

The Economic Club of New York

Hope for Democracy

April 18, 1939

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Introduction

Wendell L. Willkie, President

Since this is the annual election meeting, it is necessary to dispose of the business prior to the program. I believe that the first order of business is the Report of the Nominating Committee, of which Mr. Frederic Attwood is Chairman. Mr. Attwood.

FREDERICK ATWOOD: Ladies and Gentlemen: After careful deliberation your Committee respectfully nominates for your consideration the following candidates for the offices of the Economic Club of New York to be filled at the election this evening:

For a term of 1 year, from October 1, 1939 to September 30, 1940, it is with extreme pleasure we offer in nomination Mr. Wendell L. Willkie. (Applause)

For Vice-Presidents: David Sarnoff and George V. McLaughlin.

For a term of three years, from October 1, 1939 to September 30, 1942 - Executive Committee:

Winthrop W. Aldrich, Chairman of the Board, Chase National Bank.

Vincent Bendix, President, Bendix Aviation Corporation.

H. P. Davison, Member of Firm, J. P. Morgan & Company.

T. Rieber, Chairman of the Board, The Texas Company.

Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., Chairman of the Board, U. S. Steel Corporation.

I might add that Mr. Aldrich has telephoned his acceptance from London, and all of the other nominees have certified their willingness to serve, either by letter or by telephone.

PRESIDENT WILLKIE: I ask Mr. Walter Hoving, member of the Executive Committee to take charge of the meeting.

WALTER HOVING: I will entertain a motion to instruct our Secretary to cast one ballot for the nominees as stated.

....The motion was made; seconded and carried. There were no other nominations....

I congratulate you on having Mr. Willkie as your President for another year. (Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLKIE: Even the New Deal can't do better than that. (Laughter)

Also at this Annual Meeting it is necessary, or thought desirable, to make certain minor amendments to the Constitution and I am going to ask Mr. Ely, who really runs this club, the others being merely factotum--I am going to ask him to read these amendments; otherwise someone might think I am prejudiced.

ROBERT ERSKINE ELY (EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR): These proposed amendments are very simple. I will not read in full what you find in print, and the substance was mailed in advance to every member of the Club.

It is thought best that the name of the governing board should be changed from “Executive Committee” to “Board of Directors,” and that there should be a small Executive Committee of 5 Directors, with the addition of the President and the Executive Director of the Club ex-officio, making an Executive Committee of 7, with the powers of the full Board when the Board does not meet.

Another provision, the mention of which may not be plain to everyone, simply emphasizes the relationship of the Economic Club to the organization which gave the Club birth in the year 1907, the organization now known as Town Hall. That same organization gave birth to the Town Hall Club, so that these 3 organizations have a very intimate relation to each other, although each is entirely self-governing and independent in the management of its finances and its business.

I think I have said sufficient about these amendments. There is no question of principle involved; it is only a slight advance in efficiency.

PRESIDENT WILLKIE: In good democratic form I am going to assume there is nobody who desires to discuss these amendments; therefore, I will hear a motion that they be adopted.

...The motion was made and seconded...

All those in favor say "Aye." I shall give the opposition no opportunity because our subject this evening is Saving of Democracy. (Laughter)

I think every man of any intelligence in the world today is conscious that if someone fired a pistol tonight at the wrong person or if two individuals changed their minds, millions of men might be marching tomorrow. Therefore the officers of the Economic Club thought it quite appropriate at this time that we discuss the question of the "Hope for Democracy" because I think we all realize that bound up in this world struggle going on now are the hopes or the despairs of democracy.

Here in this country we are divided sharply into two groups; some who believe we should remain isolated from the rest of the world and some who believe we should establish our frontiers of the mind, but both believe their program indispensable for the benefits, for the preservation of democracy.

We have, as usual, sought to bring you me peculiarly qualified to discuss the subject. The first speaker this evening is one of the most fascinating and capable speakers of America. Out in Wisconsin where he and his father and brother have long ruled--according to some, not in accordance with the precesses of democracy--a visitor, not long ago, when Phil was governor, wanted to see the Governor, and inquired of some friend as to how he should address the

Governor when he appeared in his presence. The friend told him the people from the outside called him “His Excellency,” but people in Wisconsin were divided--sharply divided into two groups--some called him “Phil” and some called him an “S.O.B.”

It is my very great pleasure to present to you one of the most fascinating, attractive and certainly one of the most lovable men on the state of the American Scene, Mr. Philip F. La Follette!

(Laughter)

First Speaker

Philip F. La Follette

Former Governor of Wisconsin

Mr. President, Members of the Economic Club of New York and Guests: These are serious times and during the last 3 months, having been involuntarily retired from public life (I trust only temporarily) I went to Europe. These times are so serious and so critical that when anyone attempts to speak in any way relating to a foreign situation at least I feel an American ought to be particularly careful of the words that he uses, and what I have to say tonight is not final--I make no pretense that I know it all--but it is the honest and sincere appraisal of one individual who spent 3 months in as intense and concentrated an effort to find out what the situation was in Europe, and these respectfully submitted to you are some of these conclusions.

The fate of democracy in our day will be determined on this continent. Our destiny depends upon our capacity as a free people to work our way through the dangers which threaten us. Our basic principles are right. Our machinery is essentially sound. But neither our principles nor our machinery will save us if we fail to make them work. We must have a new, high-speed carburetor, and a new set of brakes.

The tragedy of the past 10 years-- a tragedy in which we all share--is that America did have the unique opportunity to solve this issue free from the harassing fear of foreign aggression.

Now a new menace appears from abroad. From now on we shall have to fight on two fronts, instead of 1. But we cannot meet successfully the threat from abroad, without solving the problems at home. Indeed, solving the problem from within may solve it abroad.

Many Americans believe that Europe is going to repeat the pattern of 1914, and that we shall face again the choice of 1917. They assume there will be another European war, and that America will choose then between isolation and intervention. Recent events in Europe make it unnecessary to emphasize that this actually may happen. But there is another possibility that must not be overlooked.

It may be that a war has been going on without our fully realizing it. Instead of a war being about to begin, it may be entering a new phase. Instead of confronting the problems of another

European war, we may face the more dangerous issue of a Totalitarian Europe, allied with a Japanized Far East, aggressively bent on dominating the Western Hemisphere.

We must face frankly the vital question whether the Atlantic and the Pacific any longer afford us the protection we have heretofore supposed, especially from the type of aggression we may be compelled to meet. Modern transportation has shrunk the Atlantic approximately to the size of the English Channel in the 19th century. It takes no longer today to go from Europe to the Americas, than it did 100 years ago to go from England to Portugal. But more important, propaganda--“boring from within”-- has become one of the most dangerous and effective instruments of modern warfare. In the use of this weapon there are no longer ANY frontiers, and within nearly every country potential enemies are bred by discontent.

The modern world is too small to hold both the American and the Nazi concept of human society. (Applause) the Nazi aim is a return to Paganism--to the worship of the material and physical as the ultimate in life. The American aim rises above this. It recognizes that the physical and material are essential to life, not as an end, but as a means of enriching the spiritual life of all. Within our time one or the other will dominate.

The greatest mistake made in Europe, and a grave danger for us, is under-estimating either the strength or the nature of Nazism.

Nazism has taken an inherently weak Italy and given it strength. It has taken a potentially strong Germany and given it super-power. The explanation is simple: in neither country are there any unemployed. Granted, that millions are at work on war preparations. Granted that the methods of government are brutal and that terror lurks on every hand. Granted that orthodox rules of finance and economics have been thrown out the window, but whatever either country has is at work. The energy of the whole people and the power of modern production are harnessed and under the complete control of a government that knows what it wants. But withdraw the military activity and the war-like objectives and the whole economy would collapse.

Providing work for human and material resources not only vastly increased the external power of Germany and Italy, it is also the greatest, perhaps the only source of popular internal support. However, much elements of the population may dislike or hate Nazism, there is always the concrete fact that everyone has a job, and every farmer can sell what he produces at a profitable price.

The right and the duty of earning our daily bread is fundamental to a normal human being. A “hand-out” under whatever name it may be cloaked will feed the body, but it starves self-respect. Honest work is essential to the well-being of both the nation and the individual.

Let us remember before we embark on another crusade in Europe that propaganda is the most effective weapon in modern warfare. The tramp of millions of unemployed in Britain, France and

America is a grave danger to democracy at home, as it is perhaps the most effective propaganda against democracy within both Germany and Italy.

Mankind always has had, and always will have to work. And men worked long before they were free. The foundation of Nazism in Germany and Italy is the simple proposition that today under modern conditions men cannot have both work and freedom. Nothing would more certainly smash Hitler and Mussolini from within than our demonstration of the counter-proposition that men can have work and be free.

We must not mistake Nazism. It is not Bourbon reaction masked behind the false-whiskers of socialism. It rode to power in Germany, and it rides toward power outside Germany as a defender of “capitalism” against “bolshevism.” In actual fact Germany is the most powerful and efficient anti-capitalistic country in the world today. The symbols of private control and private ownership remain. The substance has completely vanished.

Central, socialized control has been extended to agriculture, and to industry and business of any consequence or size. The control is not limited to what shall be produced, or how, or when, or at what price it shall be sold. For practical purposes effective management likewise has passed into the hands of the Nazi Party.

Russia may be more communistic in theory and in form. But what there is of communism in Germany is so much more efficient that the net result is that no other country has gone further in the centralized control and administration of production and distribution. Germany is not a bulwark against communism; on the contrary the ugliest features of bolshevism have entered Germany through the Trojan horse of National Socialism.

In spite of the persecution, in spite of the throttling of the press and of speech, and in spite of regimentation and socialization, the German people still would balance the ledger in favor of National Socialism, were it not for one vital factor: the destruction of religion, and the violation of personal character and all that that implies.

The German people do not want to dominate the world. They want equality for their country. They want an opportunity for 80,000,000 intelligent, industrious, thrifty, vital people, to live, and to live decently in the modern world. Nazism, by evil methods, has been satisfying the physical needs of these people. However, the events of 1938 and 1939 have convinced a majority of the German people that while Nazism is feeding the body, it is destroying the character and slaying the spirit of all that it touches.

Nazism is the gravest foreign danger to the Western Hemisphere in general and to America in particular that has appeared in our history. If it succeeds in dominating Europe and the Far East,

only too soon we shall find its attacks trained on us. There never will be peace nor will human liberty be safe while the Nazi regime is in power.

In the World War the common man everywhere was fooled into believing that the issue was the preservation of democracy. Unless we watch our step we may be fooled again, and with even more disastrous consequences to ourselves and to the world in which we live.

Within every country, including both Britain and France, there are dupes of Nazism who believe they can save their positions and power by giving aid, directly or indirectly, to Nazism.

But within every country in Europe, including both Germany and Italy, the great masses of the people are essentially fine, and fully share with us the two-fold aim of spiritual as well as material well-being.

It is just as important to distinguish between the governments and the people of Britain and France, as between them in Germany and Italy. Americans greatly underestimate two vital factors: First: The extent of the discontent within Germany among all types and classes of people. The German people understand far better perhaps than we the bitter cost of Nazism, and they correctly sense that they are being put behind the “eight ball.”

Second: The extent to which groups in Britain and France are dominated not just by the particular interests of the British and French Empires, but worse by their selfish group interests.

The events of recent years have demonstrated that certain elements in Britain and France are highly questionable allies in defense of democracy. It is difficult to escape from 1 of 2 conclusions. Their policies are the product of gross stupidity, or they result from meticulous and painstaking plans. In either case they are not designed to preserve democracy, but to protect special interests in Britain and France, and secondly those interests in the world at large.

There are those who excuse such groups with the plea that their leaders were “taken in” by the dictators, but to believe that one must assume that such leaders do not read, or if they read, cannot understand the daily reports that pour in from the best diplomatic and intelligence services in the world. If they are stupid then American would do well to stop, look, and listen before putting our eggs into a basket held by such hands.

The policies of the present governments of Britain and France are not the product of stupidity. They have been the result of a narrow, short-sighted but extremely shrewd purpose to give preference to class interests ahead of nation welfare.

These policies have been based on the following conclusions of that group:

First: Germany and Italy are now dangerously near to, if not actually in a distorted form of communism. The upsetting of Hitler or Mussolini, in their opinion, would result in making Germany and Italy more rather than less of a menace to the British and French governing groups. Hence the policy of appearing to oppose Hitler and Mussolini, while giving them aid and comfort.

Second: War must be avoided if possible not only because it is horrible, but because another prolonged war might mean a political and economic revolution in Britain and France.

If the “policy of appeasement” has been in fact abandoned, it is not because Mr. Chamberlain has just discovered what the world has known for years, namely that Herr Hitler was a liar. If the present government of Britain has now withdrawn the aid and comfort it was extending to Nazism even as late as March 15, 1939, it is not because there has been a sudden decision that Nazism is evil. If these policies are changed, and if they remain changed, it will be because they have decided they cannot stay in power without opposing Nazism. Of the twin risks of loss of power through war, and loss of power by “appeasing” the dictators, the latter is the more immediate danger.

Third: if war does come, in the opinion of this group it will be essential to have the immediate support of the United States and the Dominions. But the support of the United States and the Dominions could not be won over by British propaganda so discredited by the bitter experience

of the World War. Hence in the opinion of this group it was advantageous to let Hitler and Mussolini “get away” with acts of brutal aggression, and thus allow their actions to accomplish what British propaganda could not achieve.

Let me again emphasize the menace of Nazism and the profound conviction that it must be smashed. The question is how.

I am convinced we shall run the greatest risks if we attempt it in alliance with the present ruling forces of Britain and France. Certainly the American people will never consciously get into another European war just to pull British and French economic chestnuts of the fire. The only possible justification for such a course would be the argument that we are defending ourselves from Nazism.

In contemplating such an alliance, we should recall two things: First: Those who have dominated the governments of France and Britain, and who created and put into practice the mistaken policies which has a large part in driving democracy out and putting Nazism into power in Germany.

Second: these cliques in France and Britain until recently never raised a finger to oppose Nazism, and in fact until at least 4 weeks ago were actually engaged in giving it aid and comfort. Let every American from the humblest citizen to the President of the United States ask himself this

question: With that record behind them, are we ready to entrust the future of America and the fate of democracy itself to such hands?

Now we must assume that the purpose behind recent American foreign policy and the activity of our representatives abroad was to “stiffen” the democracies. The practical results, however, may have been strengthening the forces within Britain and France who are least interested in democracy and who have never demonstrated the slightest concern in the welfare of the United States.

America must beware lest her foreign policy run the two-fold risk first of supporting forces that may “sell out” democracy without a war, or if there is a war that it will be solely to protect selfish interests. Those who believe in human freedom would do well to envision what the disillusioning experience of another war to “make the world safe for democracy” would do to our own institutions here at home.

We should chart a course, the single, sole and underlying purpose of which should be the welfare of the American people in the highest and best sense. Time permits only an outline of such a policy:

First: Put our own house in order. (Applause) Restore to every able-bodied American regardless of age, whether on the farm or in the city, the guaranteed right--not to a living--but to earn a

decent living from useful work. By so doing we shall safe-guard democracy at home and take a big step toward undermining dictatorship abroad.

Second: Re-define the Monroe doctrine. Make clear that we will not tolerate Nazism in any form in any part of this hemisphere. (Applause) Should it, unfortunately, succeed in any place in “boring from within” we must be prepared to, and take whatever steps may be necessary to tear it out root, stem and branch. (Applause)

Third: Establish the closest economic and political relations with all the Americas, but especially with our closet neighbors Canada and Mexico. Now that Nazism has taken over Spain we shall have to re-double our efforts in this hemisphere to off-set the “boring from within” that will come from that source.

Fourth: Encourage the forces who really believe in democracy not only in Britain and France, but in Germany and Italy. A step in that direction is to make certain that our representative abroad really believe in democracy themselves and that they think first, last and all the time of the interests of the American people. Actions speak louder than words abroad as well as at home. Eloquent tributes to democracy here in America can be largely nullified if our representatives abroad by daily, public conduct support those forces in Europe least concerned about democracy. Speaking for myself alone, I do not hesitate to say that the President of the United States would

perform a public service if he immediately recalled our Ambassador to Great Britain and replace him with the best Benjamin Franklin he can find. (Applause)

Fifth: Give Nazism a dose of its own medicine. Nazism has meddled flagrantly in the affairs of other countries and resorted to any device to weaken and undermine those who oppose it. Nazism must be smashed but there is an excellent chance that it can be done without war. Although efforts seem to be afoot to take us into a war supposedly against it, until now, no serious effort has been made to destroy it without war. If war eventually should come, every step taken to support democratic elements in Europe, including Germany and Italy, will shorten such a war immeasurably. Let us follow the admonition of Theodore Roosevelt to speak softly but carry a big stick.

In 1918 Woodrow Wilson said: “The treatment accorded Russia by her sister nations in the months to come will be the acid test of their good will, of their own comprehension of her needs from their own interests and of their intelligence and unselfish sympathy.” History tragically demonstrated what an acid test he set forth of others as well as himself. In the present crisis it would be well to remember that Russia is one of the essentials in Europe today to any honest and intelligent opposition to Nazism.

Sixth: We should hold off from entanglements in Europe until and unless it becomes unmistakably clear that the principles, ideals and vital interest of the American people are

actually at issue. Let no one forget that if democracy is in a critical situation in Europe today, it is due, to a considerable extent, to the policies of powerful forces in Britain and in France.

In our apprehensions about Nazism, we must not strengthen the foes of democracy in Britain and France nor injure its friends in Germany and Italy. Above all, we must not ally ourselves with reactionary forces which in another war might scuttle democracy here and abroad.

There is no responsible head of governments who has sensed more accurately than the President the danger of Nazism--not just to Europe but to the Western Hemisphere as well. His message to Hitler and Mussolini last Friday was a desperate effort to do all in his power to prevent the outbreak of war. It is worth noting that his proposal is not peace bought by throwing some weaker people to the wolves, but one based on an honest effort to solve the underlying economic problems by peaceful discussion. In that high purpose I am confident he expresses the profound prayer of the American people, and without exception of the entire world.

The cause of human progress has suffered tragic setbacks in the past. It may again in the future. It has lost many a battle. It can never be ultimately defeated. (Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLKIE: Things are looking up; you have already one ambassador as a casualty. You ought to have a good evening. Of course, there are some supplements to what might be done domestically, but it seems there is going to be eloquent controversy here tonight. You will see following the principal addresses the speakers have kindly agreed to answer questions, so if you

care to prepare questions they will be answered on presentation to the Chair, and they will be presented to these 3 speakers. Any they can't answer Mr. Ely or I will answer, or leave unanswered. (Laughter)

I know of no man in America who can more truly represent both by reason of what he has written and what he has said and by reason of the very accidents of his life, the aspirations of democracy, as the next speaker. He was born in Russia; he came to this country as a small boy. He lived for a while in New York and then moved up into some village in northern New York, and you will recall in one of his works re recalls in an appealing story of the time he went to that village. There was a dog at the station there, and he threw a rock at it. Someone said, "You can't do that." He said, "Why can't I do that?" the man said "You can't do that to a dog up here." And, for the first time this man, born in Russia, realized that even a dog has rights in America.

It is my great pleasure to introduce one of America's most distinguished authors and speakers.

Mr. Maurice Hindus! (Applause)

Second Speaker

Maurice Hindus

Author and Journalist

You can't have a death without having a birth, and since President Willkie has spoken of a casualty, I should come forth instantly for the nomination for the birth to supplant that casualty--I mean it seriously--I nominate Mr. Philip f. La Follette as the Ambassador from America to the King at St. James.

I make the nomination more readily because in his speeches he showed the first and primary requisite of good diplomacy--he mentioned no names.

I am only a journalist, I have never been a governor and I never shall be a governor. I never shall be American Ambassador and, therefore, I shall speak frankly and I shall not be hesitant to mention names. Three of the British journalists who were with me in Prague, have recently published books in England, and one has had his book published in this country.

Please note the titles of these books: 1: "The Betrayal in Central Europe;" 2: "Disgrace Unbounded;" 3: "I Saw the Crucifixion."

*** PAGE MISSING FROM ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT***

Allies were, and all you have got to do is to look at what they are doing with the help of the British Government to Czechoslovakia now to realize how violent emotions can go when they are backed by strong military power.

I don't know how to explain the collapse of character and wisdom and imagination in the British ruling class. Please note I say the ruling class, because I know, having been in England recently that the British people are heart-broken; that they are angry; and the great tragedy is that that people who will die by the millions before they will give up their civilization, that at this particular critical moment of their history have in their ruling class the 4 horsemen of stupidity and treachery; Mr. chamberlain, Mr. Hoar, Mr. Halifax and Mr. John Simon.

I watched the thing in Czechoslovakia. All the journalists who were there, particularly the Britishers, watched it. Mr. Chamberlain, had he been interested in democracy had he been interested not only in the moral strength but in the military strength of democracy should have done everything he possible could to preserve Czechoslovakia.

Instead, what did he do? Listen carefully. He announced in the House of commons in July--I have forgotten the exact date-- that the Prague Government requested a mediation commission, and that was why he was sending Lord Runcimann to London, rather, to Prague.

The trouble with Mr. Chamberlain's announcement is this: that not a single one of us British or American journalists could find a single official in Prague who would confirm Mr. Chamberlain's announcement in the House of Commons that Prague had requested a mediation commission.

The Runcimann came, and we watched him. He came to study the minorities and to understand the problems. The British journalists watched him even more vigilantly than the American journalists. What did Mr. Runcimann do? His weekdays he spent in the luxurious Alcran Hotel; his weekends he spent in the equally luxurious castles of some German barons who were Nazi agents in Czechoslovakia, and 1 weekend he was supposed to go off and learn for himself what was taking place in Czechoslovakia, the real situation; learn it from the bottom, from the people themselves. Oh, he was going to make a great study of it. And two British journalists were very much interested in that study. He got out of town before they could locate him. But, journalists have a 6th sense. Sometimes they almost know by a miraculous intuition what a diplomat is going to do. And so they started straight for one of the most wealthy German Barons in Czechoslovakia, and Mr. Runcimann spent his weekend there.

That is how he studied democratic institutions and minority conflicts in Czechoslovakia, coming in direct contact with the people.

Well, I don't want to go too much in detail. Look further to what happened. The British--I don't mean the British--Mr. Chamberlain--his friends have been saying: But England couldn't possibly fight with Czechoslovakia because she was weak. Splendid, if you are weak, you don't fight. But I would ask the British to explain to the world--and when I say British, I do not mean the people; I mean the British ruling class--why it was that if did not tell Benes, who was a good a friend as they had in Europe, that nobody would offend him; that his alliances with France did not amount to anything; that his alliances with the Little Entente would also be brushed aside; that England would forget her guarantee through the Covenant of the League of Nations of the geographic integrity of Czechoslovakia--why didn't he tell Benes, 5, 6, then months earlier and say to him: "Benes, Hitler has been wanting to make a separate peace with you. Go ahead and do so and don't depend upon any help from the outside."

That is not what he did. I will tell you what he did. On the 21st of September, at 2 o'clock in the morning, Benes was in bed. The British and the French Ministers in Prague drove up to the Castle and they rang the bell, and the attendant came out. "We want to see the President," stated the Ministers in Prague.

"But the President is in bed. It is late."

"Wake him."

They got Benes out of bed, 2 o'clock in the morning on the 21st of September when Hitler already had his pistol over Benes head and over the head of Czechoslovakia, and they said to

him, “Either you give to Germany the Sudetenland, its mountains and its fortifications inside of them--either you do that, or we wash our hands of you. Your military alliances don’t mean anything at all. You will be all alone, and you will be murdered.”

And Benes said to them, “Gentlemen, it is 2 o’clock in the morning. My ministers are in bed. I can’t decide quickly.

And on very good authority, the British Minister said to Benes, “You haven’t a minute to lose because the British Prime Minister is waiting on the telephone on the other end of the line in London.” And so Benes got his Ministers together, and there they met.

Now, think of it. Here was Czechoslovakia, a strong country, a prosperous country, a democratic country, in my judgment, and in the judgment, I would say, of every British and American journalist who traveled in that country, and who didn’t spend their weekends in the homes of German Barons; one of the sanest most decent countries in the world (Applause) was told at 2 o’clock in the morning, on the 21st of September that you just as well bid good-bye to you independence and your democracy; that she is to become a vassal of Germany.

Well, Benes and his Cabinet met. There was nothing they could do except capitulate, and all day long Benes didn’t tell the people what had happened; and then early in the evening he told his people what had happened, and then those of us who say what followed will never forget it as long as we live.

The Czech people poured into the streets, all of them the men, the women, and even the children, and all night long they marched up and down, and they shouted: give us arms. We want to fight. Give us arms. We want to die.”

And we journalists, and we are a pretty hard-boiled lot of people, but I tell you I don't know of a single British or American journalist who saw that demonstration that night who didn't weep. Here were a people who were willing to die for democracy, even after Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Deladier had betrayed them.

But, the odds were against them and they capitulated, and Mr. Chamberlain had told Benes twice: “You yield the Sudetenland to Germany and, of course, we will guarantee your independence.

On the 4th of October, Lord Inskip delivered a speech in which he said that England was already under obligation to defend the independence of what was left of Czechoslovakia. Again and again the British press said: why, now Czechoslovakia is purged to her minorities, and she is going to be as free as Switzerland. The British Prime Minister himself made such a statement on the 6th of October in the House of Commons.

And then, from day to day, those of us who remained there as the Germans were making more and more demands, 6th zone, 5th zone; they mustn't do this, they mustn't do that, they mustn't do the other thing, it was clear to us that it was only a question of time before Hitler will move into Prague.

Mr. Chamberlain had said that Czechoslovakia was independent. Lord Inskip said that England was all ready, on the 4th of October, under obligation to defend the independence of Czechoslovakia. And yet, on the 15th of March, when Hitler marched into Prague, Mr. Chamberlain, in his first reaction, said that he did not regard that as an act of unprovoked aggression.

And it is only when the storm of emotion and protest on the part of the decent British people, not the Tory class, burst into the open. It is only then that Mr. Chamberlain turned around instantly, and as Mr. La Follette said, saw that there was a chance of losing power, and began to wage another campaign against the dictators.

I am not fooled by the words of the present British Government. I say to you, my friends, that before I, at any rate, and I am speaking for myself, would have any confidence that the British would actually be interested in the support of democracy in Europe--before I could believe that, I would have to see Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Halifax, Mr. Hoare and John Simon retire to some

country place where they could play cricket all day long and all night long--not until then.

(Applause)

I think your executive committee, and Mr. Ely, whom I have known for a good many years, and who sleeps and dreams and breathes democracy every second of his life, a very courageous people to make the subject of this evening's discussion: The Hope of Democracy.

My friends, there is no hope for democracy in Europe as long as England is ruled by the people who are ruling here now, and as long as France is ruled by the people who are ruling her now.

(Applause)

The question is what are the people of this country going to do? We American and British journalists, and please remember, no more severe criticisms were heard in Prague of the present British Government than by the British journalists, and I remember one evening the City Editor of one of the leading British newspapers called up his correspondent in Prague and said to him, "I say, don't you be overcome by local emotion."

And he came down and told the group of us this conversation with the city editor in London, and we just burst into laughter. "Don't be overcome by local emotion" when France deliberately crucified the finest democracy, the strongest democracy, the sanest democracy in the whole of Central Europe, and perhaps in the whole of Europe.

Another conditions, in my judgment, which would have to come about in order to convince me, at least, that there was a serious attempt to bring democracy back to Europe would be to stand up and say that Czechoslovakia must be given her independence again so that she can re-establish democracy within her borders. (Applause) Without any democracy in that part of the world, it is useless to think of democracy in Europe.

Bus as I said, we have got to think about this country. What are we going to do? My friends let us not fool ourselves by words, phrases, slogans. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, I, who was not born in this country, but who grew up among fine farming people in Northern New York on a farm, have learned that the people of this country love to crusade for the underdog. But before you decide to crusade, be sure that you actually crusade for the underdog and not for the upper dog. (Applause)

I am convinced a war is unavoidable in Europe. I am not sure that Mr. Chamberlain's new Allies are going to fight against Germany. I don't think Hitler has to start a war now. All he has to do is do what he is doing now, keep everybody jittery, particularly the countries in Central Europe, and concentrate large armies on their borders. One of these day I rather imagine it is going to happen, although I may be wrong, when he has a large enough army on the border of Rumania, he will call in the King and we will say to him:

“King, you are a fine fellow. I like you. You got a mustache and I have got a mustache. Your Mustache isn’t as pretty as mine, but it is a mustache. You are a real man. Shake.” And after he has complimented him, he will present him with a paper and will say: “Sign on the dotted line. If you don’t within two hours, you will lose your kingdom and you are wiped out.”

I don’t have to tell you what the reply of the King will be. The Czechs are braver than the Rumanians in the sense that they are stronger militarily. But when their President was called in and told to sign on the dotted line, he signed on the dotted line. No use resisting.

I think the one country in Europe that will not sign on the dotted line that will fight even if she is defeated, is Poland. I don’t care what you think of Poland. I don’t care what your feelings are about Poland. I have been in Poland a great deal. I even understand their language. They are a hardy, brave, fighting people. I do not believe that they will sign on the dotted line.

But the question is: What is America going to do? And again I warn you against catch words; I warn you against slogans.

I personally believe if there is a war in Europe, America should help with things but not with men. (Applause) I think if we send an army to Europe, it will mean the collapse of democracy in this country for years and years to come. (Applause)

War in Europe, in my judgment, will not result in a victory for anybody; it will result in chaos, in anarchy, in a revolution. Strange, isn't it, what an irony, that Stalin, a Bolshevik, who many of you, a lot of you would like to destroy, that the man who came out with the slogan "Socialism in one country" giving theological justification for a practical formula, namely to confine the Russian Revolution to the borders of Russia, that it comes to the Chamberlains and the Hitler's and the Mussolini's to wage world revolution!

I may say that I am convinced that Stalin will not have to wage a fight for world revolution--I am convinced that these rulers bringing Europe to war, which, in my judgment is unavoidable, will hand it to Stalin on a platter.

If America is involved in a European war, my friends--whatever you may think now, you representatives of business will be demanding that the American armies suppress the revolution. Their emotions are going to change, and your thoughts are going to change, after quite a bit of blood-letting in Europe. And if we start suppressing revolutions in Europe, it will be a job for years and years and years, and before it is through, there will be more than a few cracks in the American democracy.

So I say, if you are really interested in democracy, to help the people fighting against Nazism in Europe, do it with things, but not men--make America, if necessary, in time of European war, an

arsenal, but not an army, except to give or rather to keep the army here on this continent, and not send a single soldier across the ocean to Europe. (Extended Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLKIE: Well, there is a Prime Minister finished off to a Queen's taste. Two down and one to go.

Now I want to make a little appeal to these three speakers now. After all, I am presiding at this meeting, and I am under sufficient suspicion already. Please confine these casualties to men abroad.

The next speaker is an English journalist. During portions of Mr. Hindus' speech I saw him taking notes, and during other portion of it he didn't even have time to take notes.

Mr. S. K. Ratcliffe, as you all know, has, for many years, been as a journalist and a lecturer, an interpreter of the English mind and heart to the Americans. I think you all know him. I introduce to you Mr. S. K. Ratcliffe. (Applause)

Third Speaker

S. K. Ratcliffe

English Journalist

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen: This is obviously no place, no occasion for me. I am not a member of the British ruling classes. I am not a defender of the present British National Government. I have had no admiration for the form of policy as devised and conducted by the present Prime Minister, Mr. Chamberlain. I have belonged to that very great section of British opinion--actually of course in the minority--as represented in Parliament which has been highly critical of the line of the British National Government, and which from the beginning, in June of 1937, has been greatly troubled about the line, the philosophy, which lies behind that policy, for this is undoubtedly such a philosophy, and which shared a great deal of the feelings you have heard expressed by Mr. Hindus just now, and especially as expressed by those British and other journalists in Prague, who gave expression in regard to that policy.

You cannot expect me to attempt in the short space of time at my disposal this evening, to make anything like an orderly or considered reply to these two speeches. I came to the meeting this evening in a somewhat faint expectation that we should hear speeches upon the position and the outlook of democracy in the world. I made a shot in my mind of what Mr. La Follette would say in general--I would say, in a word, now, I have rarely listened to a finer, a clearer or a more eloquent statement. I do not think I could have heard from one American at the present time, one

with which, as regards its general positions I should be in more complete accord. I should be indeed compelled to descend from some of the things he said, but in general I agree with his standpoint, and I admired without end his wonderful force and energy in stating his views.

I will begin in what I have to say by what I call an “oblique” reply in regard to the policies of Great Britain in the recent past. Like Mr. Hindus, Mr. La Follette confined his attack to that curious governing order in Great Britain of which my friend Mr. Hindus has fantastic views. But Mr. La Follette, speaking in accusation of the governing class in Great Britain seemed to me to identify the interests of that class and its politics with the general line of British international policy, let us say, during the last 10 or 15 years, and he said very specifically that the policy of the ruling classes in England had been dictated by their class interest. He said, further, that British policy as so directed has not shown any concern with Democracy, except the general record, or with the welfare of the United States.

May I just throw back for a little to the beginnings of the whole trouble in the period following the war? It is of course, perfectly true as the two speakers reminded you that we stood with the rest of the warring nations in 1919 in the same hideous feeling created during the war. It is perfectly true the British representatives in Paris did not share as they should have done with the great American representative in Paris, and if I may say so, neither did you. The American people were not behind what Wilson was trying to do in Paris.

I crossed the United States at the time when the discussion began with regard to the ending of the war, and right across the United States, across this continent, I saw headlines on the front pages at the moment when Wilson was considering the request for Armistice from Germany, and there, in town after town, was the great headlines, “Unconditional Surrender” and “No discussion of conditions at all.” And so, undoubtedly, it was at the time the peace was made, there was a great force of opinion in Great Britain which, I think, on the whole, was more in favor of the peace with Germany than the great force of opinion on this side.

There are two things I will here remind you of: Great Britain came out of the violent war feeling I believe, earlier than the other countries. British policies reflected that change of view from 1923 onwards. The year before Ramsey MacDonald came into office, we had Bonilaw, who made an appeal to France, before they went into the Ruhr. That was the beginning of the new and more generous policies of Great Britain to the beaten nations in Europe and what I say in defense of my own country, in defense of the governments of that day, is on the whole that they had to struggle alone.

It is not true, Ladies and Gentlemen that Great Britain through its policies did not show concern for the welfare of the United States or for the opinion of the finer elements in this country from 1924 onwards--Great Britain was struggling to undo the great mistakes of the war and peace period, and if we could have gotten anything like decent cooperation with the French government at that time, when Ramsey MacDonald, in the First Labor Cabinet was prime

Minister of England, you would have seen a great change in the picture of Europe being unrolled.

And then take a leap to 1929, when the Dawes Plan was out and the new plan for reconstruction. It wasn't, I am sure, with Great Britain that the major part of the fault lay for the failure of that statement of decent policies from 1929 onwards. That was the moment when the economists, when the social authorities should have been working together with the statesmen in order to lay a foundation upon which a new Europe could have been raised. And all through one part of Mr. Hindus' speech was a repeated accusation that Great Britain had done nothing to prevent the Nazis coming into power and nothing to check the advance of Nazism over Europe.

I submit, ladies and Gentlemen, if there was any government which before 1933 was attempting to do something to remove the worse causes of the grievances upon which the Nazi Government was able to establish itself, its power, it was the government of my own country--and we were doing this virtually alone. The United States came in at the crisis of the war to secure a victory, and right or wrongly, I don't know, but I held it in 1919 to be virtually inevitable, the United States went out of the peace.

Great Britain had to take the lead in the reconstruction efforts after that, always without any direct assistance from any other power. The whole expectation and whole demand falls upon my country. Going to Geneva at any time when the League of Nations were still there, and eyes were

always turned upon England and on London. The expectation was always from this one government. The initiative was always demanded from us, and generous actions were called from us. I submit to you, never was any real demand made or expectation sought of any effort of that kind except from the British.

We have inherited a vast responsibility over the world. This generation of Britain's is not responsible for that--not even the present governing class of Great Britain is responsible for that. It is the largest and most difficult and varied load that has been placed on any modern government, and the British government staggers under that load alone. And I belong to that section of British opinion as I said in New York the other day, which has always been critical of the old empire, which implies constant criticism to the old governing class, but we make this modest claim on behalf of the British system. It is the only imperial system that has shown the elements of self reform and redemption for mistakes of the past. Look over the history of the past and you will find where something has been done under British initiative to redeem the great blunders of the past and lay the foundation of democracy under the meaning of those words.

Coming down to 1938: I couldn't speak as Mr. Hindus does. I couldn't if I tried. My attitude in times like these to the government of any country or people of any country, amidst these unending perplexities, is not the attitude that my good friend Mr. Hindus adopts. These are days when the expression of emotion and especially the very emphatic emotion is, I submit to you, to be deprecating. Every government has troubles and difficulties far beyond the capacities of the

men trying to carry out government in these days. I admit the general accusation of the Chamberlain government through these dreadful months. I share the shame and humiliation, and the indignation of practically all of my friends and fellow workers, by reason of what happened in September of last year, but I ask you if you can to detach yourselves from the tremendous flood of righteous emotion. I agree with it. But to detach yourselves if possible, and look at some of the hard facts of 1938 as facts which were confronted by the French and British governments, and let me say I was relieved, as an Englishman, to find the responsibility for the collapse of 1938 was distributed over France and Great Britain.

The central event of that period I take to be the Anschluss in March of 1938. I was in Czechoslovakia, and in Prague 6 months before that. I talked to the author of “Betrayal”, “Betrayal in Central Europe”--an old colleague of mine, and I think he and the others would agree with me, speaking of the outlook in the fall of 1937, they didn’t see the collapse that followed, and what appeared to be the practical impossibility of defending Czechoslovakia.

The central event was the Anschluss, and the merging in 1938 of Austria and Germany. Whatever that event did, it did two things, it exposed the southern frontiers, Czechoslovakia, making the country more difficult to defend, and had a decisive effect on the state of mind of Sudeten Germans. Until that time I think we would agree the redressing of immediate grievances would have been enough to keep them loyal to Czechoslovakia’s Republic. After that they recognized the tremendous change that had come about and the British and French governments

and the Czechoslovakian governments were aware that the demands would be greater after March of 1938.

Well, now, the French were bound by military alliances. Mr. Hindus reminds you that Britain was bound by the covenant of the League of Nations. True, of course, but the same had become a document without effect at that time, as we all know. Great Britain was not committed to military support of Czechoslovakia as the Allies were committed, and that certainly made a serious difference to our position.

I agree that the statement made by Mr. Hindus is correct, that the right line was to have given straight warning to Benes and the others that the independence of Czechoslovakia could not have been maintained by outside help. With any hesitation I should say that, and add, as well, that from my own point of view the whole technique of 1938 was deplorable in the highest degree.

By the time however, that the situation had reached September of 1938, there seems to me no question about the central facts, two in particular.

1: The Czechoslovakian Republic could not have been upheld by war. If war had happened in Europe at that time, the first victim undoubtedly would have been the Czechoslovakian Republic, and out of that war whatever things would have been possible, the restoration of the Czechoslovakian Republic was one that was clearly impossible.

The other point is surely indisputable. The word could have been given from Paris and London for the resistance to Germany. That would have been the beginning of the general war, without the salvation of Czechoslovakia.

I happened at that moment to be in Austria, to share the deep feeling of anxiety, and from time to time of despair, of the people all around me, and yet there was the sense when the relief came, that the war had been put off, of the appalling responsibility falling of the leaders of the two governments in London and in Paris, with respect to the word that could have been spoken, a situation arising largely, no doubt, through the maneuvering of the totalitarian states through the application of the new Nazi technique of conquest. A situation had arisen in which the responsibility for beginning the war that would have been the general war, fell upon the British Cabinet and the British Prime Minister and the French government leaders, and the French acted on the conviction that nothing which can happen in Europe now could be so evil as another general war.

I don't see how anybody can deny that as a matter of practical policy, - no statesman in the government of self-governing country in these days, I believe, can find himself in the position except under terrific emergency and pressure of events can argue, I think--can find himself in the position where he will willingly give his vote to the beginning of a general war.

I thought in October that the situation would never recur. It has recurred. The movement in Europe in the months since has come around to something like the same spot. If Mr. Hindus' forecast is fulfilled, as I think it will be, in the furtherance of the Nazi technique of conquest, in what I call the "Black peace," once again the responsibility will be placed upon the governments of France and more probably Great Britain for an action that will start that world war, and sharing as I do, a great part of the criticism of my own government, I ask whether especially upon the citizens of a great nation at so far a distance from the scene of conflict, in so glorious a position of safety, whether we cannot ask you to imagine what it is to lie under the shadow. Citizens of France and Great Britain, living in countries entirely vulnerable; under the threat of aerial warfare, which, if it come will surpass all the imagination of men and women. We are there, in the shadow of this danger, for which there has been nothing comparable in the long history of the martyrdom of man. And Mr. Hindus says we have done nothing to resist this great power, this terrible power which has come unto the world.

Well, we haven't done anything because no statesman in Great Britain could see any way of doing it except increasing the danger of immediate war, facing the beginning of another world conflict and they are compelled to assume that the maintenance of peace, the avoidance of war, is the imperative need of both those two countries. And it seems to me they are obliged to follow that lead.

Now this discussion is in terms of the outlook for the preservation of democracy, and you are warned against the present government of Great Britain because it is assumed it is the old irredeemable governing class which is following a policy dictated only by its own class interests and its determination to hold onto its governing powers.

Is that, I wonder, the way to state it? It is undoubtedly true as Mr. La Follette reminded us; the German people have no dream of world conquest, but think of the party now in control. Think of the minds that have shaped that policy, that are driving that education into the people, the children and into the young people. It is a philosophy for the mastery of the whole of Europe which means world mastery, and in the road of this terrific power the greatest and most menacing that has come, it seems to me, the road, in the progress of that power lie the old states of France and Great Britain.

If the struggle comes, it will not be in terms for the preservation of democracy or restoration of the independence of little countries that have been martyred. It will be the struggle between these two systems which, as Mr. La Follette began by reminding us, cannot exist in the world together. That is to say, if the war comes, it will first of all be a war for the life, the continuance of France and Great Britain, and that is very close to the finishing words used by Mr. Hindus, and we know, when the issue comes we won't be thinking of forms of government, of the sweeping power of the new totalitarian states upon their own people, or the preservation of our own self-governing institutions.

All alike, we shall be putting to ourselves the question, Does the world of today and tomorrow want to see Great Britain and France go down before this new black power which surpasses, which does not parallel any of our experience in the past--a new form of mastery which as we have to believe must be the end, must be ended before lie can believed and freedom be restored, and living in this world be tolerable fro men and women?

That will be the issue and when it comes and if I hear the sound of bombs over Paris and London--I won't think of the future in terms of democracy. No. We won't even remember the deep and grave sins of Great Britain, but will feel the question driven to your hearts.

And the answer is--I agree with Mr. La Follette--America must keep out of this chaos and destruction if she can. America must chart her own course; America must begin the vast job of showing that life in this country can give work and health and fulfillment to the people--a counter affirmation to the great new despotisms which have made their countries into prisons. And we have to tell ourselves that in those national prisons they have built there, there is not only harshness and forced labor, but there is for the people, as Mr. la Follette so eloquently reminded you--there is security and shelter and food, there is the tremendous challenge to all the self-governing peoples, and that challenge will have to be met. (Applause)

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

PRESIDENT WILLKIE: Now we move onto the question period. The first question I am going to ask of governor La Follette: What can be done for our young people in the democracies who are jobless and hopeless and find themselves in much the same situation which made the young people receptive to Hitler and to Fascism?

MR. LA FOLLETTE: I would just like, if I might, before answering the question, in a very small measure come to Mr. Ratcliffe's very unnecessary defense. And that is, I tried to emphasize the idea; I think it is important for people of this country to keep care of their minds. The British, whatever faults you want to level at them, even the governing class of great Britain, have a deep sense of what they call being "sporty." They are good sportsmen, and from what information I have been able to gather on I think form and satisfactory grounds, I am satisfied that the British Government at Munich and what has risen out of Munich, took far more than their share of the criticism.

I think that France, particularly, and I am speaking of the Government of France, if there was any real appraisal, should have taken far more of the responsibility than was given her by any newspapers' comments I have seen.

As to the question: What can be done for our young people in the democracies who are jobless and hopeless and find themselves in much the same situation which made the young people receptive to Hitler and to Fascism?

Frankly, I think the question answers itself. “Jobless and hopeless”--it is up to us, obviously, and we cannot go into the details here, tonight, but it seems to me we have got to start with two simple propositions: forget if you please, about what all the economists, orthodox and unorthodox, say, and begin with two simple propositions that have guided one country at least in this world of ours to the highest securest state that I know of, existing anywhere--namely, Sweden. (Applause)

Two simple propositions: 1-- no nation is so rich that it can afford to pay millions of able-bodied men and women to do nothing. (Extended Applause)

And the second is: No nation is so poor that it cannot, by making whatever changes are necessary in its economy, give able-bodied men and women an opportunity by their work to make their country richer. When we get ready to get to those fundamentals we can do the job. It has been done! (Applause)

MR. WILLKIE: I am very glad that some economic royalist did not make those remarks.

Three questions have been address to Mr. Ratcliffe, and in order to save time I will ask him to read the questions.

MR. RATCLIFFE: the first is the old question with regard to the Treaty of Versailles. It is not the question whether the treaty is to be revised by the conquering of nations or maintained by the killing of young men. There is no treaty to be maintained. It has been destroyed partly by concessions of the parties making it, and the forceful action of countries supposed to be defeated.

The next is why did the British permit Germany to re-arm in 1934? Well, we have a conservative government at that time and the same Prime Minister. We were still, at any rate, paying lip-service to the principle of collective security within the Geneva system at that time. But nobody, I think, has been fully able to explain the mind and leadership of Baldwin in his refusal to recognize the facts and meet the challenge of German re-armament. That is one of the mysteries of our British conservative party. I don't understand their blindness or their logic. I don't know why they were not true to British principles of maintaining the British Empire and nation.

Do you believe Britain would have acted differently if Japan had not been menacing the position of Great Britain in the Far Eastern part of the world?

Japan was not menacing any eastern empire of Great Britain but there was an extremely difficult situation in the Mediterranean and the Far Eastern situation came in also. The government of Great Britain had to think of the difficulties and dangers for Great Britain in central Europe, the

Mediterranean, and the Near East round about Palestine and the Far East, which is another place of evidence I think of the extraordinary complications of the job the British government is carry out.

QUESTION FORM FLOOR: May an Englishman ask a question?

Mr. Chairman, the subject of the meeting tonight is the Outlook for Democracy. I should like to ask how that outlook is being cleared by two extremely emotional attacks on the two great democratic nations in Europe, and also upon the greatest democratic statesman in Europe-- needless to say I refer to Neville Chamberlain

I should like to ask how the outlook for democracy has been cleared. I think it has been most decidedly clouded, by the first two emotional speeches that were made and that could be published by any extreme leftist paper in England.

PRESIDENT WILLKIE: I will answer that in part: I should much doubt whether any free discussion such as we had here this evening, whether of persons or principles, does not demonstrate the democratic processes of this country are completely in effect. (Applause)

Another question, now: What would Mr. La Follette or Mr. Hindus have done if they had been in Mr. Chamberlain's place, facing two nations with airplanes outnumbering Great Britain's and

Frances's fighting planes? Would you have plunged a world into war or would you have had the courage to sacrifice a small portion of humanity for the best good of the larger number? Mr. Hindus.

MR. HINDUS: First I will say that I have to say a few words in reply to the question asked by the gentlemen from England with regard to aspersions that the speakers had been casting on the two great democracies in Europe and particularly on the greatest statesman of Europe.

Democracy is like the Bible--you can interpret it as you like--it is simply a difference of opinion as to whether or not Chamberlain is the greatest or is at all concerned with democracy.

All I can say is, if this gentleman had spent a few months, not with emotional journalists, but with sober-minded British journalists of the Daily Express, the London Times and the Daily-Mail, in Prague, he would have learned something of the opinion not of Americans but of Britishers, of the esteem with which Chamberlain regards the concept of democracy.

Now, would I had I been in Chamberlain's place been ready to plunge Europe into another war instead of sacrificing a small portion of humanity?

By all means, if through the sacrifice of Czechoslovakia a war had been assured I would have forgiven Chamberlain--I might even have applauded him. All you have to do is look at the world

now and regard Mr. Chamberlain's frantic efforts even to court Russia, in order to form some kind of military strength, in order if war comes to meet the catastrophe. In other words, Mr. Chamberlain evidently had miscalculated--that is, if he thought by sacrificing Czechoslovakia, it would end war.

There were 100 British and American journalists in Prague. A great many of them drove through in cars and came in and went out again. There wasn't a single British or American journalist, who at the time traveled through Germany that came back with this very interesting report. The Germany they found, the German people, are infinitely more frightened of war than anybody else.

Moreover, and you too, know, that many of the leading Reichswehr generals were absolutely opposed to starting a war. The industrialists of Germany, likewise, were fearlessly opposed to a war. It seems to me that there is just as good reason to think that there would have been a war as that there would not have been a war. Hitler might have wanted a war. He might have been arrested by the Reichswehr. He might have committed suicide.

But supposing that the Reichswehr were to have followed him? Supposing that the German people would have followed him? I ask you, is it easier to fight a war when you have about 2,000,000 of the finest trained armies in Europe? The Czech army, which have a Maginot line, perhaps in some respects--well at any rate as good as the French Maginot Line, according to the

British and French military attaches in Prague--and one of the finest armament industries in the world--would it have been easier to fight against Germany, with Czechoslovakia, with Russia, with Rumania, with Yugoslavia, with Bulgaria, with Poland, possibly even with Hungary and perhaps even without Italy? Because, remember, that Mussolini made a speech; I think it was shortly before Gottesburg, in which he said that he has decided on which side he would fight, but he never mentioned the side on which he would fight. (Laughter)

Of course, it is an academic question, but I say this: Would it have been much easier to fight then with the enormous military support that the Allies, so-called, at that time had, than it would be now? (Applause)

Now Russia: Nobody knows whether she is going to fight. Nobody knows whether Rumania is going to fight. Nobody knows whether Greece is going to fight. I do not believe that these countries are trusting Mr. Chamberlain, because if I read Mr. Chamberlain's words correctly, if I read the dispatches of the press correctly, and Mr. Ratcliffe, I hope will correct me if I am wrong, I find that Mr. Chamberlain is gathering a lot of sheep into his backyard, but is leaving the door open for them to run out again.

He will defend them, if I understand him correctly, if they will resist. Supposing they don't resist? Or supposing they tell them as they told Czechoslovakia at 2 o'clock in the morning on

the 21st of September, when Hitler held a revolver over Benes' head--if you do resist, you will be alone.

What will happen? It seems to me to be a chance, a very good chance to help Hitler, perhaps without any war at all, like before Munich.

What is more, hasn't Mr. Chamberlain himself told us in that memorable speech in the House of Commons, that had he felt that there was a power in the world which was seeking to impose itself upon the world by force, he would have thought that attempt unreasonable, and he would have counseled resistance?

Well, then, what happened afterwards? Hadn't Mr. Chamberlain observed, even at Munich, that the very powers who he thought were seeking appeasement, or whom he could appease were seeking to get the world by force? One concession after another, until now, just look at the thing. It will cost unfortunately--and I am sorry to say that, because of my tremendous admiration for the British people, and when Communists tell me that Mr. Chamberlain is going to lead the people into Nazism, I shout against them that the British people would rather die than sacrifice the decencies of their civilization--and Mr. Chamberlains policy, my friends, will cost the British people, the Polish people, the German people, the Italian people, perhaps even the American people millions of more lives than would have been necessary to stop Hitler before Munich.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLKIE: I am going to present one more question and then I am going to give each of the speakers 3 minutes in closing. By reason of the fact that this question is asked of Governor La Follette, I am going to transpose the order and have Mr. Ratcliffe open the final discussion, followed by Mr. Hindus, and closed by Governor La Follette.

If the British are so divided, how can we, the United States, have a clear cut policy of action in your opinion?

GOVERNOR LA FOLLETTE: Apparently I didn't make myself clear. In my judgment, the great masses of the people in France and in Great Britain are not divided. That is the extraordinary thing. I don't think they are divided on this essential issue. I don't think the masses of the people in France are divided. As I have said before, I will repeat again, I think in some strange way, or perhaps not so strange, the common people have understood Hitler from the beginning. They understood him in Germany. When the Nazi Regime told the common people of Germany, "We are going to put you to work, we are going to answer this problem, we are going to tear up the Treaty of Versailles"--the masses of people in Germany believed him.

The people in Germany that were fooled were the industries and the businessmen, the politicians and the experts. Similarly, it is my impression that in France and in Britain, the masses of people have understood Hitler and Nazism. They have understood in spite of all of the protestations and

the like that when Hitler and his regime said, as they did from the earliest, and repeated it, that they intended to do their best to dominate, to control, I think that the masses of people in France and in Great Britain have understood it, and for that reason I think we can start with the assumption that the great mass of people in Britain and in France are not divided.

I have tried to say to you that astounded me. I don't think in any real sense the great mass of people in Italy or Germany are really divided on this fundamental proposition. That is the most important single point I would like to leave with you about Germany and Italy, as I am given to see it. The masses of the people in both those countries have as profound and deep abhorrence of what has been going on in Germany and in Italy as any man in this room. (Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLKIE: Mr. Ratcliffe, 3 minutes in reply.

MR. RATCLIFFE: There is plenty of material, Mr. Chairman, in the notes that I made during the addresses. For those 3 minutes though, I think I will discard them, although I am greatly tempted to take up the 3 points with regard to the present position of Great Britain and the governing classes that were stated so clearly by Mr. La Follette. I think I will devote my 3 minutes to just two points.

First: In Mr. Hindus' reply to the question in which he went over his charges against Mr. Chamberlain, he said that if there was a chance of a war in September, there was also a chance of

avoiding war, or an equal chance. Quite so, I concede that, only reminding Mr. Hindus that the head of the Government inevitable must base his policy upon the more dangerous chance. It was quite impossible for Great Britain in September of 1938 to avoid what I believe to have been the very real danger of war, and they had received confidently from the Premier and the Foreign Minister of France on the Sunday between Gotesburg and Munich, they had received the account of the divided opinion in France and in the great weakness at that moment have France bolt as regards to the army and the air force.

The Prime Minister of Great Britain in all the circumstances was then compelled, I believe, to take the course that he followed. The charge against Mr. Chamberlain, I believe, therefore, should be based in general upon the stages by which the unhappy changes by which he had reached that 4 weeks of September.

The other point is with regard to the outlook now, especially in Great Britain, and this in particular in relation to the point that Mr. La Follette repeated and enforced.

Assume that we come to the ultimate emergency of having to prepare for the great struggle. We shall have, I take it, over night, a reconstituted Cabinet. We should have at once all prepared for compulsory service, and at that moment, I am afraid the present weakness of the opposition in Great Britain would be revealed. The opposition in Parliament should have been strong enough

to hold its own position during the troubles of the last few months, and especially to make its position clear with regard to the policy, if the ultimate emergency came.

That is to say, it ought to be strong enough to announce that it would cooperate with the government upon condition that the terms of the full national service should include equal satisfaction for all classes, and most particularly the national control of industry and of profits. It looks, unfortunately at the present time, as though the weakness of the Labor Party and the opposition in Parliament would leave them in the unfortunate position of having to accept the situation perhaps without conditions that mattered, to submit to the military organization of Great Britain which, in the end, unless we came to the final disaster would, as Mr. Hindus quite rightly says, would not be a repetition of a Nazi state in England, it would however, be a British form of an organized and disciplined nation. (Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLKIE: Now we will hear Mr. Hindus for 3 minutes.

MR. HINDUS: I don't think I am going to exhaust my 3 minutes. Mr. Ratcliffe, you have said that I was a little emotional. I plead guilty to your charge. Mr. Ratcliffe, I was in your country last summer. I was visiting a friend of yours, Mr. Braceford, one of your neighbors, and I said to Braceford, "I would like to visit Mr. Ratcliffe."

He said, “Mr. Ratcliffe has gone to the Far East”--so I contented myself with looking at Mr. Ratcliffe’s garden, and anyone who will spend as much time and as much effort in having such a beautiful garden can afford to be a little under self control.

MR. RATCLIFFE: It is entirely my wife’s.

MR. HINDUS: Anyone who has a wife like that has even a greater right to plead emotional self-control. And, you see, Mr. Ratcliffe, you happened to be away in the Far East.

Mr. Ratcliffe: In Australia.

MR. HINDUS: In Australia, rather. You are now just going back to England. Let me assure you, Mr. Ratcliffe, that some of your good friends there who are also my good friends, are going to surprise you with the amount of emotion they will show when they talk to you. I only wish to disagree with Mr. Ratcliffe on one thing which is rather important. He said that he had seen the author of “Betrayal in Central Europe,” Mr. Gattey, in Prague some months before the crisis and Mr. Gattey agreed with him or I think had told him that with Austria....

MR. RATCLIFFE: That was my reading, not Gattey’s--don’t put it onto Gattey.

MR. HINDUS: Pardon me, if you didn't ascribe it to Gattey then I would suggest this, that you look at his book and you will observe that he was working the thing out with a number of Czecho and foreign military experts in Prague and presents a complete military schedule of what would have happened had war broken out, and Gattey comes to the conclusion that it would not have been Czechoslovakia, but Germany who would have gotten in the middle of the pincers and would have been destroyed.

That also is only an opinion. But in conclusion I only want to say this to you; I quite agree with Mr. La Follette that there is nothing basically wrong with the common people in Germany or in Italy or in England. I will repeat to you that the British people in my judgment would rather die than give up the decencies of their civilization.

I was in England a few weeks ago, or a few months ago and I saw how the British villages would announce in the press very quietly in small print, villages in which there were not any Jews at all that they would adopt 5, 10 or 15 Jewish children, bring them up and raise them into manhood or womanhood. The fundamental decencies of the British people are there, and I say, thank heaven that the British people are not Chamberlains.

The only thing I would say in conclusion is this: it is going to be difficult for people in this country not to get over-excited when planes fly over England and British women and children are going to be killed, or French women, but particularly British women and children. You go to

the moves and you see bombardments of people in Spain and China, and you get angry, you don't like it. You are nauseated; you go home, but you know that you are not going to do anything. It is not going to be so easy for people in this country to be of the same frame of mind when they see in the motion pictures British women and children killed by bombs from the air.

Just the same I say that in the interests of democracy in this country and in the world the people of this country ought to exercise sufficient self-control not to send an army to Europe. I say if an army goes to Europe our democracy will be scrapped, and if revolution is breaking out in Europe, we shall be called upon; we shall want to suppress them, if it will be for years and years and years, and anything but democracy. There will be thousands upon thousands, tens of thousands, perhaps even hundreds of thousands of young people who will want to go to war. Those young people will find it easy to go to war. Canada is right nearby. They will fill quite a home in Canada. They can go and enlist and they can fight there if their emotions get the better of them.

But as a nation, in the interests of democracy in this country, in the interests of preserving in one spot in the world the spirit, the technique, the method, the formula of democracy, in the interests of that alone, we should never send an army to Europe. (Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLKIE: Governor La Follette.

MR. LA FOLLETTE: Mr. President and Ladies and Gentlemen: I would like to relieve the tension here by just telling a little story. It very nicely, I think, illustrates the difficulty that Mr. Mussolini is having in putting over his anti-Semitic policy.

They tell a story; of course it is purely hypothetical, it really didn't happen. They tell a story which really typifies Italian reaction and that was that in a country of about 40 odd million people and I think a total of say 70 thousand Jews, most of whom have lived there for many, many generations--it has been very difficult to whip up any anti-Semitic sentiment.

They tell a story to illustrate that the Prefect of one of the provinces in Italy sent a telegram to the Minister of Propaganda for the province, "For god sake please send us a Jew."

May I just emphasize one or two points? It is a very easy thing for us, 6,000 miles away, separated by nearly 4,000 miles of water to criticize and to comment like spectators in a grandstand on conditions in Europe. I should like to say for my own self defense, that this is the first time that I have made any comment about Europe. I kept my mouth shut over there, and what I have said here tonight is not directed as criticism of any individual or groups of individuals in Europe, but so far as I am capable of trying to suggest to intelligent, thoughtful opinion in America of things that we as Americans must keep our eyes on. One can go to Europe today, and I cannot over-emphasize this, without living in a sense of terrific tension.

It is a privilege, gentlemen, which we do not fully understand and appreciate, to be able to sit and to stand in a room like this tonight and in a sense talk with abstract freedom about these matters. (Applause) to live in London and in England, as I did, for 3 weeks, where literally you would waken at night and you would hear airplanes and - I give you my word - no one ever knew, those who lay in their beds and were awakened, never knew whether that was the beginning of an air raid or not. And even though we were not residents of the country, and knew we were returning to the United States, the tension and the apprehension was terrific. Similarly, no one in this room, unless you have been there, can have any sense of the tension and the terror in Germany and in Italy; the terrific strain on the nervous energy of people who are working, of people who are trying to carry on their daily tasks.

And so, just this one word to us. Our civilization does hang in the balance. It is going to require more than emotion to preserve it. It is going to require first and foremost, a clear sighted understanding of what we are really determined to....

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....governed.

Second: that by democracy we mean that every individual, regardless of race, creed or color, that we go back to that basic concept that every individual is the son of a common creator, and by

that fact every individual has certain rights that belong to the man's spirit that no government on earth has any moral right to deprive him of.

Third: that perhaps in essence nothing is more important to realize that democracy is a high form of evolution, of development, and that in order to preserve these high ideals and social values we must remember that life does have an economic basis and that the economic foundation of what we call the democratic way of life is this, as I see it, fundamentally; namely, that economic well being and prosperity can never be created by dividing or subtracting wealth. It can only come through the constant and continuous multiplication and increase of the total production of wealth, and if we can only agree on those things, perhaps we can center our eyes enough so that all of us, even a man who may call himself an economic royalist, or a man who may call himself a New Dealer, or a man who may call himself a radical or what not, we can agree sufficiently on those objective so that we can keep ourselves moving towards them. We will make mistakes in foreign as well as domestic policy, but if we can only keep agreed on the essential objectives, then what is the most important thing for democracy in America and perhaps which can say it too, for democracy in the world, will be that in essentials the American people will be a united people, because there must be united action, there must be unity on those essentials if we are going to preserve them.

I am certain I express the sentiments of both Mr. Ratcliffe, Mr. Hindus and well as myself, in expressing the appreciation that we feel for the very generous and open-minded opportunity you have given us to express some judgments about the problems that we face. (Applause)

PRESIDENT WILLKIE: In conclusion, I want to warn Phil, he had better quit making those kinds of speeches because the economic royalists of this country will get together and nominate him on the conservative ticket and that wise lingo won't work anymore. (Applause)

In conclusion I want to express the deep appreciation of the Economic Club for these three speeches. I know that you were not disturbed as I was not disturbed by any observations on foreign governments. If my recollection serves me correctly, I have heard of gentlemen in this country who have obsessions on Government. We encourage here the free and easy discussion because we appreciate that it is in the conflict of ideas that we arrive at just conclusions, and that this organization can make its greatest contribution to the democratic process by keeping open at the board the free channels of public discussion and thinking. I thank you. (Applause)

ADJOURNMENT