

that ruined them is advanced to us as the reason either for our getting into this war or for continuing to rely for our defense on another nation, then I am very sure that it is the duty, however unpleasant, not merely to point out these simple facts of life but to make them as emphatic as the English language and the rules of radio permit.

We are told that Hitler is our threat in the Atlantic, or might become so over night if Britain fell. But we have a defense against that threat—as fine and strong a navy as sails the seven seas. Where is it? Facing Hitler? Oh no, it is out in the Pacific almost half a world away. Why? Is that hemisphere-defense of the Americas?

Our Fleet in the Pacific

No professional strategist will say that there is any pending practical threat to our west coast that we could not guard against on a reasonable basis and with a moderate force. Nobody pretends that our fleet is out there to defend this continent. It is out there to give us a dominant voice in Asia where our material interest isn't worth half a battle squadron; and where the Philippines have asked us to abandon our moral obligation to our flag, which we have promised to do in 1946.

If that is defending the Americas, somebody has scrambled this good globe of ours all up and all geography needs to be turned inside out or upside down.

Saving Britain's Empire

Now, of course, it is no such thing. We are out there to help preserve the British empire in Asia. Is that necessary in order to keep the British fleet between us and Hitler? It may help, but it's a pretty far cry to such a conclusion. The real effect of it is not to keep the British navy between us and Hitler. Its purpose is to rest the peace and defense of America on some force other than our own. Present indications are that we are in more danger of waking up some morning to find ourselves at war in the Far East, 7,000 miles away, than of anything that could conceivably happen to us on our Atlantic coast.

Bringing American Dictatorship

That would be a war over issues which few, if any, of our people would understand and in which fewer have any interest. Nobody who has studied this rapid trend of ours toward "war to defend America by defending Britain" will deny it. The further it goes, the more we shall have to give up every attribute of American freedom and democracy, and the closer we shall approach a war dictatorship which will be as drastic as any known in Germany or Italy.

At Home, 1940 Is Not 1918

We had to do that in 1918. Woodrow Wilson hated that form of government. He gave up most of those great powers the day after the Armistice. This administration does not hate powers centralized and personalized in the president. It has constantly sought them ever since 1933, and it has never voluntarily surrendered one power granted on the excuse of an emergency. Would this country be willing to trust it with complete war powers, or if the country did, would it ever give them up? A grave and growing danger is there.

What's the Answer?

Our belligerent friends are arguing themselves into a curious dilemma. Keep out of war, by getting into war? Defend America, by defending Britain in Asia? Save our democracy, by giving up our democracy? In the meantime what have we been doing to defend ourselves?

Before I say anything about that, let me pay a tribute to Franklin D. Roosevelt for building up and equipping a large one-ocean navy and for providing a great chain of outlying air and naval bases for defense at sea.

Paper and Pencil Defense

There is no time here to discuss the method by which the latter act was done, more than to say that it was unnecessarily highly questionable and ominous. Aside from those preparations, however, the delay, the blunders, the lack of foresight in building up our landward defenses, are tragic and inexcusable. To cover these failures, the country has been dazzled with appropriations of billions, by misleading congressional reports and by a constant display of rhetorical Roman candles. Now money "appropriated" is not "munitions in hand."

America Gets Second Choice

We have shifted to England, war munitions that we cannot replace in years. The necessary equipment for the army and air force is neither on hand nor "on order." Even the contracts that are actually in performance, or negotiated, for cannon, real first-line fighting airplanes, engines, tanks, explosives, propellers, shells, automatic rifles, anti-aircraft guns, and other machines and tanks, are not a drop in the bucket compared with the defensive needs.

The bulk of this material in the present blundering progress will not begin to flow until 1942. The great new naval appropriation will not begin to speak for another year. In fact, we have gone backward in our strength in all these regards. Much of this delay was avoidable and all of it was inexcusable.