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HIRAM JOHNSON:

HIS PART IN ISOLATIONISM IN THE 1930'S

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HIRAM JOHNSON: HIS PART IN ISOLATIONISM IN THE 1930'S

CHAPTER I

JOHNSON AND THE ISOLATIONIST PATTERN

One of the major dramas in Congress in the 1930's was isolationism. The plot reveals a complexity of factors and has not as yet been wholly untangled. There does, however, emerge one personality who seems to have been extremely consistent in his role. This was Hiram Johnson, Republican senator from California.

Undoubtedly the emotional speeches made by Senator Johnson did much to deepen the cleavage on foreign policy between Congress and Franklin D. Roosevelt in that decade. His Congressional clamorings paralleled the work of Father Coughlin and of William Randolph Hearst in leading the public away from reality. His diatribes were a message to aggressing dictators that the temper of the American nation was such that it would condemn, but not prevent, their moves in Europe and the Far East.

Johnson had spent his political apprenticeship in the progressive movement. In the 1930's he was a remnant of that group which had begun its national crusade with the fiery oratory of William Jennings Bryan. Like Bryan and other progressives of the early twentieth century, Johnson was a fighter for what he saw as the righteous cause. Photographs and cartoons of Johnson with clenched fists raised in boxing position were typical of his political career. His isolationism was a crusade against the League of Nations and its Permanent Court of International Justice "where the controlling individuals represent dictatorships, absolutism, tyranny"; a crusade against the President (whether Wilson, Hoover or Franklin Roosevelt) whom he saw as stealing "that which is peculiarly within the jurisdiction of the Congress..."; a crusade against those foreign nations which he termed

1 Congressional Record, 71st Cong., 1st Session, p. 480, Jan. 16, 1935.
2 Congressional Record, 71st Cong., Special Session, p. 27, July 8, 1930.
"spongers." 3 This was Johnson's personal brand of isolationism.

It cannot be explained away according to geographic theories; the Pacific Coast as a section supported the administration's foreign policy both through its members in the Senate and the House. In Congress as a whole California was one of the least isolationist states. Samuel Lubell's idea that isolationism was largely the result of ethnic allegiance does not fit Johnson either. The state which consistently sent him to Washington, D.C. had a large upper middle class of old American stock. Strong isolationist sentiment has also been attributed to regions of cultural insularity, but California's population was concentrated in four metropolitan districts. Likewise, party explanations do not suffice in determining the basis of Johnson's isolationism. The GOP was isolationist, but Johnson was more so. He was one of the irreconcilables on the League issue in 1919; his opposition on foreign measures persisted under Republican Presidents Harding and Coolidge; he led the fight against the London Naval Treaty negotiated under the Hoover administration. 4

It is unlikely that Johnson's isolationism in the 1930's was an evidence of opposition to the Democratic administration. It is also unlikely to have been a result of opposition to the New Deal; Johnson was an old-time progressive and had supported Roosevelt for the presidency in 1932. His isolationism was rather a manifestation of Hiram Johnson's personality.

3 Congressional Record, 71st Cong., 1st Session, p. 484, Jan. 16, 1935.
CHAPTER II

THE BASIS FOR JOHNSON'S FIGHT

Since Hiram Johnson was a "righteous" man, he placed his principles above reproach. Once convinced of the rectitude of his position, he held to it "often irrespective of later evidence." His concern was "to serve the public interest, and he was unquestionably incorruptible and courageous." But these virtues proved to be his faults. To serve the public interest was, for Johnson, to decide the public interest; to be incorruptible was to be inflexible; to be courageous was to be stubborn.

His political record as well as his speeches in the Senate indicate his intense pride. In 1920, after failing to get the Republican nomination for the presidency, he refused to be placed in the second spot on the ticket. Thus, Calvin Coolidge rather than Hiram Johnson stepped into the White House upon Harding's death in 1923.

Johnson was much concerned with dignity. The Senate must keep aloof from Europe, jealously guarding its privileges. "Are we to maintain our dignity...?" he asked his fellow senators when demanding documents from the State Department in the debate over ratification of the London Treaty. The nation must keep aloof from Europe, suspiciously guarding its republican heritage. To preserve national dignity seemed to be the basis of his argument for the Johnson Act in 1934 to prohibit loans to nations in default of World War I debts. This one can infer from a story he related in the Senate, explaining the background of the measure. It concerned a "gentleman" who in Europe had "met on every side with hostility."

1 Mowry, pp. 114, 116.
He met with sneers and jibes at our country and the debts which are due from foreign countries to ours. In something of exasperation one day he wrote me that there ought to be some mode in which we would express our will or our displeasure, some mode by which we would preclude the possibility in the future of that occurring which had occurred in the past. His letter...impressed me immensely, and I endeavored then, long ago, to present a measure to the Senate which would prevent individuals in this country selling the securities of those countries which had defaulted on the debts they owed us.

This was the basis of the Johnson Act, and it goes far to show the make-up of the man who introduced it. Much of what made Hiram Johnson was, or seemed to be, embodied in the California progressive creed— an emphasis on religion, a concern with problems of morality, and "talk shot through with biblical allusion." The progressive belief was that "evil perished and good would triumph," democracy was "a thing to venerate," public opinion was the "final distillate of moral law," and "individualism was a sacred thing as long as it was moral individualism."μ

One sees evidence of all this in Johnson. In his 1935 attack on United States' entry into the World Court, he quoted Virgil—"Easy is the descent to hell"—as a parallel. "Hell" was the League, and the World Court was the "first step" on the descent. Such was Johnson's opinion on international organization. His 'heaven' would undoubtedly have been an individual one with each nation in its own separate sphere. Historical parallels and allusions were even more predominant in his speeches. Washington's warning against entangling alliances may as well have been uttered to become a device in the hands of the future Hiram Johnson.

The triumph of good was to be insured by Johnson's pointing out the bad. His "veneration" for democracy was profuse, but it extended only to that which was

3 Congressional Record, 73rd Cong., 2nd Session, p. 8191, May 7, 1934.
4 Mowry, pp. 97-99.
5 Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 1st Session, p. 482, Jan. 16, 1935.
within the confines of the United States. In advocating "Americanism," which was
Johnson's term for what others called isolationism, he spoke "not as a citizen of
the world," but "...as a citizen of the United States." This was a reflection of
his provincial attitude. His identification did not extend past that which he knew
and understood, and Hiram Johnson did not understand the world. He was "a Califor­
man, loving the soil and loving the state" and would "not intrust that state...to
those with their internationalist views who do not believe that any protection
should be accorded any place on the face of the earth." Here was Johnson's cause--
to protect the 'good' people, whom he understood, from those 'bad' men with inter­
nationalist views, those "pseudointellectuals who are so perfectly certain they are
right."9

By the 1930's Johnson was getting used to playing the role of the great cru­
sader. He had entered the political scene in the first decade of the century in
such a guise. His group then was the Lincoln-Roosevelt Republican League in Cali­
ifornia. Johnson was its vice-president. The organization identified itself with
the national progressive movement and set out to "free the state from corporate
rule"--namely, the Southern Pacific railroad which had been in control of the Cali­
ifornia GOP machinery for nearly forty years. In the 1910 state primaries, Johnson
waged a "campaign for righteousness" on the single issue of the Southern Pacific
machine with the result that the Lincoln-Roosevelt League took over the party ma­
chinery and shortly thereafter, the state. Johnson's first moral cause had won,
and he soon set out to show his crusading spirit on the national scene.10

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6 Ibid., p. 479, Jan. 16, 1935.
7 Mowry, p. 286.
8 Congressional Record, 73rd Cong., 2nd Session, p. 9963, May 30, 1934.
10 Mowry, pp. 8, 84, 120; George Payne, The Birth of the New Party (New York:
H.E. Rennels, 1912) p. 84.
He was among the charter members of the National Progressive Republican League, and in 1912 led the Theodore Roosevelt forces in the Republican National Convention. The convention split over the issue of 238 seats claimed by both Taft and Roosevelt delegations. Losing to the Taft delegates, Johnson and other Roosevelt men formed a new Progressive Party. Johnson gave the opening speech of the rebel group, became chairman of its national organizing committee, and was ultimately selected as Teddy Roosevelt's running mate. Keeping in character, Johnson "pledged himself for the rest of his life to the cause that had called him to leadership" and declared that he "would rather go down to defeat with Teddy Roosevelt in this cause than go to victory in another with any other man." This party to which he declared allegiance was against the political power of big business and, in that respect, was attacking the basic policy of the Old Guard Republicans. The result of this was that the Democratic rather than the Progressive or the Republican parties won in 1912.

There are indications that Johnson was not easily forgiven by the GOP. In 1923 the Los Angeles Times was still denouncing him as a "selfish politician who helped to wreck the Republican party in 1912." His motives were attributed to personal factors, for his national aspirations were evident "in almost every move the California Progressive party made after 1914." In that year Johnson carried all but four counties to become the first California governor to be reelected since 1853, while leading candidates of the Progressive party were defeated in other states. It was evident that Progressive strength was diminishing, however, and in

12 Payne, p. 63.
13 Ibid., p. 68.
15 Mowry, pp. 218, 225.
1916 Johnson ran for the Senate on the Republican ticket. He won, but at the same time, Charles Evans Hughes lost the Presidency because of the California vote. Although there is no proof for the charge, the Los Angeles Times rebuked Johnson and his Progressives for "selling out the Republican party in California and in the nation." The feeling was that Johnson did not give the support he should have to Hughes.

In the Senate Johnson continued in his oppositionist role. His first experience in that body was the special session in which the United States decided to join the Allies in World War I. Assuming the negative position he subsequently did on most international issues, Johnson joined the isolationists. His cause was no longer reform, but "Americanism." This not only took the form of opposition to U.S. entry into the war, but placed Johnson with the irreconcilables in refusing further international commitments afterwards. Johnson's belief in individualism was never better manifested than in his 1919 actions. He and some fourteen others, the "Battalion of Death," stubbornly opposed Woodrow Wilson's plans for a League of Nations. Vindictive attacks by Johnson and William Borah of Idaho convinced the people that there were dangers in internationalism, and they succeeded in defeating the Versailles Treaty in the Senate.

Johnson's critical attitude did not change when his own party assumed the national ascendancy in 1921. His opposition to the Four Power Pact, one of the treaties emerging from the Washington Conference of 1921-22, was in spite of support for the measure by California Republicans and by President Harding, and also in spite of the fact that the good will of the administration was necessary in that

16 Ibid., p. 273.
17 Ibid., p. 285
year as he sought high tariff rates for California products. In this debate, he
came forth as "the most unqualified isolationist in the country," bluntly charging
that his own party had reversed its position on internationalism. Taking this position, as one writer has said, he later "defied the moderates
in his party and refused to accept any American responsibility for facilitating
the collection of war reparations or promoting German recovery." As Johnson saw
it, the Reparations Commission was another means by which the United States was to
be drawn into the affairs of Europe against its will. He was not willing that the
nation become a partner in the method by which reparations would be collected; yet
he was vociferous in demands for the money. When the depression led to repudia-
tion of the war debts, he denounced former allies and determined to bring about
the act prohibiting further loans to these nations.

Many of Johnson's actions at this time have been attributed to his presiden-
tial aspirations. Intense isolationism was an issue by which he could ally him-
self with both the regular Republicans and the progressives, for this was a doc-
trine common to both elements in his party. His "Americanism" was to serve as com-
pensation for his 1912 estrangement from the party. The emotion-packed speeches
he delivered on the subject kept him in the public eye.

Johnson's failure to get the presidential nomination in 1920 was certainly a
disappointment to him—so much so that, as previously stated, he could not bring
himself to accept the second place on the ticket. By 1923 he had already announced
his next attempt to secure the nomination. His platform was an attack on the ad-

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18 George P. West, "Hiram Johnson after Twelve Years," The Nation, CXV
(Aug. 9, 1922) p. 142.

19 Selig Adler, The Isolationist Impulse (New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1957)
p. 152.

20 Ibid., p. 173.

21 Ibid., p. 173-174.
ministration of Calvin Coolidge, the man most likely to prevent Johnson's getting the nomination. It contained his usual group of vague generalities, designed to criticize the administration's tax and foreign policies. He said he would go to any length and make any sacrifice to preclude wars, but he got little favorable response. In this period of peaceful prosperity, isolationist sentiment was losing its former militancy among the public. Not having any other significant moral issue, Johnson was unsuccessful in his 1924 efforts.

Approaching the 1928 convention, Johnson again began his attack on a potential contender, Herbert Hoover. There had previously been animosity between the two Californians, and although Johnson agreed to back Hoover after the latter's 1928 nomination, this persisted throughout the ensuing administration.

In spite of the fact that Johnson never seemed quite popular enough with the national GOP to secure top spot on the ballot, his large majorities in California elections gave him an independence in his Senate role and go far to explain his rebuffs to party discipline. Borah was in a similar position. Following his stand on the League in 1919, Johnson multiplied his 1910 majority of 45,000 in the California primary by more than three. In the 1922 senatorial race, he was elected by a plurality of 348,674, the largest in his political career up to that time. A major reason for his strength in his own state was undoubtedly his success in getting high tariff rates on California products. The constant support of California for Hiram Johnson persisted throughout his political life, which continued until his death in 1945. In 1940 when Franklin D. Roosevelt asked Californians not


24 West, "Hiram Johnson after Twelve Years," p. 143.
to reelect Johnson, because he had been thwarting administration foreign policy, the Senator received the largest vote in all his thirty years of victory. "On primary day California Democrats decided that Johnson was a Democrat and Republicans decided he was a Republican,25 and the great majority of votes were cast for him.

Thus, one can assume that Johnson was somewhat justified in assuming he was advocating what was best for the people; looking at election returns, he could honestly conclude that the people believed that what he said and did was good for them. Democracy in California was sanctioning his actions in the Senate, and for much the same reasons, democracy in the nation was slow to respond to the international upheaval of the 1930's.

25 Raymond Holey, "California Talks Back," Newsweek, XVI (Sept. 9, 1940) p. 64.
CHAPTER III

JOHNSON IN THE HOOVER ADMINISTRATION

To what extent Johnson's views were a reflection of those commonly held by the man-on-the-street at that time and to what extent the reverse was true can only be speculation. It seems reasonable to assume, however, that men like Johnson in the Senate, Hearst through the press, and Father Coughlin via the radio played a considerable part in influencing the attitude of the times—that is, an attitude which held a nation capable of assuming world leadership to an old policy which had already proved unsuccessful in preventing involvement in mass warfare.

America had turned its back on Europe in the 1920's. While Harding and Coolidge had each presented the World Court protocols to the Senate, there had been no real effort to push them through the legislative channels. While the Dawes and Young plans had emerged in answer to the reparations problem, it was merely for the expediency of getting back an American investment. While the Washington Conference was hailed as a huge success, it was largely because we had managed to terminate the bothersome Anglo-Japanese alliance with virtually no obligation. The U.S. had not, in any case, stuck its neck out. The Pact of Paris, a noble declaration by which this country avoided a bilateral agreement with France, was a result of the very fact that we wanted a weak agreement or none at all.

Then, in 1929 a professed internationalist arrived at the White House. This was Herbert Hoover, destined to endure the most vindictive attacks Johnson ever aimed at a Republican president. Hoover was not only an internationalist; he was pro-British. What is more, he and Johnson had been old foes in their home state of California, and his name on the 1928 ballot had been in the place where Hiram Johnson had wished his own to be. These factors set the two men in diametrically opposed corners of the ring in which policy issues were decided. There was no secrecy about the enmity existing between them, and in the Hoover administration,
Johnson became more than ever disengaged from the party leadership.

By this time a well entrenched member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Johnson was in a favorable position to pursue his isolationist role. The depression, when it came in the late months of 1929, gave him additional arguments for his point of view—why look abroad when there were problems enough at home? He was willing that the U.S. play its part in the world, but "do it in our own way...pursuing our own unhindered course."^1

His first pursuit along this line in the 1930s concerned the London naval treaty, a document drawn up on the assumption that more limitation of armaments was necessary. Hoover had previously agreed on this point with Ramsay MacDonald, new British prime minister who had then issued invitations to the conference. When the Senate was called upon to ratify the resulting product, Johnson indicated that he did not share the philosophy of these men. He attacked the treaty's substitution of a 10-10-7 ratio in destroyer tonnage, following the 5-5-3 in capital ships formerly existing between Great Britain, the U.S. and Japan. He made similar arguments against Japan's being given parity with the two larger powers in submarines, extension of the naval 'holiday' to 1936, and the 'escalator' clause giving the three nations the right to exceed treaty quotas if a security threat was caused by naval construction of a nation not a party to the agreement.

Johnson had raised his fists and prepared to lead another fight. He stepped into the battle holding high his presentation of the minority views of the Foreign Relations Committee:

> It is a noticeable and remarkable fact that a treaty for which so much is claimed, opposition to which arouses such a pretense of indignation, is presented to the Senate without explanation or report. 2

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1 Congressional Record, 71st Cong., 3rd Session, p. 1371, Jan. 5, 1931.
2 Congressional Record, 71st Cong., 2nd Session, p. 12021, June 30, 1930.
Here was the old contention that the President had not rendered the Senate its due. Hoover had been careful to avoid Wilson's mistake by sending Democratic Senator Joseph T. Robinson of Arkansas and Republican Senator David A. Reed of Pennsylvania in the delegation to the London Conference, but he had still, according to Johnson, injured Senate dignity by not presenting the committee with the dispatches between Secretary of State Stimson and Charles G. Dawes, the American ambassador in London during the period of negotiations. In addition, Johnson be-rated the executive for demanding that all minutes, records, and documents pertaining to the conference and presented to the Foreign Relations Committee be kept strictly confidential. Johnson maintained that these belonged in the public record. His primary concern regarding the treaty seemed to be, not its possible effects, but the motives of those who negotiated the agreement.

Motives were all-important for Johnson. He was so sincere, apparently, that one can sympathize with his lack of foresight. From all appearances, he believed in his unreasonable demands upon the President and State Department. He called upon the Senators for support:

...if there is the spirit of those old patriots who made this body what it was, and wrote this country's history in the glory of the skies for all the world to see—if there are yet men of that caliber and of kind in this body, neither supinely nor lying down will they take the lashing that has been accorded them in telling them of their impudence in asking for documents which they have a right to see...

Hoover and Stimson believed that the release of such documents and papers would indicate lack of confidence in our diplomats, and this could conceivably interfere with future American negotiations.

Another point of Johnson's attack on the treaty was that it served the interests of Great Britain. To him, anything that helped the British was contrary to

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3 Ibid., p. 12028, June 30, 1930.
4 Congressional Record, 71st Cong., Special Session, p. 110, July 11, 1930.
U.S. interests. His line of reasoning indicated suspicions that Great Britain had conspired to prevent the U.S. from acquiring naval strength since our sea-going commerce challenged that of her empire. He professed his "favor" of limitation and reduction of armaments. It was something to "hope and strive" for, but in the meantime, the U.S. must have "in fair comparison with others the ability to maintain and protect our trade routes and our ocean commerce."\(^5\) In this time of great depression, the nation must, as Johnson saw it, dispose of its surplus abroad in order to avoid privation. There was a distorted sense of internationalism in the Senator's economic theory, but he did not perceive the contradiction between this and his isolationist theory. The U.S. must not involve itself in the troubles of Europe, but it was mighty fine that Europe was there to help out with a few economic troubles of the U.S. This "desideratum," however, could be accomplished only with sea power.\(^6\)

Johnson was eager to point out that the U.S. "commercial success" was not likely to lead to war, because

...America's intentions are so pacific, our policies are so utterly lacking in aggression, that it seems inconceivable the pursuit of legitimate commercial paths, even to the exclusion of trade rivals, could ever give such offense as would lead to armed conflict. 7

Economic policy as a cause of war just did not apply to a moral nation like the U.S.

Johnson came through as a true disciple of Teddy Roosevelt in the debate, pointing out that the size of a nation's fleet must be based upon its policies. Sea power was essential to the open door policy in China; it was necessary for a

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5 Ibid., p. 115, July 11, 1930.

6 Ibid., p. 224, July 17, 1930.

7 Ibid., p. 225, July 17, 1930.
'neutral' policy. The reasons for his argument on this point are obvious. Johnson, being a Californian, had his eyes on the Pacific. Our Far Eastern policy was that in which he was most interested. Our trade with the Orient was that which he was most desirous of protecting. The U.S. must be 'neutral' so far as Europe was concerned, but there was no implication of neutrality in regard to the Open Door. Johnson admitted dreams of the Pacific "as the great theatre of world activity in the years to come," and because of this "vision," he was making a "contest" over the London treaty.

The treaty, however, was not threatening the U.S. navy. The fact was that we would have to spend about a billion dollars to build up to the parity it granted. Johnson seemed to be aware of this, but called attention to the point only when it suited his argument. Thus, one moment he was able to charge that the reduction of armaments by the treaty was "a sham, a delusion, a snare," and in the same speech to draw a comparison between the London Conference and the Washington Conference with the contention that by the 1922 treaties we "put beyond our power the defense of the Philippine Islands." In his opinion, the worst thing about the London treaty was that it had raised the ratio of Japan that we "dearly bought" in 1922 by refusing to fortify our possessions in the Far East. Johnson did not point out, however, that in 1922 the Nine Power Pact was not viewed as any sacrifice on our part since Congress had no plan to strengthen Guam and the Philippines anyway. 8

Similarly, at the 1930 conference the U.S. had suffered no loss in actual naval strength. The 'limits' were, at most, curbs on shipbuilding potential if Congress were ever to grant adequate appropriations, and the legislature had long scoffed at proposals for a stronger navy. Johnson, however, seemed to be attacking the treaty on the assumption that without it, the U.S. would build up the most

8 Ibid., pp. 222-223 and 228-229, July 17, 1930.
powerful navy on the seas. He saw the "real issue" in the controversy as

...the question of whether we shall leave in foreign hands the power
to work their will upon us through immense economic pressure exerted
by the instrumentality of a naval blockade. 9

His contention was that, considering numbers of people and extent of business
involved, U.S. trading interests were superior to those of any other nation, and
because of this, our navy had to be stronger than any other. The real danger, he
indicated, stemmed from the power of Britain, for only she could affect a blockade.
It was "not so much a question of naval competition" as of "business competition
supported by diplomatic competition." Here again one sees traces of the old pro-
gressivism in Johnson—a mistrust of business interests and England, which was seen
as the center of the money trust. He termed it a "fact" that the British "not on-
ly destroyed our supremacy, but reduced us to an actual inferiority." His words
create a picture of the powerful, conniving Great Britain taking advantage of the
less powerful, but innocent U.S. much in the same way Johnson had seen the evil,
corporate interests as taking advantage of the just people. He exhibited his in-
ability to avoid moral judgment when he asked if there were "no ethics in these
conferences," implying that ethics would have led the British and Japanese to re-
recognize the superiority of our trading interest.10

In opposing his party in its support of the treaty, he charged its members
with seeking to make political capital out of the document. He openly scoffed at
party discipline and lauded his own individuality in opposing the "fifty or sixty
men whipped into line and lashed into inactivity, sitting mute and silent and fear-
ful of uttering a single word." He took pride in the fact that even as an "old
man" he was "fighting his own fight."11

9 Ibid., p. 253, July 18, 1930.
11 Ibid., p. 296, July 18, 1930.
Here was the crusader at work, and as always, he had carried the issue to the people. As he had traveled up and down the California coast in 1910 to tell the people how the state must be freed from the evils of corporate rule, and as he had with Borah trailed Wilson in 1919 to warn against entry into the League, he now attempted to reach the people via the printed speech. Lack of adequate funds prevented him from sending more than a few thousand copies, and he was quick to point to the contest as "unequal," because the U.S. Government Treasury stood behind the State Department, which was able to issue copies of a speech made by a proponent of the League. But it was a "glorious thing," he said, in an unequal contest "to stand your guard, knowing you are right." His inflexibility was well indicated in the debate on this issue; Johnson admitted with pride that he had not swerved a single iota from the views he held in the beginning.

On the day of voting his cause was not won, for the measure passed 58-9. However, the influence of Johnson is evident in that ratification was with the understanding that there were no secret agreements made in connection with the treaty. The debate perhaps even furthered the cause for isolationism; he had managed to point enough fingers at the British to convince any number of people that the new and the old worlds had little or no interests in common. He never mentioned our stake in the European balance of power; it is likely he never realized it.

When in December, 1930, Hoover presented the World Court issue to the Senate, Johnson again made accusations of deception. The American people were indirectly and surreptitiously to be taken into the League which, he said, they "overwhelmingly repudiated" in 1920. One can question whether or not the voters were given a

12 Ibid., p. 223, July 17, 1930.
13 Ibid., p. 376, July 21, 1930.
14 Ibid., p. 378, July 21, 1930.
clear cut choice on this issue in 1920, but even if the returns were evidence of such repudiation, this would not seem to rule out a reconsideration in 1930. There were many Americans who, by this time, had adopted a much friendlier attitude toward the League. For Johnson, however, the conditions existing in 1930 provided even stronger reasons for avoiding international organization. To remedy our own ills and relieve our own people was the immediate task at hand for the Senate, as Johnson viewed the situation. This meant ignoring the "propaganda" of the "highly financed" League, which was "bludgeoning the Senate and demanding the immediate ratification" of the protocols. 15

Not only was this attack typical of his scorn for anything European, but it was another illustration of his stalling tactics. The implication of his pleas for time on foreign measures was that they were being rushed through, because there was something devious about them that would be revealed if the vote were delayed long enough. It would seem, however, that Johnson's real motive for such tactics was to allow public opinion to catch up on the issue—specifically, his side of the issue. In this, Johnson frequently succeeded, for public opinion, at least until the latter part of the 1930's, was decidedly isolationist. Also, in stalling, Johnson gave Hearst and Coughlin, who seemed to be in some sort of alliance with the Senator, ample opportunity to exploit whatever sentiment did exist. When the protocols were again submitted under Franklin D. Roosevelt, this strategy became particularly significant.

Other than disarmament, the major foreign policy to command attention in the Hoover administration was the war debt question. Johnson was of the group that opposed, not only cancellation, but also the moratorium. As he pointed to the World Court as a first step to the League, he charged that a revision of the debts was

"the open wedge" to cancellation. The argument was one which had special appeal with the public, for it struck at the pocketbook; if Europe failed to pay, the American taxpayer would have to assume the debts. To him, the European view that war debts should constitute the U.S. contribution to a common cause meant that "we contribute everything and they contribute nothing."17

Johnson, of course, was ready to fight for the cause of the taxpayer and told his colleagues:

...it is time there should be some kind of warning spoken in this chamber and in this Government by those who believe that, after all, this Government belongs to just one people, the American people; who believe that, after all, burdens that belong to Europe should not be put upon the backs of Americans...18

The implication was that Hoover did not share the belief. After assuring support of an adequate number of Congressmen, the President had taken it upon himself in June of 1930 to declare the debt moratorium. When this was formally submitted for Congressional approval in December, Johnson seized his chance to charge Hoover with seeking "to legislate without the formalities required by the Constitution" and dealing with "what means the very lifeblood of the people." He petitioned the Senate to unite with him in preventing this "first great violation that has been attempted by an Executive." To do otherwise would be taking a "step toward dictatorship."19

Johnson did not admit, if he realized, that Hoover's choice had been between cancellation and the postponement of payment, and the latter had been the lesser of two political evils. Along with the moratorium, the President submitted to Con-

17 Congressional Record, 72nd Cong., 2nd Session, p. 1274, Jan. 4, 1933.
18 Congressional Record, 72nd Cong., 1st Session, p. 15084, July 12, 1932.
19 Ibid., p. 1079, Dec. 22, 1931.
gress in December a recommendation that the World War Foreign Debt Commission be recreated, but on this measure, Johnson's philosophy won out. The Senator had been wise to show that the commission was likely to serve, not only as a body to revise the debts downward, but as a means to take us into Europe.

The question of war debts continued to plague the administration, and Johnson continued to keep a vigilant eye on Hoover's actions in regard to the issue. The Senator was prompt in pointing out the possible meaning of the Lausanne Conference, when Hoover met French Premier Pierre Laval to discuss war debts. The outcome of the conference was indefinite. Johnson resented "that the American people should have been kept in absolute ignorance of any...understanding" on the debts. The State Department denied that there had been any agreement made at Lausanne, but Johnson called attention to Chamberlain's reference in the British Parliament to the "gentlemen's agreement" made with Hoover. When in the London Economic Conference, British Prime Minister MacDonald felt forced to say that 'Lausanne has to be completed,' the Senator's suspicions that the cancellation of German reparations was dependent on our forgiving debts seemed to have been justified. Here was more fuel for the fire.

Johnson's policy of keeping a suspicious watch on government was closely related to his progressivism—the idea that government was run by big business at the expense of the people. He saw the stakes in the game of foreign loans as being appropriated by the supermen of finance. The Senator's claim was that the moratorium had postponed payment of the Allied debt to the American taxpayer in favor of payment of short-term securities to international bankers. Hence, these bankers would persuade the Government to grant another moratorium or revise the debts due

20 Ibid., p. 15082, July 12, 1932.
to the people. The Government, Johnson charged, was neglecting its responsibilities to its investing public. He championed the case of the farmer of the Midwest and the worker without a job, who cried aloud "against a government that would give a moratorium to Europe and put Europe's debt upon his back." He admonished the internationalists to "beare!"23

Johnson was also not to forget his old concern with national dignity. There were many who advocated revision as a means to avoid complete default by the European nations, but the Senator preferred the latter to the former on the grounds that in this case, America could at least continue to hold her head high. His reasoning on this seemed to contradict his former statements:

We can afford the injustice of defaulting, non-payment, but we can not afford to be bludgeoned or bullied or frightened into yielding the right and accepting whatever internationally may be doled out.24

So it seems that Johnson was even more concerned with the national dignity than with the national pocketbook. He accused his opponents on the issue with seeking flattery abroad and those abroad with laughing at us for our thinking of "buying disarmament, or buying peace, or buying friendship, by forgiving debts."26

The Johnson argument, whatever its weaknesses, was that which triumphed in the matter of debts. He had succeeded in making it political suicide for anyone to speak for revision or cancellation. Thus, Franklin Roosevelt avoided Hoover's plea for a commitment on the question, and the outgoing President was forced to become a witness to that which he had feared most--default. When this occurred in

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22 Congressional Record, 72nd Cong., 1st Session, pp. 6052-3 and 6061-2, March 15, 1932.
23 Congressional Record, 72nd Cong., 2nd Session, p. 1273, Jan. 4, 1933.
24 Ibid., p. 1278, Jan. 4, 1933.
25 Ibid., p. 1279, Jan. 4, 1933.
26 Ibid., p. 2476, Jan. 25, 1933.
December, 1932, the average American grew even more thoroughly disgusted with the outside world and tightly embraced the Johnson philosophy of 'let's-worry-about-ourselves.' And in 1933 Franklin Roosevelt seemed to be in full agreement with the idea.
CHAPTER IV

JOHNSON IN THE ROOSEVELT ADMINISTRATION

Although Johnson in 1928 had subordinated his personal dislike for Hoover and remained loyal to the GOP, his alliance with that group in the administration's four years had been tenuous. In 1932 he severed the loose bond and openly turned against Hoover. The possible reasons for this are numerous. He had not experienced any liking for Hoover in the first place and was dissatisfied with the administration's record in office. Furthermore, in 1932 Franklin D. Roosevelt seemed to symbolize much of the old progressive philosophy. The Roosevelt nomination was secured by the same sectional combination that had backed Bryan's candidacy in 1896 and Wilson's in 1912. The new President had carried 282 counties that no Democrat had ever carried before, but of these only 42 had not been carried by Teddy Roosevelt in 1912 or by Robert LaFollette in 1924 on Progressive tickets.¹

In the interim between Roosevelt's election and the inauguration, Johnson indicated a number of times his expectations of the new President to whom he had rendered such avid support. In the Senate he expressed hope that

...with the changes which may occur within a brief period,...we will have those in control who look upon one thing, and one alone, first—the great American people and the United States of America.²

Johnson's belief was that with Roosevelt, we would have in the White House an isolationist—a true patriot who shared the Senator's idea that the U.S. was for Americans and Europe was for Europeans; and never the former should become concerned about the latter. Roosevelt had provided some basis for Johnson's optimism. In campaigning, the aspiring President insisted that the League had not lived up

¹ Brogan, pp. 31-32.
² Congressional Record, 72nd Cong., 2nd Session, p. 1271, Jan. 4, 1933.
to its expectations, and he would not lead the U.S. into it. In his two White House discussions with Hoover, he had shown that he did not consider the war debts 'his baby.' Roosevelt's first administration was to revolve chiefly around domestic policies, and this seemed clear before he took office. That foreign policy would be subordinate was exhibited at London by the new President's refusal to stabilize the dollar. Even his recognition of the U.S.S.R. in 1933 is believed to have been the result of his desire to reduce the slack in the American economy.

At the outset, it appeared that here was finally a President with whom Johnson would get along. Grateful for the Senator's support in the election, Roosevelt offered him a cabinet post and later, a place on the American delegation to the London Economic Conference. Both were refused. This perhaps was because Johnson was still too much a Republican to ally himself with the Democratic administration, but a more logical reason would be that his pride would not permit subservience at this time any more than it would in 1920 when he refused to be Harding's running mate. By 1932 Johnson seemed to be venerating his position of independence.

He particularly displayed this in Roosevelt's first administration. In April, 1934, the Johnson Act passed, prohibiting loans to defaulting nations—the logical culmination of his condemnation of the debtor nations who had "sponged" from the U.S. His argument against the acceptance of token payments made by Great Britain and Italy was similarly successful, for these nations were afterwards informed that unless obligations were honored fully, they too would be regarded as defaulters. The result was that all except Finland repudiated outright in June, 1934.

Johnson also made a good attempt to prevent Hull's reciprocal trade idea from gaining approval. In addition to being a somewhat internationalist scheme, the agreements were to be a means of lowering the tariff without necessarily repealing the existing Hawley-Smoot tariff. Johnson seems to have had a two-fold basis for his opposition to Hull and the latter's advocacy of a trend to lower tariffs. First, it is easy to see how a high tariff would be in accord with the complete
insulation Johnson sought for the U.S. Second, following his victory over corpor­ate rule in California, Johnson had gradually become more friendly to the business interests there. Much evidence exists which causes one to doubt whether his con­victions were as progressive as he professed them to be. His alliance with the conservative William Randolph Hearst was well known by this time. Some even went so far as to say he was Hearst controlled. Progressivism was still, however, the banner under which he expressed his views.

The trade agreements act was attacked, because of the powers it gave the Pres­ident, constituting a destructive interference with the people's rights. His argu­ment upon the "fundamental principle" involved was made notwithstanding his "admi­ration,...respect, and even...affection for the gentleman who occupies the White House."\(^3\) The appeal was to emotion:

> It is a frightful thing today, the sin of patriotism in this land, and there are societies throughout this country now that believe that none of us should ever dare teach our children and our grandchildren to love their country, and who preach we should set some fine example and leave ourselves naked and defenseless to all the world.\(^4\)

Jealously guarding the powers of the Senate as usual, Johnson offered an amendment which sought to preserve for the Senate the right to pass by majority vote upon the treaties to be made by the President under the bill. His plea was for the preservation of popular government as it existed in the land.\(^5\)

The Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act, however, in accord with economic sense, passed without the amendment; lowering of tariff rates was already overdue since the bottom had been reached in the depression. Under the act, the President was empowered to negotiate with other countries for tariff reductions. To submit the

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3 Congressional Record, 73rd Cong., 2nd Session, p. 9960, May 30, 1934.
5 Ibid., p. 10371, June 4, 1934.
resulting treaties to a Senate vote, as Johnson suggested, would have removed the flexibility for which the program was designed.

In spite of Johnson's attempts to block the trade agreements program, the administration supported his reelection in 1934. The 2,000,000 votes he received running on four different tickets can be cited as evidence that Californians enthusiastically approved of his Senatorial record. Perhaps history was briefly on his side. His isolationist views were more practical now, it seemed, since Europe had proved its immorality through default.

These views were successful in the World Court issue of 1935; Johnson dealt Roosevelt his first major defeat at home in world affairs. Again, the Court was painted by the Senator as a stepping stone to the League. Once in the Court, he said, the U.S. would be used by European nations to win their victories. Europe was an incessant trouble spot, and he lamented U.S. action in World War I, pointing to the disappointing results of the mission. The Senator failed, however, to take into account that the U.S. had made no move after 1919 to produce different results.

In his intense manner, he spoke out against those who said we should go into the Court to preserve the peace:

Where do they go if they want to preserve peace? Not to their League or Court. Italy meets with France in secrecy for the determination of African boundaries and for the settlement of differences that may exist. 8

Here one sees shades of Wilson—the disdain for secret diplomacy. Also, Johnson seemed to feel that the Court, if it were to exist, must exist to settle all disputes or none at all. He neglected the possibilities of negotiation, media-


tion and conciliation which usually precede arbitration or adjudication on any matter.

He went on to point out the malfunctioning of the Court and League, and accused the Court of rendering political rather than judicial decisions. He was angered that the proposed reservation to "protect us from any political action with nations abroad" had been defeated when the bill was in committee, but he predicted that it would come up again on the floor.9

The war debt default by European nations was another point in the argument. He saw it as absurd that a creditor submit himself to "the judgment of his debtors."10

The words of the founding fathers in regard to entangling alliances were pointed to as if they were some sort of divine gospel to continue through the ages. He overlooked any indication that conditions had changed somewhat, and these words of wisdom no longer held a magical key to peace. Not only had the power structure of the world changed by the 1930's, but the nature of war itself had been transformed.

Johnson was opposed to setting a date for a vote on the Court. Tactics of delay were important, for with his able allies doing their part outside the Senate debate room, public opinion was bound to swing against the Court. To assure this, the group employed many techniques of successful advertising. Testimonials were used. In the Senate, Johnson presented a document from Herbert Wright, an American judge who had also served on the Court, in which the latter said that the nation should not adhere to the protocol if it was opposed to entering the League, for the Court was an integral part of the League. There was an appeal to patriotism; he accused the intellectuals of holding views which would have us change the Gov-

9 Ibid., p. 482, Jan. 16, 1935.
10 Ibid., p. 484, Jan. 16, 1935.
ernenment under which we had lived so long. A desire to maintain status over minority groups even entered into the picture. Johnson predicted that the questions of Oriental immigration and Oriental tenure of U.S. land might someday be taken to the Court.12

The publicity campaign, in which the voters were called upon by Coughlin to write to their Congressmen, proved a success for the isolationists. At the beginning of the debate, Johnson and Borah were known to be against the Court, but the administration still figured that, with sixty-eight Democratic Senators, it had the necessary two-thirds vote.13 When voting finally took place, though, the yeas numbered only fifty-two. A popular sentiment had been well exploited.

The desire to keep out of war became an obsession in the latter half of the decade as Europe drew closer and closer to its second cataclysm. At the same time, Roosevelt was changing his viewpoint from one of isolationism to one similar to Hull's idea of sanctions and aid to the Allies. This was especially indicated in 1937 in his 'quarantine' speech. Yet, the demand existed for neutrality legislation to avoid the mistakes by which we had gotten into World War I.

There were three different schools of thought, however, on how to do the avoiding. The classical theory of defending our neutral rights was still advocated by some, although this had proved a failure in keeping us out of the first World War. More popular, however, were the sanctionist and isolationist theories. Johnson, of course, was in the isolationist group, but his specific viewpoint incorporated much of the classical theory. Sanctions was the method proposed by Hull and Secretary of War Stimson; this would be to use means short of war to stop aggression. Sanctions had been the original League idea, but to Johnson, they were inhumane:

13 Ibid.
I would rather see my grandsons go out and with guns upon their shoulders, take their chance and fight than to be a party to levying sanctions upon an innocent people, and upon children, the weak, the sick, the lame, the halt—those who never did a wrong. 14

Thus, here was the fervid nationalist, suddenly assuming a humanitarian air about the whole world. He preferred another war to such methods as the embargo and boycott, which were "stronger than war." The isolationist idea would not support such partiality as that embodied in Hull's advocacy of trade with friendly nations and restriction of trade with aggressor nations; this seemed too close to an alliance. Yet, Johnson and Borah differed with other isolationists such as Senator Gerald P. Nye on the issue of mandatory neutrality legislation, which embodied the idea that to be impartial we should restrict trade of war articles with all belligerent nations in the event of war. The California Senator saw impartiality as being more effectively maintained by trading with all nations on an equal basis.

It was his feeling that permanent neutrality legislation would likely prove inflexible when confronted with unique circumstances. 15 The arms embargo was his specific point of contention. For instance, by being neutral in the Italian-Ethiopian war, he said, we helped Italy, for it was Ethiopia which needed to import arms. Johnson saw that the resolution would not accomplish great results; he realized that a nation cannot legislate war out of existence. He called upon Professor Edwin M. Borchard of Yale and John B. Moore, former justice of the World Court, to tell the Foreign Relations committee that the neutrality legislation was likely to lead to war rather than peace. 16 The United States, he stated, should declare a policy of neutrality, but, in accordance with that, retain its rights under international law. Thus, Johnson was mingling his isolationism with the classical theory

14 Congressional Record, 76th Cong., 1st Session, p. 2131, March 2, 1939.
15 "Background for War," Time, XXXIV (July 17, 1939) p. 18.
of avoiding participation in Europe's wars by maintaining neutral rights.

The sanctionists—specifically, Hull—also opposed neutrality legislation, but on the grounds that it prevented the United States from aiding those nations whose interests coincided closely with ours. Hull's idea was that if we aided England and France with supplies, we perhaps could escape actual involvement in another European war. Aiding the Allies was definitely not Johnson's idea of pursuing U.S. interests. Thus, although his vote on neutrality legislation would correspond to administration wishes, his arguments on specific points endangered administration policy. Judging from his vague position here, it would seem that Johnson did not know what he really wanted. As always, though, he knew exactly what he did not want.

For instance, when the cash-and-carry principle for non-war materials was introduced into the neutrality legislation in 1937, Johnson's criticism was vehement, for by limiting exports on raw materials to only those nations which could pay cash and carry the goods for which they then had title in their own vessels, the act was to curtail U.S. trade. By this provision, he said, we would "permit other peoples to carry on the commerce of the world." Again, the Senator indicated inconsistency between his economic views and his isolationism:

I am not one of those who believes that in commerce there is something terrible that imures to and oppresses our people. I was taught originally that commerce on the high seas was the lifeblood of a nation and that this was the very thing most desired by nations. 17

In pointing out our rights to ocean commerce in international law, he called attention to Washington's and Jefferson's insistence upon those rights. He also cited our persistence in putting forth our claims in the Alabama case following the Civil War. He attacked his usual isolationist colleagues as being "peace-at-any-

price people." Johnson's policy for remaining neutral was to follow international law, allowing U.S. citizens to trade and travel on ships of belligerents at their own risk. The 1937 neutrality resolution was to further restrict trade and prohibit travel by U.S. citizens on ships of belligerents.

The Senator argued that cash-and-carry would cause resentment against us by all except those strong enough to obtain our raw materials. Thus, the provision made us an ally of Great Britain in the Atlantic and Japan in the Pacific, for only these two nations had strong enough navies to convoy goods across. This was undoubtedly realized by most members of the administration and Congress, but here again, how one stood on the matter depended on which group of nations he regarded as the greatest threat. It was Hull's intention to aid the Allies; Japan was to be later ruled out of the benefiting group by a specific embargo. It was Johnson's intention to aid neither the Allies, nor Japan.

Again in 1939, with war in Europe already underway, the administration made a vigorous attempt to change neutrality legislation and scuttle the arms embargo, so that arms could go by "cash-and-carry." Key Pittman, chairman of the Foreign Relations committee, had even withdrawn his former support of the arms embargo. But, as the situation in Europe led others to realize the impracticality of neutrality legislation in existence, it caused Hiram Johnson to embrace what he had previously opposed.

Thus, Johnson now argued against repeal of the arms embargo. The reasons he gave were embodied in two 'self-evident' truths: first, that such a repeal would favor the Allies, and second, that this if accomplished after the beginning of the

18 Ibid., p. 1779, March 3, 1937.
19 Ibid., p. 1778, March 3, 1937.
war, would be unneutral. The proposed change, he said, was not a return to international law, but a "defiance" of international law, since the arms traffic had been prohibited when the war broke out. The position of Pittman and the administration, on the other hand, was that the embargo was unneutral, because it helped Japan, which could still get the materials, and Germany, which could obtain goods by way of Russia and Italy—still neutral in 1939. Which policy was more neutral seemed to be merely a matter of opinion as to which side constituted the greatest threat. For the administration, this was Hitler, who might destroy the European balance of power. For Johnson, the threat was from the Allies, who might involve us again in their war.

Johnson was firmly convinced that Hitler constituted no threat to the United States. He thought it perfectly idiotic to assume that the Fuehrer would ever conquer Europe. History would not support such an assumption. Even the great Napoleon had been unable to do so. It was even more absurd, he thought, to believe that were Hitler to succeed in his conquest of Europe, he could successfully attack the U.S., for in Europe he would suffer from revolts and "a resurgent nationalism." And if we had not spent our resources in a European war that was not ours, "we could stand on our own shores, with our airplanes and carriers, and a vastly superior navy, and laugh at his efforts." As Johnson saw it, there was no such thing as "our being next." He entreated the Senators not to repeat the mistake they had made in 1917. His speechmaking in the Senate at this point was an attempt to rekindle the disgust with World War I and the Versailles peace that had existed in 1920. Calling attention to the failure of Wilson's crusade, he revealed bitter

21 Congressional Record, 76th Cong., 2nd Session, p. 630, Oct. 20, 1939.
22 Ibid., p. 630, Oct. 20, 1939.
his amendment proposing to remove the President's discretionary power to decide whether a foreign conflict endangered the nation's security or peace. It led also to his amendment to prevent Congress' declaring neutrality laws in effect. It led to his support of an amendment, proposed by Senator LaFollette of Wisconsin, to set up an export control board. It led to his approval of an amendment to make it unlawful to export arms and ammunition except to American nations engaged in defensive war against a non-American nation. It led to his affirmation of an amendment to restrict use of American ports by war vessels of belligerent nations. It led to his agreement with the LaFollette Resolution providing for a national referendum prior to declaration of war, except in case of attack. It led to his 'aye' vote on an amendment providing that prior to export of articles on materials they be paid for in full in U.S. money; Johnson had likewise charged that "cash-and-carry" had come to be "credit-and-carry." Each of these amendments, designed to prevent a change in what Johnson considered to be an effective neutrality policy, received the Senator's vote. Yet, each was rejected. So also was the amendment proposed by Senator Bennett Champ Clark of Missouri to restore the arms embargo to the pending neutrality resolution.

The Neutrality Act of 1939, repealing the arms embargo, passed 63-30, without Johnson's vote. It seems that the Senator's isolationist thunder had lost its impact.

26 These amendments were offered Oct. 25-27, 1939.
CHAPTER V

THE EFFECTS

To what extent did Johnson influence or weaken the foreign policies of Hoover and Roosevelt? He was an isolationist, a member of that group in Congress which the Presidents of the 1930's were forced by politics to appease, while at the same time trying to cope with a world in turmoil. But, one may argue, he was not the only isolationist in this period. In the Senate alone there were: William Borah, Republican from Idaho; Burton Wheeler, Democrat from Montana; Arthur Vandenberg, Republican from Michigan; Bennett Champ Clark, Democrat from Missouri; Gerald P. Nye, Republican from North Dakota; William Bulow, Democrat from South Dakota; Robert LaFollette, Progressive from Wisconsin; Arthur Capper, Republican from Kansas; David Walsh, Democrat from Massachusetts; George Aiken, Republican from Vermont; Hugh Butler, Republican from Nebraska; C. Wayland Brooks, Republican from Illinois; D. Worth Clark, Democrat from Idaho; John Danaher, Republican from Connecticut; James Davis, Republican from Pennsylvania; Rufus Holman, Republican from Oregon; Edwin Johnson, Democrat from Colorado; William Langer, Republican from North Dakota; Pat McCarran, Democrat from Nevada; Robert Reynolds, Democrat from North Carolina; Henrik Shipstead, Republican from Minnesota; Robert Taft, Republican from Ohio; John Thomas, Republican from Idaho; Charles Tobey, Republican from New Hampshire; Alexander Wiley, Republican from Wisconsin; and Raymond Willis, Republican from Indiana.¹

Indeed, isolationism was not limited by party lines in the decade; the nation was isolationist. Yet, because the sentiment existed as a part of the traditional American way of avoiding war, it did not necessarily have to produce a militantly stubborn neutrality. For this, much blame goes to Hiram Johnson and the national

leaders like him, who would base policies on a distorted sense of 'right,' rather than a careful study of the demands of world politics. He exploited what isolationist sentiment did exist. He exploited emotions of fear. He exploited the very democratic form of government to which he professed his intense loyalty, for he made legislative battles a matter of courting the people, rather than bringing the facts to them. So in the 1930's, leadership, in many instances, was sacrificed for popularity with the uninformed mass of voters.

Johnson never seemed able to find a President who advocated policies with which he was able to agree—unless we take into account past Presidents, Washington, Jefferson, and Monroe. It did not matter too much whether the President in power was of Johnson's party or of the opposition party; the Senator was skeptical of rendering support to any Executive. Perhaps, one can attribute this, in part, to a jealousy of those who held the office. During Johnson's service in the Senate, many journals and publications maintained that he was dominated by a desire to be President. He, obviously, was one who sought distinction. To discredit administration policies would be to credit his own, which held out the opposite alternative on matters. For the nation to accept Johnson's policies would, logically, be to accept the idea that Johnson would make a better President than the man in office. Hence, if the nation demanded isolationism, the GOP would be likely to give them Johnson as a Presidential candidate.

When Hoover was assured the candidacy in 1928, Johnson seemed to give up the hope that the Republican party would ever hand him the nomination. But his extreme isolationist role, an individualistic position, and his success in winning legislative battles against the administrations had given him a considerable amount of distinction as a Senator. Thus, it was this distinction he sought to maintain in the 1930's—not to be known as the Republican Senator from California, but as Senator Johnson. He would succumb to no person and no party. As he was concerned with national dignity and Senatorial dignity, he was intent on maintaining personal...
dignity. As he perceived so many threats to the two former, it would seem he inter­preted any defeat as a threat to the last. Johnson was known in political cir­cles as a pessimist. What turned out to be overwhelming election victories had been pre-calculated by the Senator as defeats. He seemed to carry this pessimism over into legislative battles, fighting for an issue in a manner one would fight for his honor. Thus, the distinguished Senator from California was just that—distinguished by the views he held, methods he used, and results he achieved. He had built a personal success story on negativism.

Domestically, his Senatorial preaching was a lesson in what not to do. The nation should not go into the League; it should not join the World Court; it should not sign the Four Power Pact because of the collective security clause; it should not revise or cancel war debts; it should not loan to defaulting nations; it should not agree to the London treaty; it should not grant tariff reductions in any way; it should not render any aid to the Allied nations or any nation at war. It should not do anything that would require a step beyond its own shores. Johnson never conceived of carrying the love of which he constantly spoke past the continental limits of the United States. It was not until after World War II—which he believed his philosophy would keep us from—that Americans were to abandon Johnson’s idea and come closer to identifying their own interests with those of mankind in the broadest sense.

Internationally, his oft-repeated lecture was a lesson to foreign nations in what not to expect. They should not expect U.S. participation in any collective security agreement or effort to guarantee world peace; they should not expect any consideration of revision or cancellation of war debts; they should not expect to export much to the U.S.; they should not expect any more loans if they defaulted on war debts; they should not expect U.S. aid in any event, peace or war. The lessons were well learned; yet, the problems were not solved, for the content of the course was grossly inadequate.
Johnson not only led or played a major part in the defeat of numerous measures concerning foreign policy, but his influence in Congress and in the nation's press in the 1930's caused Roosevelt to proceed more slowly and more cautiously in meeting the rising international crisis. When the President spoke at Chicago in October, 1937, urging a 'quarantine' on aggressor nations, Johnson was one of those who demanded a retreat from that stand. In the Senate, he was provoked to ask for a definition of U.S. foreign policy, condemning Roosevelt's use of the word 'quarantine.' He offered a resolution demanding that the Secretary of State inform the Senate as to whether any secret agreement existed between the U.S. and other nations. He knew the position in which this put the President and cabinet members who sought more positive moves in thwarting the actions of the European dictators, yet did not want to commit political suicide. So long as there were men like Johnson around to sell the people on the idea that there was an easy way out of undesirable situations, and so long as there was a lack of leaders willing to undertake the task of educating the people on the difficult remedy, isolationism would prevail—at least until war shocked the nation into a change. This it did.

As Europe went to war, there were Americans who said we must give aid to the Allies or fight ourselves. It was our war as well as theirs; America's increased power and the transportation revolution of the twentieth century forced us to be concerned with the European balance of power. There were people who heard these men, and many became less isolationist. Yet, internationalist and sanctionist views seemed to rebound from Johnson's ears, and there were others like him. They remained isolationist. But the former category began to outnumber the latter. Still, Johnson insisted that the U.S. was not going to become involved in another war, and the statement was to furnish its own proof. He took a stand against Congress and public opinion on defense legislation. But the Senator's cause was a

dying one. By 1941 we scrapped all remnants of neutrality legislation and were actively involved in war. The isolationism of the 1920's and 1930's had failed; internationalism was worth a try.

The new point of view was embraced by practically all, including the former isolationists in Congress who in World War II finally had shifted gears. This was not true of Johnson. He was expected to take a stand against acceptance of the United Nations charter in 1945. When the vote on the international organization was taken, however, only Langer and Shipstead cast 'nays.' Senator Johnson lay dying in the hospital.

Hence, if one may dare to use symbolism in a dissertation such as this, Johnson's death can be cited as just that—a symbol of the death of isolationism. But just as persons frequently live on in the minds of men, a philosophy, even when proved unsuccessful in practice, may leave its traces. There are vestiges of Johnson's 'Americanism' to be found today. It is subtle, and in most cases, sublimated, but it is there. In some it means a desire for insulation or the quest for absolute security. These persons cannot accept the fact that the U.S.S.R. controls Eastern Europe or that Communist China is there to stay; to realize this would be to admit there is no such thing as security in the world and that this nation must of necessity be involved in the never-ending game of power politics where the illusion of security is no more than a momentary advantage in relative strength. These persons would ban all foreign aid and invest the money in more retaliatory weapons, for so long as the U.S. can strike back effectively we need fear no one, and allies they reason, are only that so long as they can 'sponge' on the U.S. treasury.

In others, Johnson's 'Americanism' exists merely as a type of moral self-righteousness. The United States, they say, would never drop an atomic bomb or be the first to use a missile, but the other side would not hesitate to do so. They neglect Hiroshima and Nagasaki; they overlook the propaganda disadvantage this World War II action gave us. They are quick to condemn the actions of other states and
slow to admit our own mistakes in the realm of international relations. The United States can do no wrong in their eyes, and hence, must, of right, triumph in any cause. This leads to a complacency about the world situation, a disinterestedness in international events. These are the "Johnsonites"; their isolationism is latent, but, nonetheless, existent. It is difficult to discard entirely an idea which was oversold to the American people in the not-yet-distant past. And the super-salesman was Senator Hiram Johnson.
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