in for Woodrow Wilson telling him to beware, that somebody was following his footsteps. Mr. Hillman's activities notwithstanding, the labor movement is not hepped on the war. Nor have many Negro citizens been aroused by the urgency of a "defense" program in which they are forbidden to participate. Sizable sections of the electorate are beginning to suspect some kind of hoax. They supported Mr. Roosevelt on the assumption that by helping Britain (which most folk see in its humanitarian aspects) we would nevertheless stay out of the war. But Mr. Roosevelt and his closest friends never really believed this "short of war" business. Of course, statesmen are never supposed to believe exactly what they themselves say: the trouble is that the great majority of people are less sophisticated and really believed their Chief Executive. As somebody put it to me, this short-of-war propaganda was too good. "It was over-sold."

MR. ROOSEVELT has come up against this realization at a most delicate moment in his international poker game. For one thing, the British seem to be exploiting their own difficulties, using their own setbacks as a diplomatic weapon. Dark rumors circulate in Washington that unless FDR comes across, the British may come to terms with Hitler; usually such rumors come in the form of statements that a negotiated peace is unthinkable. All winter long, Sumner Welles was trying to determine just how many barrels of flour would suffice to cajole General Weygand from the idea of closer cooperation with the Nazis. This policy also seems to be reaching a point of visible fiasco. Out in the Far East, the Japanese are working harder than ever for a *de facto* truce with the Kuomintang, while in the midst of discussions about joint naval operations around Singapore, observers who ought to know suggest that Churchill may be talking things over with the Japanese ambassador in London. This kind of doubledealing, it will be recalled, gave Mr. Stimson, then the Secretary of State, some rough going during the Manchurian incident, back in the days when Stimson was a younger and a stronger man.

I find in Washington that most American military men do not expect the British to make a very strong showing in the Near East. Churchill's boast of a half a million men in Egypt is generally considered to represent a specimen of the British prime minister's legendary command of the English language.

It is impossible to judge how much of this kind of thing is real, and how much of it is a form of pressure on the United States. At any rate, the President is faced with an international picture in which everybody is playing his cards very close, and while FDR has a lot of aces up his sleeve, the rest of the gamblers in Berlin and Tokyo and London are playing their deuces wild. On top of it all, the Soviet Union is taking care of itself very well.

Thus, at the very moment that the President hoped he would have complete control of the American public, which in itself would be a very strong card, he discovers he does not have that control. Some newspapermen tell me they really think he has lost the initiative both at home and abroad. Malicious minds even suggest that Mr. Roosevelt called off his two press conferences last week for more urgent reasons than a slight gastro-intestinal *malaise* and two-tenths of a degree of fever.

In the last fifteen days, therefore, the administration has been trying to "wake people up." Almost every Cabinet member, and even the under-secretaries, have made at least one speech. It looked for a while as if Colonel Knox would have his say twice, since he usually speaks twice as much as anybody else, but Stimson outdid them all with his demand for immediate convoys. John D. Rockefeller lent a hand, or rather his handwriting. Claude Pepper, the senator from Florida, who had such successes in Canada a month or so ago, charged out on the Senate floor demanding no less than the Azores, the Canary islands, and Dakar. He also wanted to bomb the cities of Japan into shambles, and the White House watched with suppressed excitement what the effect of throwing some pepper in people's eyes would be. Happily enough, there was some sort of banquet in Dorothy Thompson's honor up in New York, which provided the occasion for still more speeches, and Dorothy herself insisted on the declaration of a national emergency. The Fight for Freedom committee got together and went over the top, and Mr. Willkie contrived to have his article in *Collier's* published just in time. He professed to wonder why the American people were so frightened of this American Century.

REFLECTING the general sentiment among Navy men, Colonel Knox actually intended to call for a declaration of war in his last address, and he was a bit angry when his Chief decided that was going too far just now. The President evidently believed that his Secretary of the Navy was going overboard. Some columnists have accused the President of cowardice, while others suggested he might be becoming the American Chamberlain. But the President himself held back.

Why? The answer lies in the internal