

SUSPECT U. S. ALREADY BOUND TO AID BRITAIN

Isolationists Fear That Some Sort of Commitment Went to London.

(Second of a Series)

By BRUCE CATTON

WASHINGTON, Oct. 3.—One of the most important angles of the whole arms embargo fight is the isolationists' feeling that there is much that has not been told in the history of the months immediately before the outbreak of the present war.

Bluntly, they suspect that the American Government somehow, somewhere, committed itself in pre-war conversations with the British. There is no direct evidence to support such a charge. The accusation may never be made openly while the war is being debated.

Were British Encouraged? To explain why they feel that way it is necessary to recall some of the background of the present crisis. Early last April, President Roosevelt bade goodby to a group at Warm Springs, Ga., and promised to return in the fall "if we don't have a war."

A week later Senator Walter F. George (D. Ga.) rose in the Senate to say:

"When that declaration is made by the President of these United States it will arouse and it has aroused a genuine fear throughout this nation that somebody has afforded some encouragement to the distinguished English statesman (Lord Halifax) who today said that America, the United States, was in full sympathy with or shared fully, the expressions that had just been made in the House of Commons by the English premier."

George Now a Revisionist

A moment later Senator George added:

"I venture the statement, Mr. President, and I venture it without fear or hesitancy, if we let Europe alone there will be no war." Today Senator George is ranked among the revisionists. But the isolationists have that fear he mentioned—that "somebody" afforded some encouragement to the British, and that that fact helped to stiffen the British for war.

On April 11, at a White House press conference, President Roosevelt, by warmly endorsing a Washington Post editorial, implied broadly that any general European war would involve the United States and that this country should stand with England and France against any Nazi-Fascist design to dominate the world by force.

On April 15, President Roosevelt made his famous peace appeal to Hitler.

British Purchases Drop

Shortly thereafter occurred one of the queerest factors in the whole chain of events—an abrupt drop in Britain's purchases of American munitions export licenses.

Senator John A. Danaher of Connecticut points out that Britain bought licenses for \$26,611,797 worth of arms and munitions in the United States in 1938. In the first four months of 1939 she bought \$14,000,000 more. But from the end of April to the end of August she bought only \$701,000—in which same four-month period France bought \$60,000,000.

Here is the way some of these isolationists put these facts together:

In April, the President talked freely of war and of the danger of America becoming involved. He made a dramatic peace appeal to Herr Hitler, offering substantial benefits to Germany; and it was reported at the time that there was some advance knowledge of this appeal in London and Paris.

Hitler Rejects Plea

On April 28, Herr Hitler contemptuously rejected the peace appeal—and simultaneously announced abrogation of the German-Polish non-aggression pact, the Anglo-German naval agreement of 1935, and the Anglo-German consular pact reached at Munich the previous autumn.

On the heels of all of which, the British—not the French—practically stopped ordering munitions in America.

Now—ask the isolationists—Isn't all of this at least a hint that some pledge went from Washington to London, that after a final appeal to Herr Hitler the United States Government said something in London which convinced the British that American aid of some sort would be forthcoming in the event of war, so that the British let up on their frantic effort to lay in a full supply of munitions before the embargo could be applied?

NEXT — Congress examines President's plan.

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