

Quarantine of 1937



The Quarantine Speech of 1937 given by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) propositioned the idea of quarantining aggressive nations as an alternative to war. Even though many Americans were drawn to isolation, FDR was hoping to convince 90 percent of the American population this was the way to go (Haight, 1962). During the speech FDR did not specifically point out a nation which was being targeted but it was likely he was talking about the war in Europe or was it geared towards Japan and their aggression towards China. By remaining vague, Roosevelt had the advantage of not committing himself to a specific policy or set actions” (AP Central, 2002). The isolationist feeling of Americans were that of refraining from political and economic relations with other countries. Roughly ten years after World War I the United States fell into the great depression where a lot of money was invested and America did not fully recover. This may have been weighing on the minds of the citizens of the United States and swaying their attitudes toward the isolationist feeling.

The Neutrality Acts of the 1930’s were originally passed as a way to thwart the United States from entering into foreign wars thus showing the United States neutrality (U. S Department of State Office of the Historian, n. d.). FDR did not like the international aggression which was taking place around the world. His views and quarantine speech led to many protests by isolationist in America (Aboukhadijeh, 2012). FDR wanted to redirect his foreign policy from the problems in England and France towards Germany to that of domestic problems which had more importance to him (Brajkovic, 1978).

With his speech FDR was trying to rally Americans around the idea of joining with other countries and cut ties with the belligerents. American's having isolationist feelings does what for the United States? By following through with the quarantine will send a message to aggressive countries that the United States will sit back and let it occur. By amending the laws of neutrality and adding to them that there should be a greater focus on hold countries accountable for their actions. FDR stated " In times of so-called peace, ships are being attacked and sunk by submarines without cause or notice" (Roosevelt, 1937).

These types of actions are not okay, especially when the incidents directly affect Americans by killing the innocent. Americans can only sit and watch for so long. World War I was taxing on America, but if this quarantine does not come to fruition then aggressive countries will keep on violating treaties and bring war to neighboring countries which have nothing to do with the aggressors. " Without declaration of war and without warning or justification of any kind, civilians, including vast numbers of women and children, are being ruthlessly murdered with bombs from the air" (Roosevelt, 1937).

If these types of events occurred in the United States, how would the public opinion and reaction change? Just like the events during the Spanish-American War in 1898 American stepped in to help Cuba ending in the complete cut off of Spain from the new world. By quarantining aggressive countries America is following the Neutrality Act of 1937 which states that Americans are forbidden from traveling on ships of aggressive nations and prohibits the transportation of arms to aggressive countries even if those arms are made outside the United States (U. S Department of State Office of

the Historian, n. .). America needs to put the isolationist attitude on the back burner. World War I is done and over with. The United States needs to take a stand. By doing so, countries will know and recognize America as a true power and will have to take responsibility for the actions taken by their country. “ War is a contagion, whether it be declared or undeclared. It can engulf states and peoples remote from the original scene of hostilities” (Roosevelt, 1937). This quote from FDR’s Quarantine Speech shows that no matter what neutral countries do or view a war at some point in time they will be affected by it.

By entering in to a quarantine of aggressive countries with other nations could possibly stop the flow of merchandise into those countries not allowing them to continue on in their ways. America has always hoped and wanted peace. “ America hates war. America hopes for peace. Therefore, America actively engages in the search for peace” (Roosevelt, 1937). Peace will come from not allowing violent countries to continue the actions they are taking. The United States needs to step up with the assistance of all Americans to help stop these countries.

References

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