

L.I. Sunoco. Tues., Sept. 5, 1939.

NEUTRALITY

(At thirty-six and a half minutes past one, Eastern Standard Time today - the United States became neutral. That is, officially. At precisely that second, the great seal of the Department of State was affixed to President Roosevelt's Neutrality proclamation.) Both President Roosevelt and Secretary of State Cordell Hull had signed it shortly before. The proclamation tells the world that ~~the~~ United States is officially neutral in the European War, and it proceeds to lay down rules according to international law - the rules governing the conduct of a neutral nation.

The proclamation itself is hardly news - the President already told us what would be done. The unusual thing about it is the promptness with which formal neutrality is enacted in this present European war. During the World War, President Woodrow Wilson did not formally declare American neutrality until three months after hostilities had started.

(After the great seal had been affixed ^{today,} all that remained was another proclamation declaring an embargo on the sale of war materials to any of the nations at war, ~~this to be~~ ^{And this was} issued by the State Department in accordance with congressional law.)

PAN AMERICAN

And there is to be a Pan-American Congress -- on neutrality -
to establish a common Western Hemisphere front with references to
the war on Europe -- a neutrality front. The United States Govern-
ment has suggested it and immediately the Republic of Chile said
okay.

issued
A statement later on by Secretary Hull's department, gave
the information that the Republic of Panama was about to issue
an invitation to the other American republics -- asking them to
gather at Panama City and discuss Pan American attitudes toward
European war question, Pan American neutrality policy.

RULES

After wading through an ocean of war bulletins for several days, I've figured out a few things about sizing up the news of the armed clash in Europe. It's the same way with all wars, and this one especially -- what to believe and what not to believe. You newspaper readers and listeners to radio can't help but be puzzled, just as I've been. And right here I'd like to suggest a set of rules for reading and listening to war news.

Be mighty dubious and skeptical of any news that's favorable to the nation from which it comes. Everything is censorship and propaganda -- in this war more than ever. If a nation reports anything that sounds good for its own cause, it may be the honest truth -- but, it's more likely to be exaggerated, colored or, simply invented.

About victories on battlefields land, sea or sky, it'll be safe to believe them when both sides agree, the winners and the losers. For instance, in Spain, when Barcelona fell both sides said so. When the winner claims a glorious success and the losers admit a minor set-back, then the truth must be somewhere in the middle.

When both sides issue diametrically opposite war bulletins,

we can sometimes figure out the general truth from geographical locations. If both sides claim victory at a certain point within an invaded country, well then we know the invaders have at least advanced that far. I remember in the World War, and more recently in Spanish War news, how the scene of defensive victories was changed. One day you'd have a bulletin -- "We completely repelled the enemy in such and such a place." The next day - "We've checked the enemy with heavy losses at still some other place." And the map would show that place Number Two was twenty or thirty miles in the rear of Place Number One. And that would tell the story. The repelling and checking meant -- a fast retreat.

In addition to the censorship and propaganda, there is the exciting business of steaming up stories, exaggerating little or into something huge and startling -- scaring up headlines. So let's keep a wary look-out for the facts, if any, upon which great flashing rumors are based. For sometimes the fact isn't there. A minor border skirmish may turn into a blasting report -- Germans invade France, or something like that.

Along about now, I'll bet some of you are saying -- "Well, what's the use of reading or listening to all this war news at all?" But, there will be much truth in what comes through - in spite of censorship, propaganda and scare headlines. So let's be as keen as we can about picking out the facts and tossing out falsehood -- and thereby keep ourselves clearly aware of the tremendous events that are occurring on this mad globe right now.

FRANCE

(What about the Western Front? There seems to be no real fighting there. (Tonight's official war dispatch issued in Paris is about the same as the news earlier in the day. Even the wording is the same: "Our troops are everywhere contacting the enemy." says the French High Command. Explanatory reports indicate this contact does not mean violent clash, but is merely the preliminary manou vering in No Man's Land between the Maginot and the Siegfried lines.)

The sector with the greatest activity is a place where the opposite fortifications are separated by six miles of territory along the Franco-German frontier. French and German soldiers moved into that six-miles belt of No Man's Land and dug trenches, jockeying for position. In places the French seem to have edged over the German border, thus technically invading Germany.

(Berlin officially declares that not a shot has been fired on the Western Front.)

Last night's supposed air raid on Paris, was nothing more than a practice black-out of a thorough sort. And Paris is going to have more of these unexpected blackouts, to train the people what to do when the bombers come.

WAR

(The Germans claim to be driving deep into Poland, the Corridor isolated, Hitler's southern army smashing its way ~~on the southern front~~ toward the great industrial City of Krakow. Nazi troops ~~rapidly achieving the~~ ^{occupation} of the whole industrial section of Silesia. Great victories ~~in Poland~~ are announced in Berlin to the tune of popular cheering, and Nazi triumph.)

~~The~~ News of the war in Poland had its dramatic flare today in dispatches from Warsaw, ~~these were~~ heavily censored, brief, cryptic, ~~hard~~ [^] to be guessed at. Some parts ~~had~~ ^{with} no meaning because of ~~what~~ the Warsaw censor ~~had out out~~. The indications, though vague, were unmistakeable - that the Polish government is preparing to abandon the capital. Foreign diplomatic officials are leaving. United States Ambassador ~~Anthony Drexel Biddle~~, ~~and~~, and his family departed from Warsaw today.

The reasons for the exodus are not ~~altogether~~ clear, ~~it may~~ be because of the incessant German air raids. - They continued all day today, Hitler's bombers striking the unfortunate capital of Poland. Yet the censored dispatches seem to indicate more than air raids. (German dispatches reported that Hitler's troops,

striking from the north, had driven to within fifty miles of Warsaw. The reports from the city itself told of the sound of cannon fire, the thunder of the fighting line. Could it be that the Germans have driven that close to Warsaw? This is not at all clear. ^{TR} Still the news is that there's an exodus from the city, that the government of Poland is moving. "To an unknown destination," say the dispatches. The rumor is that the Polish government will move far to the south, toward the Roumanian border. No, not toward the frontier of Soviet Russia - they'd hardly want to take refuge in Stalin's Communist ^{pro-Nazi realm.} ~~realm.~~

BOMBING

There's an unconfirmed report that Berlin was bombed today -- by Polish planes. Paris has a Warsaw announcement that thirty Polish bombers flew over and gave Berlin what Berlin has been giving Warsaw. They smashed at Hitler's capitol from the sky and returned safely to their bases. London knows nothing about this.

About the British air raid against the German fleet, Berlin and London are in flat contradiction. The British claim their sky bombs either damaged or sunk a couple of Hitler's battleships. Berlin says no damage was done and claims that German defense planes shot down some of the British bombers.

There was another British propaganda air raid today. London announces the dropping of five million more leaflets over western Germany. Britain is attaching a lot of importance to these propaganda attacks from the sky -- hoping to stir up discontent in Germany against the Nazi Fuehrer and his war. And indeed there are rumors which tell of disaffection and even of outbreaks inside Germany. London has a proclamation, said to have been smuggled out by the German Socialist Party -- a proclamation saying that the working masses are against Hitler's war.

BRITISH LABOR

Great Britain, under the pressure^r of war time, adopted a drastic labor bill today. One Labor member of Parliament said the bill would give the administrator of the law more power than a totalitarian dictator possessed. The British government now controls - employment; ~~It concerns~~ the right of the worker to select his job, ^{and} ~~to~~ go from one job to another. The control is exerted through the employers. These are forbidden to hire or rehire employees without the consent of the London Minister of Labor.

Obviously, if employers can give jobs only by government consent, workers can get jobs only through government permission. ~~You won't leave a job if you have no chance of getting another.~~ So you see what an inroad war has made on one sort of liberty that Britons have long held sacred.

ATHENIA

The survivors of the Athenia told their stories today, and we have a picture of pity and horror -- ~~that~~ picture of a torpedoed passenger liner which the World War made so tragically familiar.

Today ~~in~~ the House of Lords, Cabinet Minister Lord Stanhope declared there was no doubt that the Athenia had been torpedoed and sunk by a submarine. "A study of the evidence given by the survivors" said he, "indicates positively that after firing the torpedo the submarine came to the surface and was seen, seen clearly. Lord Stanhope declared that there was no positive confirmation of the story that the undersea boat fired a shell at the Athenia -- though this is positively stated by the Captain of the ill-fated craft. Some passengers say the submarine fired a second shell, and one man describes it as -- a gas shell.

A member of the crew of the Athenia declares that the submarine stayed in the vicinity of the sinking ship for hours afterward. "Several times during the night," says he, "when we were in the lifeboats, we heard the submarine passing below us. ~~How a submerged craft could be heard by survivors in a lifeboat is not so understandable. But the stories go further.~~ An American

survivor, ~~ix~~ Mrs. Ellen Fisher of Gerard, Ohio tells the following:
"The submarine apparently fired another torpedo which passed underneath our lifeboat, pitching it high in the air. "I think" ~~xx~~ she adds, "we were ~~very~~ lucky to come down right side up." What she thought was another torpedo passing underneath the boat might well have been a large wave for the sea was rough.

Survivors stories like these are indications of what a nightmare experience it was -- the crash of the explosion, slow sinking of the ship, a bright moonlight night, four hundred people in life boats on a rough sea amid high waves. The number of fatalities is still not known for all the boats with ~~xxxxifxxx~~ survivors may not have arrived in port. The death list now is estimated at about ninety.

The Germans continue to insist that the Athenia was not torpedoed by a German U-Boat. The denials continued urgent and repeated today. Berlin insists that a boiler explosion might have caused the disaster, and charges British propoganda -- to influence the United States. Hitler's Germans are right about one thing, nothing would more greatly influence the American public against Hitler than the torpedoing of a passenger ships.

BRITISH DOMINIONS

Today the government of South Africa rallied to the side of Great Britain, and this came after a ~~bit of~~ ^{dramatic} ~~situation~~ ^{situation} ~~dramatics~~. The act of loyalty to Britain was opposed by the South African Premier, General Herzog, ~~the~~ old-time leader of the Boers, the Dutch element that fought Great Britain in the Boer War. Premier Herzog proposed that the British South African dominion declare itself neutral in the European War. Today the Parliament at Capetown ~~took a vote on this, and voted down~~ ^{voted down Herzog's} ~~the~~ neutrality proposal. The vote was eighty to sixty-seven in favor of standing by Britain in the present war. [¶] What did Premier Herzog do? He resigned - stepped out of office. And King George's Governor-General thereupon asked former Premier, General Smuts, to form a new Cabinet. Smut ^{z was a dominant} ~~was a~~ ^{Boer leader} in the war against England back in the early part of this century, but for years since ^{then he} [^] has been a pillar of strength to the British Empire, an influential British statesman in the World War. Under his leadership, South Africa will join Great Britain in the war against Germany.

~~In Canada today there was an important move in the~~

U.S. PLANES

Three missing United States army planes were found today - but not in such good shape. They vanished yesterday during a formation flight to Panama, and were missing somewhere along the Central American coast. It turns out that all three were wrecked. The bright part of the story is - no casualties.

DIES

It's a relief these days to find some hundred per cent American home news -- just plain United States.

There is a journalistic remark I've heard attributed to Bonfils, the once renowned and picturesque editor of the Denver Post, who is reported to have stated editorially: "A dog fight on a Denver street corner is more important than a pitched battle in Mongolia." Well, today's war news is not on the intellectual level of a dog fight on a street corner in Denver.

Today the Dies Committee gives us the testimony of Witness Ear Browder, Communist chieftain and Red candidate for the presidency. Browder told of a plot. He indicated that it was a deep laid scheme to have the Communist Party nominate Franklin Delano Roosevelt for the presidency in Nineteen Thirty Six. Browder was offered a hundred thousand dollars for his participation, which sum was later raised to a quarter of a million, says he.

Browder said that while he was Communist candidate in Nineteen Thirty-Six, he was approached by a man named Davidson. The Communist chieftain said he didn't know much about him, but described Davidson in these words:- "He looked like a typical

industrialist, banker or broker." Now what does a typical industrialist, banker or broker look like? Tall or short, fat or thin, handsome or homely? Davidson, testified Browder, suggested that Browder retire his Communist candidate and have the Reds nominate President Roosevelt as their crimson choice.

Comrade Browder spurned a hundred thousand or quarter of a million, to do this. He preferred to run for the presidency -- no doubt expecting to be elected.

I don't suppose the story is of any enormous consequence, but it does have the good familiar flavor of Washington and the Dies Committee, and a Denver Dog fight, and SO LONG UNTIL TOMORROW.