

An Examination of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's
"Quarantine the Aggressors Speech"

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INTRODUCTION

The "Quarantine Speech" of 1937 was truly a memorable event in the diplomatic life of twentieth century America. It was on Tuesday, October 5th in Chicago, that President Franklin Delano Roosevelt chose to deliver what would become one of the most controversial speeches of his presidency. He was warmly greeted by all those who were in attendance for the dedication of a PWA (Public Works Administration) bridge constructed to connect two city park systems.¹ This speech surprised most people, citizens and diplomats alike. It was the first of its kind since the Presidency of Woodrow Wilson.²

After hearing the speech, many thought Roosevelt had used this happy occasion to redesign American foreign policy. He spoke of the aggression which was consuming the world. He continued by calling for all "peace loving nations" to join in a "concerted effort" to "quarantine" those nations and peoples who were not dedicated to the pursuit of peace.³

Many of President Roosevelt's advisors were warning him that the U.S. might be dragged into the rivalries of Europe once again. In reaction to this, he appointed Sumner Welles as an Under-Secretary of State to monitor the situation. He

then gave his speech as a "trial balloon" to see how the predominantly isolationist U.S. people would react to re-involvement in world affairs in a "concerted effort" to preserve peace.⁴

Since the end of the First World War, the American people had adopted an "isolationist" position toward the problems of Europe and the rest of the world, excluding North and South America. During the presidencies of Warren G. Harding, Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover the principle of non-intervention had guided the U.S. through a prosperous period, and then into a depression that devastated the American people. Something needed to be done so that the U.S. could regain her economic footing. However, nothing significant happened until March of 1933 when Franklin Delano Roosevelt was inaugurated as the Thirty-Second President of the United States of America.

The presidential election of 1932 was a turning point in American Presidential History. Because of the depression, a Democrat had won the election, the first one since Woodrow Wilson on the eve of World War I. Naturally Roosevelt entered his first term as president concerned almost exclusively with national recovery. During his first "One Hundred Days" in office, he proposed more legislation than any other president in the history of the nation. This period had become synonymous with the word "action." The

"New Deal" programs helped to stimulate the economy and decrease the number of citizens who were unemployed. With Congressional support, these measures started to put the country back on her feet. In addition to alleviating the economic depression which the country had been experiencing since 1929, the New Deal helped to better living conditions in the country through various creative projects and providing relief. However, none of this would have been possible without the realization that federal funds were needed to help the states and the country recover from such economic devastation.⁵

The first reform measure was the Banking Act, which gave the president control over all transactions on the foreign market as well as the right to take the U.S. off the "gold standard". He followed with the Economy Act which called for a cut in government salaries and pensions to all war veterans, and provided for a budget reduction of 25 percent.⁶ Next came the Agricultural Adjustment Act which relieved farmers of the burdens of mortgages and increased the value of their loans by the banks.⁷ Seeing how cooperative Congress was towards these reform measures, President Roosevelt decided to continue with reforms designed for the next year.⁸

Next Roosevelt proposed that the Civilian Conservation Corps be established for "Reforestation and Humanitarian"

purposes. Next came the Securities Act which called for supervision of transactions pertaining to investment securities in interstate commerce.⁹ The next proposal Roosevelt sent to Congress was for the establishment of the Tennessee Valley Authority to produce and generate power as well as improve the rural life of America.¹⁰ Other Acts sent to Congress during the "100 Days" included, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, Homeowners Loan Corporation, Railway Reorganization Act, Civil Works Administration, National Industrial Recovery Act, and the National Recovery Act. By the end of the "100 Days", Roosevelt's proposals had amounted to some 3,300,000,000 dollars.¹¹

President Roosevelt received much criticism for these reforms. Dorothy Thomas referred to him as a fascist, Frank H. Simonds called him a communist, and conservatives commented that all Roosevelt was doing was patching up the nation. Liberals saw these reforms as a socialistic attempt to save capitalism for the capitalists. Others proclaimed that Roosevelt was playing "tiddlywinks with the entire universe!"¹²

This paper is a study of the impact upon the citizens of the United States and other countries of the world of President Roosevelt's Quarantine Speech. This topic has been examined by many historians since the delivery of the speech in October, 1937. Some believe that the speech was

made as a diversion to domestic problems after what seemed to be a return of the depression in 1937, which demonstrated that the New Deal had failed.¹³ Others believe that it was given simply to see how the American people would react to a change from isolationism to interventionism in the cause of world peace.¹⁴ Still, there are others who hold that this was Roosevelt's true side, and that the isolationist facade which he had shown since 1933, because of his preoccupation with national concerns, had been put up only to pacify the people.¹⁵ In order clearly to understand this question, we need to examine it in light of post-World War I sentiment and the early years of the Roosevelt Presidency.

CHAPTER ONE

After the end of World War I, the leaders of the Republican Party proposed to take the the American people back to pre-war passivity toward international affairs. They knew that this would be politically profitable because of disillusionment with World War I. Also the Republican aspirants for the presidency seemed to feel that the U.S. should put the war behind and revert to pre-war isolationism.¹⁶ The people responded and Warren G. Harding was overwhelmingly elected President of the United States in 1920. He had spent many years in public life, but had never shown the leadership qualities necessary for assuming the presidency.¹⁷

When Harding took office in 1921, U.S. membership in the League of Nations was not nearly as strong an issue as it had been during the last year of the Wilson Presidency. Harding appointed the majestic Charles Evans Hughes to the position of Secretary of State. After accepting this appointment, Hughes quickly obtained legislation from Congress declaring that the state of war with Germany was over. This was necessary since the Treaty of Versailles had not been ratified by the Senate. Hughes then negotiated separate peace treaties with the Central Powers.¹⁸

The first priority of Secretary of State Hughes was to

limit the naval armaments race between Japan, Great Britain, and America. This led to the Washington Conference of 1921. At this conference Hughes called for a ten year moratorium on building any new large warships, and the scrapping of almost 2 million tons of existing ships. This conference resulted in the Five Power Pact, Four Power Pact and the Nine Power Pact.¹⁹ The Five Power Pact of February, 1922, called for the limitation of total naval tonnage. It also established a ratio among those who signed the treaty: the U.S. 5 : Great Britain 5 : Japan 3 : Italy 1.75 : France 1.75. However this treaty, because of its exclusion of China, handed Japan the right to dominate East Asia. Another fault of the treaty was that it did not limit the construction of submarines, destroyer and cruiser ships. The Nine Power Pact called for the signatories to recognize the Open Door Policy in China. However, this treaty was not totally effective because the Russians, who had interests in Asia, were not invited because the world powers did not diplomatically recognize the Bolsheviks. Another difficulty with the treaty was the fact that there were no means to enforce it. The Four Power Pact involved the United States, Great Britain, France and Japan who promised to respect each others holdings in the Pacific and to cooperate with one another in case of aggression.²⁰

The Washington Conference involved the U.S. in world affairs, but not to the extent it had been during the Wilson

Era. The result of the conference was to involve the U.S. in an effort to keep peace, but in a non-active way. This notion of non-active participation in the cause of peace thoroughly agreed with the isolationist mood of the people.²¹

Isolationism was not a new concept to Americans. It can be traced almost as far back as the history of the nation. This idea had become rooted in America because of its geography and location. Since the beginning of United States history, America possessed a greater degree of national security than any other nation in the modern world. Because the territory of the U.S. spans the North American Continent from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific, she was protected by natural barriers from the aggressions of Europe and Asia. Even though the U.S. was bounded by other nations on the north and south, they were too weak to endanger its security. The prevalence of isolationism in the 1920's and 1930's was mainly due to a profound disillusionment with World War I by the American people. They felt that they had been betrayed into entering a "war to end all wars," and a "war for democracy," when it had been neither. This is why they had refused to agree to the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.²²

Upon the death of President Harding, Calvin Coolidge became the 30th President of the United States. Coolidge

was not unlike Harding in policy, but unlike his predecessor, Coolidge lived "soberly and puritanically". Coolidge delegated much authority to cabinet members and other officers. In 1924, American banker Charles B. Dawes initiated negotiations between the U.S. and France, Britain and Germany. Dawes proposed that U.S. banks should loan large amounts of money to Germany. This in turn would enable Germany to pay reparations levied on her by the Treaty of Versailles. In return for these guaranteed reparation payments, France and Great Britain would agree to lower ones, and use the money to pay their war debts to the United States.²³

In 1928, the Kellogg-Briand Pact was negotiated through the initiative of French Foreign Minister Aristide Briand who had asked for U.S. support against Germany. Frank Kellogg helped create this pact, which outlawed war as a means of national policy. In Paris, on August 27, 1928, the pact was signed by representatives of fourteen nations. Eventually forty eight other nations joined in this important "non-active" effort to keep peace and eliminate war.²⁴

During the Presidencies of Harding, Coolidge, Hoover and Roosevelt, there was a strong sentiment for the cause of peace in the world. Although there were many different groups, they could be classified as two categories:

moderates and extremists. The moderate groups held to the principle that if world peace was to be maintained, then there must be international cooperation which would end U.S. isolationism and involve America in world affairs. The extremist groups at first agreed with the moderates on this issue. But during the latter years of the 1920's and certainly during the 1930's the extremists began to abandon this belief and become devastatingly isolationist. This group was strengthened when it was realized that even the League of Nations could not coordinate an effort to counter aggression. 25

CHAPTER TWO

When the results of the presidential election of 1932 came in, the country then realized that "new ideas had been chosen along with a new president."²⁶ After the President had begun his "100 Days" of reform, the world began to witness the first faint indications that the isolationist status quo which had dominated the 1920's was beginning to end.²⁷

In April 1933, President Roosevelt hosted many diplomatic leaders at the White House. Even though he was preoccupied with national recovery, he knew that he could not ignore the economic status of all world nations since he felt that this was closely linked to U.S. recovery. During a meeting with Prime Minister Mac Donald, the President agreed to send U.S. representatives to a World Economic Conference to be held in London beginning on June 12, 1933. Since the U.S. had gone off the "gold standard", the dollar had been falling on the world market. This conference, he hoped, would help stabilize the dollar and eventually the economy as well. At the conference terms for an agreement were being pursued which would prevent world leaders from altering the gold content of all currencies in any nation. Members of Congress and the President were outraged at such a proposed restriction. On July 3, 1933, President Roosevelt sent a "bombshell" message to Secretary of State

Hull in London. The President accused the world representatives at the conference of losing focus of the actual reason for convening; namely financial stability for all nations, not just a few. Hull tried to redirect the proceedings, but the conference disbanded several weeks later with nothing being accomplished.²⁸

Once the New Deal reforms were implemented, then the President began to evaluate U.S. foreign policy, which had been almost non-existent. His first realization was that for several reasons Japanese-American relations had not been good since the mid-twenties. In 1924, due to the strong fear of alien oriental immigration among the American people, Congress passed an Immigration Act limiting immigration into the United States.²⁹ Some historians claim that the Japanese began to enter Chinese territory more heavily, especially Manchuria, because the U.S. had prohibited further immigration from Japan. When General Chiang Kai Shek rose to power leading the Chinese Nationalists during the 1920's, China began to pursue a strong foreign policy which moved towards the termination of foreign privileges in territories which had belonged to China.³⁰

Since Japan could not send her people to the U.S. because of immigration legislation, they may have decided to take political control of the province Manchuria to

accommodate their excess population. However, the Japanese action may have been precipitated because the Russians were trying to enter from the north and only Japanese troops could keep them out. The Japanese presence in Manchuria violated the Nine Power Pact and the Kellogg-Briand Pact, but the League of Nations reacted very cautiously. Then on October 8, 1931, the Chinese city of Chinchow, far from the belligerent zone, was bombed by the Japanese. Secretary of State Stimson convinced President Hoover that it was necessary for the U.S. to send a delegate to the League of Nations Council meeting in Geneva to protest this aggression.³¹

Since the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, Japan had regarded Manchuria as necessary to its economy.³² Manchuria was part of China, but since 1905 the Japanese had held economic control of the territory.³³ In addition to needing this territory economically, the Japanese also felt that if they relinquished control, then the Russian Communists would seize not only Manchuria, but also Korea.³⁴ The United States had recognized the Japanese presence in Manchuria through the Root-Takahira and Lansing-Ishii agreements. The Japanese knew that the U.S. would not cooperate with Russia since the U.S. Government did not recognize the Bolshevik Government. The Japanese had also anticipated that the U.S. would not cooperate with the Chinese Nationalists since they had encouraged Chinese

citizens to migrate and invest in Manchuria to balance the investment and presence in that territory of Japan, thus causing the difficulty. In September, 1931, Secretary of State Stimson had urged both China and Japan to settle their differences and proposed that the U.S. build up its Naval forces in Guam so that these Asian nations would move more seriously toward an agreement. In February, 1932, Japan renamed Manchuria as Manchukuo, thus creating a puppet state, and in September proclaimed it to be a legal holding of Japan. In 1933, Japan resigned from the League of Nations because of criticisms.³⁵ Hostile feelings between China and Japan increased, and in July of 1937, a minor shooting between troops representing the two countries at Marco Polo Bridge, near Peiping, began the Sino-Japanese War.³⁶

Roosevelt maintained Stimson's policy of non-recognition and did nothing to remove the tension between the U.S. and Japan. The President and many others believed that the Japanese would begin to withdraw from China when they realized that America was building up her military; however, Roosevelt did not totally rely on this.³⁷

While the Japanese and the Chinese were battling over Manchuria, Germany had begun to abandon its acceptance of the post-war status quo. On October 14, 1933, Hitler announced that Germany was no longer affiliated with the

League of Nations. Later, in 1935, Hitler renounced the disarmament provisions contained in the Treaty of Versailles. This was Hitler's way of telling the world that Germany was planning military revitalization, which posed the most serious threat to world peace.³⁸

If the difficulties of Japan, China and Germany were not enough to make Roosevelt move the U.S. towards a more interventionist position, the problems between Italy and Ethiopia were. In December, 1934, Roosevelt realized that the Italians and Ethiopians were on the verge of war in East Africa. The Italians had refused a peaceful settlement and seemed intent on conquering Ethiopia. With all of these problems arising in the world, Roosevelt may have felt that he needed to announce to the American People and the world that the U.S. would not just "sit back" and allow aggression to prevail in the world. Also, the President may have hoped that such an announcement would bluff these aggressor nations into thinking that the U.S. would come to the assistance of other status quo powers, chiefly Great Britain and France. He had received encouragement from close friends and members of the cabinet to take a stand on the aggression which was affecting the world.³⁹

Many felt that the President was referring to aggressions in China while delivering his "Quarantine Speech," but no one knew for sure. His strong emphasis on

the security of the Western Hemisphere was startling to many. In Washington, D.C., cabinet members and party leaders alike remained silent, but those who opposed the idea of U.S. involvement in world affairs, mainly isolationists and pacifists, spoke out against the President and his plans.⁴⁰ In his book Roosevelt and World War II, Robert A. Divine writes of historian James MacGregor-Burns theory of this speech as a "trial balloon" used by the President to get feedback from American Citizens and world leaders alike as to whether the U.S. should pursue a more interventionist policy. Divine continues by stating that Dorothy Borg, a well-known historian whom Divine thought gave the best analysis of the Quarantine Speech, believed Roosevelt knew that he needed to develop a new policy, but also needed to know how the country would react to a change in foreign policy. She claims that is the reason for such strong words and emphases not accompanied by concrete measures.⁴¹

In addition to these problems abroad, Roosevelt was experiencing his own difficulties on the domestic scene. Since the court had nullified several of the New Deal Programs, Roosevelt felt the need to get some new faces into the Judiciary. He made a proposal to nominate a new judge to the Supreme Court for every judge who was over seventy-five years of age and did not submit his resignation within six months. This "court packing" proposal proved to

be a tremendous mistake made by the President. It caused a great uproar and led to charges that he was trying to make himself a dictator like Hitler.⁴² Also the New Deal was under tremendous criticism by Anti-New Dealers. They felt that its programs would end the free-enterprise system that America cherished.⁴³

In the Late summer of 1937, the stock market began to experience a decline, which many equated with that of the 1929 "Crash".⁴⁴ This recession/depression of 1937/38 was beginning to align Roosevelt with his predecessor, Hoover.⁴⁵ This decline came as a shock to the President and his advisors. The only alternative they could think of was to "prime the pumps" once again by injecting more federal money into the economy.⁴⁶ Henry Morgenthau and other "gloomy" economists in the treasury were making the situation sound worse than the President wanted them to at this time.⁴⁷ Because of the return of what seemed to be another depression and the gloomy forecasts of these treasury officials, Roosevelt began to lose support from New Deal Democrats as well as the public.⁴⁸

The failure of some New Deal measures, along with this court-packing incident, seriously wounded the popularity of Roosevelt during his second term.⁴⁹ It may not have been solely in response to the aggressions of the world that Roosevelt delivered his Quarantine Speech. He may have

tried to divert the public's attention from domestic problems rather than merely to see whether or not Americans were prepared for such a transition at this time.

CHAPTER THREE

Whatever his reasons for giving it, the Quarantine Speech of 1937 was probably the most controversial address given by Roosevelt since his election. The speech seemed to represent such a great departure from previous policy that it shocked and surprised the people of the U.S. and the world. Roosevelt approached the speech from a strictly emotional viewpoint. He did not present any documented information pertaining to violations in treaty terms. The speech was written in non-specific terms, thus leaving interpretation up to the listener or reader.

For example, Roosevelt did mention the Kellogg-Briand Pact, which outlawed war as the means for executing national policy. He only stated that in some cases "the very foundations of civilization were seriously threatened." He continued by saying that innocent nations and peoples were being "sacrificed" so that aggressor nations could gain more power. Was he referring to China and Ethiopia? Or was it the nations of Europe which surrounded Germany? Could it be Spain? He called for those who loved peace to join in a "concerted action" for the preservation of peace. He maintained that the "principles of the Prince of Peace must be restored". He ended the speech with these statements: "America hates war. America hopes for peace. Therefore, America actively engages in the search for peace."⁵⁰

Reaction to the speech was varied. A writer for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch wondered what President Roosevelt intended the speech to accomplish. What forms would the quarantine effort take---sanctions, embargoes, economic boycotts, armed action?⁵¹ The President's speech was interpreted by a New York Paper as a warning to Japan amongst others, and as a suggestion that the U.S. was supporting the League of Nations in its efforts to maintain the post-war status quo. It also seemed that the president had tossed all previous American policy aside, and had begun a new strategy which would place the U.S. in an active role of trying to stop aggressor nations.⁵²

The domestic reaction to this speech was mixed and could not be categorized by location, conservative or liberal political views, or economic status. In New York, a writer stated that citizens of the U.S. and Europe were becoming impatient with the League and its "overly cautious" procedure in dealing with the Japanese, and welcomed the President's speech as a sign of American interest in foreign affairs. In Boston, a reporter spoke of the similarity between Roosevelt and Wilson. He charged Roosevelt with an attempt to "stampede" the American public into interventionist policies and actions. The article closed with this statement, "Crusade if you must, but for the sake of several million mothers, confine your crusading to the continental limits of America!"⁵³ In Philadelphia,

another reporter fully supported the courageous proposals of the President. Roosevelt's Speech was seen as like those of President Wilson two decades earlier. But this reporter cautioned the government to be careful that she does not end up in a "pitfall" once again.⁵⁴

A Baltimore reporter commented that for Roosevelt to maintain a non-entanglement position would be a challenge for him, since he enjoyed being in the midst of the action. It was always easier to speak of such moral principles than it would be to compel other nations to follow them. However, just because it was not going to be an easy task should be no reason to stop before ever trying!⁵⁵ In Washington it was understood that aggressors were ready to continue even if they could not trade with other world powers, which the speech threatened to deny them. But the president should continue with this effort for a return to peace. If he continued, this might be the first time since 1931 that a restoration of peace, because of American influence, might be attained throughout the world.⁵⁶

In Chicago where the speech had been given, editorial writers interpreted Roosevelt as proposing to bring the "aggressors to their knees" by economic means. However, if such a boycott was unable to stop such aggression, what was the next plan of action? There was a time when President Wilson found no other alternative but war. Was this

Roosevelt's plan?⁵⁷ In Cincinnati, a newspaper was pleased that President Roosevelt was finally considering a more active role in foreign policy and interpreted this speech as more than mere words.⁵⁸ In St. Louis, a reporter felt that Roosevelt's position was appropriate for the head of American Government. He saw him expressing the concerns of all Americans about this aggression which plagued certain helpless nations throughout the world. However, since Roosevelt did not propose any concrete measures, this reporter interpreted the speech to mean nothing at all.⁵⁹

In Des Moines, citizens focused their attention on foreign reaction rather than on the speech itself. They commented that the Germans thought it was aimed at the Japanese. The Italians perceived this speech as being directed toward the Bolsheviks in Russia. An Italian official was quoted as saying, "Italy is a peace-loving nation."⁶⁰ In Chattanooga, reporters were concerned about how the president planned to carry out the quarantine he had proposed. Was the U.S. going to organize a police action in the Far East and Europe? Or, was the President hinting to France and Great Britain that they needed to pursue a more direct course against aggression?⁶¹ Since there were no concrete measures outlined in the speech, reactions in New Orleans were concerned with the effects of such an approach. The editorial staff of this newspaper congratulated the President on the timing of the speech. They felt that it

was timely because of all the problems existing abroad; however, whether or not any of the President's hopes of actually quarantining the aggressors would materialize remained to be seen.⁶²

The reaction from Minneapolis-St. Paul was positive. Even though the President spoke in general terms, it was claimed that this speech paralleled Roosevelt with Wilson. The speech was seen as a small stakes venture to warn aggressors, rather than putting the issue off and risking a war which would require large stakes. This shift in Roosevelt's attitude preceded what would be a turn in American Foreign policy and a "new hope" for all of America.⁶³ In Omaha it seems that the editorial staff of the World Herald thought Roosevelt was using the speech to distract people from domestic troubles. Citizens focused their attention on the domestic difficulties which they believed the President was facing--or avoiding. They warned the president that "war is a contagion within as among nations." They continued by reminding Roosevelt that "patience and consideration are not wholly out of place even in domestic political disputes."⁶⁴

On the West coast, a Los Angeles newspaper expressed its support for the president. He was commended for saying what he did and in the manner which he said it. "This speech shows the President at his best."⁶⁵ The people of

the press in San Francisco interpreted the speech as Roosevelt's warning to America that neither isolation nor neutrality was going to help the cause of peace throughout the world. They also interpreted the President as saying that the U.S. must take action against those aggressive nations who pushed around defenseless countries and their people.⁶⁶ The people of Portland agreed that the U.S. should become actively involved in world affairs. However, they hoped that Roosevelt was not embarked on this tangent simply to deter the public from domestic difficulties.⁶⁷

A reporter from the Washington Post exclaimed, "The timing of the message was perfect!" It warned the Japanese that the U.S. would not recognize any territorial gains made during this time which were in violation of the Nine Power Pact. It alerted the Italians, who were on the verge of joining the Germans in assisting the rebels in Spain, that the U.S. would prepare to counter such action if necessary. It cautioned the Germans that any aggression in Europe would be taken in Washington as a "direct offense to the United States." The editorial staff of the Washington Post further challenged Roosevelt to carry out such action. The present isolationist stance in world affairs was seen as being inconsistent with the history of the country.⁶⁸

The staff of the Chicago Tribune, who were present when the speech was made began to utter phrases like,

"League of Nations", "Marching troops", and "The nation back in training camps." These people also noticed the President's use of the word "must" so often during his powerful delivery of the speech. They did not know what to make of it, but they surmised that such a policy would inevitably lead to war.⁶⁹ Chicago had long been recognized as a predominantly isolationist city, and this did not improve its people's opinion of Roosevelt, especially during this period of domestic turmoil.

In London, a writer commented that it seemed as if the U.S. planned to use this moral value system, which President Roosevelt discussed during his speech in Chicago, in constructing a new foreign policy for the United States. Although this proposal was hailed by other nations, no one knew exactly what the U.S. would do in an attempt to "quarantine the aggressors".⁷⁰ Members of the English Labor Party interpreted the speech as an attempt by the U.S. to promote world peace through peaceful means. They felt that British cooperation would strengthen this attempt to keep peace and support the position President Roosevelt had already taken.⁷¹

The Quarantine Speech was warmly accepted by many other peace-loving nations throughout the world. In Madrid, Spanish Loyalists hailed the speech as being in harmony with the ideas of their Valencia Government.⁷² Authorities in

Buenos Aires, Argentina, wholly accepted the speech and its implications as the beginning of an effort toward world peace.⁷³ The day after the speech was given, British officials announced that members of their cabinet would meet to discuss it at length.⁷⁴ On the 7th day of October, the same British officials were questioning just how far the President was willing to go in order to force this concept upon Japan.⁷⁵ An official spokesman in Paris called the speech America's entrance "into the world's troubled affairs." Now, because of America's great strength and resources, other nations would be greatly encouraged in their efforts for the preservation of peace.⁷⁶ Two days after the speech had been given, a French Foreign Office spokesman stated his country had given its "unqualified approval" for this American statement which was parallel to the aspirations of other League Nations.⁷⁷ In Geneva, a spokesman for the League of Nations interpreted Roosevelt's words as fully supporting the course of action which the League had tried to develop.⁷⁸ Two days after the speech had been given, members of the League of Nations were summoned to a special meeting to consider implementation of the suggestions offered by President Roosevelt.⁷⁹

Those nations who had been aggressive were very cautious in answering questions or making comments about the speech which Roosevelt had given. German officials would not comment until they received a copy of the text. Once

they had procured a copy, they commented on the shift in the foreign policy of the United States. Articles had appeared in morning issues of the Berliner Lokalanzeiger and the Berliner Tageblatt on Wednesday, October 6, but were removed from the evening editions. The Lokalanzeiger stated that Roosevelt had finally realized that "international anarchy" would not stop in Europe, but might very well enter the United States. The Berliner Tageblatt interpreted the speech as being aimed at the Bolsheviks in Russia.⁸⁰ German diplomats were unsure of Roosevelt's authority to impress such views, pertaining to peace, upon other nations of the world.⁸¹ The concept of world peace, which President Roosevelt discussed, was emphasized in Rome. Italian officials also reminded their country's people of Premier Mussolini's visit with Reichsfuehrer Hitler in Germany to discuss peace.⁸² However, on October 7, Italians admitted that Roosevelt's speech directly contradicted Premier Mussolini's approval of the Japanese program for expansion, but nothing was said about Italian aggression in Ethiopia.⁸³ A Japanese spokesman claimed that President Roosevelt's speech was "incompatible with Japan's ideas of right!" The spokesman further stated that Japan's population had doubled within the past fifty years, and there was no outlet for its surplus people in the U.S. or other nations of the world. The only alternative at hand was to migrate into Manchuria and further develop that land.

They claimed that the people of Japan should be able to possess the freedom to move and settle wherever they wished, even in the United States.⁸⁴ On the following day, October 7, the Japanese cabinet had a special meeting to evaluate the implications of the Quarantine Speech and resolved that "Pacification" would continue.⁸⁵ This "pacification" presumably meant that the Japanese planned to continue their aggressive tactics regardless of U.S. threats.

Senator Key Pittman, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, expressed his satisfaction with the President's message. He went on to tell reporters that the President "had been very patient with Japan." He further assured readers that any action taken would be in accord with the terms of the Nine Power Pact signed in the early 1920's but not with the covenant of the League of Nations. He also reassured U.S. citizens that the League of Nations would not lead the United States into any unjust action. Pittman stated that present neutrality legislation was not intended for current conditions throughout the world, and could not be expected to last under such conditions.⁸⁶

President Hoover's Secretary of State, Henry L. Stimson fully supported Roosevelt. He referred to "concerted action" as the best means for U.S. active leadership in world diplomacy. He stated that if the U.S. did not act at this time, the peace which America enjoyed and treasured

would be in severe jeopardy. Stimson also claimed that China was not looking for outside assistance, but was merely trying to stop outsiders from helping her enemy.⁸⁷ Stimson was later appointed by President Roosevelt to the position of Secretary of War.

Since Roosevelt had accused the Japanese of violating the Nine Power Pact, the Kellogg-Briand Pact, and the covenant of the League of Nations, was he attempting to thrust America into working with the League? Or was he trying to use the League as a means of persuading other nations to react to aggression and thus create the "concerted action" of which he spoke in Chicago? It was obvious that American policy had begun to shift. It was also evident in the Quarantine Speech that the President was ready to join other status quo world powers in an active effort to preserve peace. However, many peace organizations accused President Roosevelt of starting on the deadly path that had led President Wilson into a world war.

CONCLUSION

Roosevelt knew that the key to success was the ability to say the right thing at the right time, no matter what the short term ramifications might be.⁸⁸ He also realized that the U.S. was accustomed to passive isolationist Presidents who were only concerned with domestic affairs. This is undoubtedly one of the reasons why the newly inaugurated Roosevelt focused his attention on domestic economic recovery. Also, although Roosevelt may have been concerned with foreign policy from the outset of his presidency the economic status of America needed his immediate attention. Hence, the President was forced to deal with domestic matters first, and once he had developed a program which began economic recovery through domestic reforms, he could work on the development of foreign policy.⁸⁹

Roosevelt and Isolationism do not seem to be compatible. Historians have long debated whether or not Roosevelt put national needs over his personal preferences during his first term as President. Critics of Roosevelt such as Beard, Barnes and Tansill, hold that the President was almost exclusively concerned with domestic reforms and hardly gave an indication of concern pertaining to foreign policy during his first term as President. They maintain he tended to domestic matters first, and subsequently tackled

foreign problems after he had proven himself to be an innovative leader.⁹⁰

Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Norman Davis, Chairman of the U.S. delegation at Geneva, convinced the President to make such a speech in the interest of promoting world peace. Their purpose was to prepare Americans emotionally for the implications of current aggression. However, the use of the word "quarantine" and the comparison of aggression to an epidemic was totally Roosevelt's concept.⁹¹ According to his critics Roosevelt invoked a political tactic used by many leaders who had failed to solve domestic problems in the past. Through the Quarantine Speech, he attempted to shift American concerns from domestic problems to the threat of aggression and the loss of world peace.⁹² This hypothesis may be a valid analysis of why Roosevelt suddenly shifted his attention from domestic matters to international concerns. This could also explain why he did not pursue the ideas contained in his speech sooner than he did.

More likely, Roosevelt sincerely believed that if America did not act, there was a real possibility that a world war could erupt and countries even in the western hemisphere would be attacked. However, when so many of the people responded to the Quarantine Speech with such vehement opposition he did not press the issue on them, even though

he probably felt that the concepts contained in the speech were vital to national security.⁹³ Many internationalists and even some isolationists welcomed Roosevelt's plan for "non-entanglement and non-intervention" since they had interpreted the speech to be no more than an extension of the Stimson policy. However, other isolationists were not pleased with the President's use of such bold language. If Roosevelt was using this speech as a "trial Balloon" to test American reaction to the pursuit of a more interventionist policy, then the overall reaction of U.S. citizens conveyed a clear warning against adopting such a policy.⁹⁴

Many other American leaders criticized Roosevelt for seeing foreign policy solely in terms of world peace, rather than U.S. security.⁹⁵ However, because of the opposition to his Quarantine Speech, Roosevelt knew that he had to hold back a little longer rather than abandon the whole concept of U.S. isolation from foreign affairs.⁹⁶ But this assumption is not compatible with the idea that Roosevelt was a leader who was not afraid to pursue a course which he felt was in the best interests of the nation and the world regardless of consequences, and strengthens the claim that he was using the speech as a deterrent from domestic difficulties.

In his book The President As World Leader, Sydney Warren describes President Roosevelt as being "accomodating

and affable, yet shrewd and calculating---at times even ruthless!" After seeing the nation's reaction to the speech, the President retreated from such bold statements, but as the 1940's approached and the threat of war became more apparent, he began to regret this retreat more and more.⁹⁷ Roosevelt was an intelligent man and a brilliant strategist. He perceived Hitler's intentions and in what direction he was planning to move next. Roosevelt also knew that Hitler could not keep to the course he had been pursuing without starting a war. In addition to the military build up in Germany, aggression by Japan in China disturbed him greatly. The Italians continued their aggressive actions in Ethiopia and began to develop an alliance with Germany. Roosevelt feared that these nations would join forces. If they did, he knew that no nation would be safe, not even those in the Western Hemisphere although he probably kept Jan Masaryk's phrase in the back of his mind, "Dictators always look good---until the last ten minutes!"⁹⁸

There has been much investigation as to whether Franklin Delano Roosevelt was an internationalist or an isolationist, and whether or not he led the country into World War II. From researching this topic, it becomes quite clear to me that the President was indeed an internationalist, but also a good and effective politician. He knew that he could not push the country into an

internationalist position until the people had become ready for it. From what can be learned about him, there seems no doubt that Roosevelt was indeed a strong, capable President. He knew what needed to be done and timed his actions well. It was probably no accident that the President gave this speech during a time of severe domestic problems, but it is much too harsh to say that he used this speech only for its deterring power. Roosevelt may have been trying to deter the American public, but more likely he felt the need for the United States to adopt an Internationalist diplomacy because of the threat to world peace posed by the aggressive nations. The only way he could safely pursue such a course was to test the American opinion to see if the people were ready to move in a new direction.

Roosevelt felt that citizens of the U.S. should be notified of the dangers which threatened them. He had the foresight to perceive that if aggression continued American involvement in another world war was a possibility and that he needed to arouse the American people to avert such an eventuality. Roosevelt undoubtedly wanted to warn aggressors and let the rest of the world know that America would be ready to stop them if they went too far. He also needed to test U.S. reaction to such a great shift in policy. Also, the President realized that his popularity was decreasing and may have hoped that this bold proposal would restore his political standing. I believe that world

peace and national security were the primary concerns which provoked such actions. However, because of Roosevelt's shrewd approach to political life, the other other issues surely played a part in determining when and how the speech was given.

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APPENDIX I

Franklin D. Roosevelt
Quarantine the Aggressors Speech
October 5, 1937

The political situation in the world, which of late has been growing progressively worse, is such as to cause grave concern and anxiety to all peoples and nations who wish to live in peace and amity with their neighbors.

Some nine years ago the hopes of mankind for a continuing era of international peace were raised to great heights when more than sixty nations solemnly pledged themselves not to resort to arms in furtherance of their national aims and policies. The high aspirations expressed in the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact and the hopes for peace thus raised have of late given way to a haunting fear of calamity.

The present reign of terror and international lawlessness began a few years ago. It began through unjustified interference in the internal affairs of other nations or the invasion of alien territory in violation of treaties, and has now reached a stage where the very foundations of civilization are seriously threatened.

The landmarks and traditions which have marked the progress of civilization toward a condition of law, order and justice are being wiped away.

Without a declaration of war and without warning or justification of any kind, civilians, including women and children, are being ruthlessly murdered with bombs from the air.

In times of so-called peace, ships are being attacked and sunk by submarines without cause or notice. Nations are fomenting and taking sides in civil warfare in nations that have never done them any harm. Nations claiming freedom for themselves deny it to others.

Innocent peoples, innocent nations are being cruelly sacrificed to a greed for power and supremacy which is devoid of all sense of justice and humane consideration.

To paraphrase a recent author: "Perhaps we foresee a time when men, exultant in the technique of homicide, will range so hotly over the world that every precious thing will be in danger, every book and picture and harmony, every treasure garnered through two milleniums, the small, the delicate, the defenseless---all will be lost or wrecked or utterly destroyed."

If those things come to pass in other parts of the world, let no one imagine that America will escape, that it may expect mercy, that this Western Hemisphere will not be attacked and that it will continue tranquilly and peacefully to carry on the ethics and the arts of civilization.

If those days come, "there will be no safety by arms, no help from authority, no answer in science. The storm will rage till every flower of culture is trampled and all human beings are leveled in a vast chaos."

If those days are not to come to pass--if we are to have a world in which we can breathe freely and live in amity without fear--then the peace-loving nations must make a concerted effort to uphold laws and principles on which alone peace can rest secure.

The peace-loving nations must make a concerted effort in opposition to those violations of treaties and those ignorings of humane instincts which today are creating a state of international anarchy and instability from which there is no escape through mere isolation or neutrality.

Those who cherish their freedom and recognize and respect the equal right of their neighbors to be free and live in peace must work together for the triumph of law and moral principles in order that peace, justice and confidence may prevail throughout the world.

There must be a return to the belief in the pledged word, in the value of a signed treaty. There must be recognition of the fact that national morality is as vital as private morality....

There is a solidarity, an interdependence about the modern world, both technically and morally, which makes it impossible for any nation completely to isolate itself from economic and political upheavals in the rest of the world, especially when such upheavals appear to be spreading and not declining.

There can be no stability or peace either within nations or between nations except under laws and moral standards adhered to by all. International anarchy destroys every foundation for peace. It jeopardizes either the immediate or the future security of every nation, large or small.

It is, therefore, a matter of vital interest and concern to the people of the United States that the sanctity of international treaties and the maintenance of international morality be restored.

The overwhelming majority of all the peoples and nations of the world today want to live in peace.

They seek the removal of barriers against trade.

They want to exert themselves in industry, in agriculture and in business, that they may increase their wealth through the production of wealth-producing goods

rather than striving to produce military planes and bombs and machine guns and cannon for the destruction of human lives and useful property.

In those nations of the world which seem to be piling armament on armament for purposes of aggression, and those other nations which fear acts of aggression against them and their security, a very high proportion of their national income is being spent directly for armaments. It runs from 30 to as high as 50 percent.

The proportion that we in the United States spend is far less---11 or 12 percent.

How happy we are that the circumstances of the moment permit us to put our money into bridges and boulevards, dams and reforestation, the conservation of our soil and other kinds of useful works, rather than into huge standing armies and vast supplies of implements of war.

I am compelled and you are compelled, to look ahead. The peace, the freedom and the security of 90 percent of the population of the world is being jeopardized by the remaining 10 percent who are threatening a breakdown of all international order and law.

Surely the 90 percent who want to live in peace under law and in accordance with moral standards that have received almost universal acceptance through the centuries, can and must find some way to make their will prevail....

It is true that the moral consciousness of the world must recognize the importance of removing injustices and well-founded grievances; but at the same time it must be aroused to the cardinal necessity of honoring sanctity of treaties, of respecting the rights and liberties of others and putting an end to acts of international aggression.

It seems to be unfortunately true that the epidemic of world lawlessness is spreading.

When an epidemic of physical disease starts to spread, the community approves and joins in a quarantine of the patients in order to protect the health of the community against the spread of the disease.

It is my determination to pursue a policy of peace and to adopt every practicable measure to avoid involvement in war.

It ought to be inconceivable that in this modern era, and in the face of experience, any nation could be so foolish and ruthless as to run the risk of plunging the whole world into war by invading and violating, in contravention of solemn treaties, the territory of other nations that have done them no real harm and which are too weak to protect themselves adequately. Yet the peace of the world and the welfare and security of every nation is today being threatened by that very thing.

No nation which refuses to exercise forbearance and to respect the freedom and rights of others can long remain

strong and retain the confidence and respect of other nations. No nation ever loses its dignity or its good standing by conciliating its differences, and by exercising great patience with, and consideration for, the rights of other nations.

War is a contagion, whether it be declared or undeclared. It can engulf states and peoples remote from the original scene of hostilities. We are determined to keep out of war, yet we cannot insure ourselves against the disastrous effects of war and the dangers of involvement. We are adopting such measures as will minimize our risk of involvement, but we cannot have complete protection in a world of disorder in which confidence and security have broken down.

If civilization is to survive, the principles of the Prince of Peace must be restored. Shattered trust between nations must be revived.

Most important of all, the will for peace on the part of peace-loving nations must express itself to the end that nations that may be tempted to violate their agreements and the rights of others will desist from such a cause. There must be positive endeavors to preserve peace. America hates war. America hopes for peace. Therefore, America actively engages in the search for peace.

Text of the speech taken from:

Hofstadter, Richard and Beatrice K. Great Issues In American History: From Reconstruction to the Present Day, 1864-1981. [Volume III] (New York: Vintage Books, 1982), pp. 379-384.

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