

The Neutrality View from the *Sunday News* [1935-1939]

Donald A. Crownover

PREFACE

The following pages attempt to relive some Lancaster history during a very trying period of time—not unlike today. But, it parallels today in a common element—public reaction. 1935-1939 had a United States President promoting a foreign policy—neutrality—which drew opposition, while today's President is advocating the opposite type of foreign policy—escalation—which also has opponents.

It is interesting to note that the same characteristics mentioned in general United States histories were also present here in Lancaster County at the time, especially the isolationist usually associated with the Midwest United States by historians. As one newsman phrased it, "These people, ideas, and moods went there from here. It was all here in Lancaster County first."

Probably the closest "stethoscope" to the pulse beat of the Lancastrian is his newspaper. So, this monograph utilizes the technique of looking at this period through the "eyes of the Fourth Estate." The eyes belong to J. Thomas Barber who has just finished forty years behind the typewriter. Barber holds the distinction of being the first editor of the *SUNDAY NEWS* (Lancaster) with its initial press run September 16, 1923, and he retired from that same responsible position January 2, 1966.

This writer is much indebted to the resident at 437 State Street, Lancaster, for the pages which lie beyond —

War clouds began to darken the European continent in 1935 and United States citizens glanced apprehensively toward them. Adolf Hitler was making defiant speeches which were rallying the German people, especially the younger set, to chant, "Heil Hitler," and Germany was now on the road to rearmament. In the south Benito Mussolini was arousing Italy to colonial aggressiveness. The democracies in Europe were alarmed; however, they took no steps to use military action to check the rising tide of dictatorship.

By the mid-1930's the "revisionist" view of World War I had become a majority view.¹ According to this manner of thought, there had been guilt in both the German and American sides with the latter being unhappily suckered into participation by British propaganda and by its economic stake in an Allied triumph. Also, there were American memories of the unpaid debts by their allies. United States newspapers were now carrying sensational stories about the United States Senate hearings being conducted by Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota.² These hearings were seeking to prove that business pressure groups and profiteers had pushed the United States into the first world conflict. Promoting this investigation had been a series of sensational articles charging that munitions manufacturers had actually plotted World War I.

July, 1935, was a hot month in Lancaster County, and the July 7 issue of the *SUNDAY NEWS* greeted its readers with the sizzling front page headline, "ITALO-ETHIOPIAN WAR BELIEVED IMMINENT."³ Also on page two, the streamer read, "Mongolia Charges Jap Army is Plotting to Seize Nation."⁴ From this initial mention of world troubles in 1935, the *SUNDAY NEWS* readers were to get a steady flow of "war" news until September 2, 1945, the Japanese surrender aboard the U.S.S. *Missouri*.⁵ The first *SUNDAY NEWS* story mentioning the word "neutrality" during that year was printed August 25 with the headline, "Neutrality Act Warns Europe of U.S. Stand."⁶

This Associated Press story told about the United States Senate's approval on the previous day by a 77-2 margin of House amendments to the 1935 Neutrality Act which would be in effect six months, until February 29, 1936. This Act called for an "outright ban on shipments of arms and munitions to belligerents,"⁷ and other neutralist features. Actually, this neutrality resolution represented a reversal of traditional American policy in permitting the President wide discretion in the handling of foreign affairs. The following week's issue, September 1, had a prominent front page story of President Franklin Roosevelt's signing of the bill into law.⁸ The late President's comment at the signing explained, "The purpose of this Act is to avoid any action which might involve us in war. It is wholly excellent [the act], but there is a need for further legislative action lest the inflexible arms embargo might drag the United States into war instead of keeping us out."⁹ *SUNDAY NEWS* Editor J. Thomas Barber readily admits, "I was an FDR man, and I was chastised many times because of it. Some Lancastrians thought I was promoting the man because of the manner my page layouts emphasized stories about him and his legislation."¹⁰

The only public reaction to Editor Barber's handling of European news stories, as well as the events themselves, appeared as a "Letter to the Editor" on the editorial page four Sundays later.¹¹ It was written by an Italian immigrant named Antonio Palumbo, who is still very prominent in Italian-American affairs in Lancas-

ter. Mr. Palumbo's writing somewhat represents local reaction to incidents occurring across the Atlantic. His lengthy letter reads:

In 1923 and 1926 I went to Italy on a visit, during my stay there found modern systems and plenty of discipline throughout the nation. The world-wide knows that Italy with the grace of God, has been a nation which brought into the world civilization, culture, science, art, music, inventions, discoveries, and also the first law book was written in Roma, which the world today is enjoying and, for which in return that sunny land of Italy should be praised.

Italy today has a population of 42 million people, restricted in area of 125,000 miles with not sufficient national resources to take care of her population. The world closed its doors restricting her in this area, and we all know that this expansion is essential to them. Today Italy asks the world court for more land in order to properly provide the needs for this 42 million people that were brought in (sic) this world for the same purpose of enjoying the things that other people are enjoying in the rest of the nations, and which have been handed down by God.

Today no realization whatsoever; the world shall not forget what Italy has done. Is that what Italy should get in return? As I see it, Italy doesn't want land expansion for means of private advantage, but because this land will be national advantage, and for that reason it compels her to ask for land.

This present civilized world should never experience misunderstanding causing a world conflict. This wide world should be capable of avoiding further destruction, by keeping peace on the earth for which God put us here. We cannot avoid future war through persecution but through justice.

Some nations of the world, today, are awaiting for war to start, figuring that war will end the present world depression. This is all wrong. It seems to me that the present generation is not possessing enough balance. Quickly it flies [sic] up in the air. That is why it is difficult to settle the present disputes.

This is my personal duty to express my point of view. Hoping that peace will be with us.¹²

Mr. Palumbo's sympathy toward the Italian situation was not uncommon around Lancaster County at this time. According to the *SUNDAY NEWS* Editor, there were "a lot of local people pro-Axis; especially in the German situation." Barber opinions that "they thought Hitler would do a good job because he was anti-Communist and he was straightening everything out, such as elimination of German unemployment and the bolstering of German industry." "Our local people would tour Italy and Germany, and when they returned home, we'd [*SUNDAY NEWS*] interview them, and our readers really ate it up," he recalls.¹³

About a month following the Palumbo's "rationalization" for Benito Mussolini's dream of recreating the Roman Empire, the *SUNDAY NEWS* contained a local feature on a colored lad named Oscar Wright who wanted to join Emperor Haile Selassie's air corps. He planned to enplane to Ethiopia during the spring of 1936.¹⁴ Lancaster's first Negro student aviator told a reporter that "he was going there to get the opportunity for some valuable experience in flying, and training in the air; and in the bargain, he paid for it."¹⁵ As to whether Wright ever got the United States Consul to make the proper arrangements, the *SUNDAY NEWS* never followed up the story.

Editor Barber describes the decade of 1935-1945 as "the most miserable part of my life because there was no way to stop Hitler. I was in misery. Why I pretty near 'died' because I could see all this going on, and nobody else around here was paying any attention."¹⁶

Although the *SUNDAY NEWS* had been in existence since 1923, it still did not contain editorials on its pages. However, on a page designated as the "editorial page," feature stories filled its spaces along with such items as Paul Mallon's "Behind the News" column. The March 8 editorial page carried a local slanted feature, "Straight-Arm Diplomacy Spiked War." Its writer penned:

Threats to American Neutrality, now constant concern of the State Department, involve a complicated routine of Senate speeches, adjusted neutrality acts and general patriotic endeavor among students and organizations which may or may not preserve the intended safety of peace. But, whatever is done need not be tried without precedent, for United States history contains several illustrations of the American attitude toward European diplomacy which on more than one occasion has been effective. Perhaps the most effective precedent is the characteristic straight-arm attitude in emergencies which was born out of the "Spirit of 1776."¹⁷

The column mentions that even in the French-Indian War, Lancaster was an influential frontier town ready for the fight. The columnist editorialized further:

... the attitude of 1936 government indicates that the spirit of the earlier Lancastrian ultimatum (an actual petition by 1,800 signers to President Adams in 1798) prevails with certain differences. The 1936 diplomacy is broad and deep and smoother than it was in 1798. Perhaps it is better, but at least the first brand was effective. It all came about when France decided that its favor was worth several million dollars. (The writer is referring to the famous "XYZ Papers") That's an old story, but European politics hasn't changed and there is every possibility that the United States may again be faced with similar problems. What happened in '98, however, made history and best of all peace.¹⁸

As a postscript to the above column, it should be noted here that Lancaster's historic document was received by President Adams, and there's little doubt in local historians' minds that it greatly influenced him judging from the strong wording of his own message to France.

April 19, 1936, marks a milestone in the successful journalistic career of the *SUNDAY NEWS*. It dates the first official "Barber penned" editorial, and the editor accepted this role with a vengeance as it finally gave him an opportunity "to wake the town and tell the people" all about the European dictators. His words seem to leap off the page as they read:

Italy, like Germany, as was expected by the editor, will never hold its peace until it tasted fruits of imperialism that other nations have had in the past. It is a menacing thought, but it must be faced by evasive European diplomats if collective security is to be realized.¹⁹

This editorial is along side of II Duce's explanation that the Italian campaign must be carried on until the entire Ethiopian fighting force is annihilated.²⁰

Two Sundays later, Barber again tosses his verbal darts at the

man he calls the "blundering fool"²¹ with the following:

. . . Mussolini's assault on Haile Selassie has all the earmarks of a New York or Chicago gang sending its muscle men in on a rival's territory, as it is as direct, as unmoral and as ugly as that.

What it comes down to is that we have no cause to work up a lather of moral indignation over what is happening to the Emperor of Ethiopia. We live by a system which drives strong nations out to conquer the weak. We are today reaping the profits of that system. Can we afford to adopt a holier-than-thou attitude toward Italy?

If the conquest of Ethiopia disturbs you, with its dark implication that might does make right, after all, in this modern world, your cue is to hate—not Italy, not Mussolini, but war itself, and the world system which enables nations to profit by war.²²

In late June, President Franklin Roosevelt received his second nomination at the Democratic National Convention, Franklin Field, Philadelphia, with the following remarks which received prominent coverage by the politically moderate *SUNDAY NEWS*: "People in other lands have grown tired of the struggle for democracy and yielded to dictatorship. I believe that our success (in democratic opportunity) can stir their ancient hope. They begin to know that here in America we are waging a great war . . . a war for survival of democracy. We are fighting to save a precious form of government for ourselves and for the world."²³ These words could serve as a rebuttal for the Lancastrian because on May 16 the county received as a visitor the noted proponent of isolationism—Senator Gerald P. Nye. Barber's paper gave the Senator front page coverage with a two-column picture showing Nye being greeted at the Pennsylvania Railroad Station by Dr. Landis Tanger, president of Millersville State Teachers College, where the Senator spoke that evening.

An account of the visit follows:

Munitions-makers and military opportunists have made "National Defense" an excuse for "an unadulterated racket" Senator Nye declared in a plea for support of neutrality legislation to take the profits out of war and preparedness.

In a two-hour address interrupted nine times by applause, the Senate Munitions Investigation chairman further told an audience of 650 persons in the MSTC chapel that America's military secrets are being sold to other nations by the same men who are shouting for "preparedness."

Nye quoted from testimony before his committee to show the intimacy between military men and munitions makers—how both stand to gain, through profits or promotions, by a war, and how they collaborate in wrecking disarmament conferences and promoting "war threats."

"We hear of the dangers of a 'war with Japan' once a year. Is it a coincidence that that cry is raised whenever the naval appropriation bill is before Congress? Our relations with Japan become quite amicable after the bill is passed."

Nye ridiculed the danger of invasion by Japan or any other nation. America's geographical situation is a protection which would enable her to stop an enemy fleet 500 miles from her shores even if Japan has twice as large a navy and America's were only half as large."²⁴

"What, then, are we arming for?" National defense? Certainly not. Our army and navy men have exhaustive plans for the next war—but all of those plans are for battles on foreign soil and for maneuvers in waters far from our shores."

"As a matter of fact, the United States is spending more money than any other nation on earth on armaments. Yet we complain because the rest of the world isn't following our example."

The North Dakotan brought laughter frequently by ironic references to the "patriotism" of munitions manufacturers who make formulas and manufacturing rights on torpedoes, airplanes, poison gas, and other war instruments available to America's "potential enemies."

He cited the duPonts, of Delaware, as a specific example of a firm which sold Japan a power formula despite the protest of the U.S. War Department.

America is leading the armament race, Nye asserted, and cited statistics comparing the amounts being spent in 1913 and 1933, the most recent year for which full tabulations are available. Great Britain, Russia and France increased their budgets from 30 to 44 per cent; Japan increased her military and naval budget 130 per cent; while the United States increased its budget for those purposes 197 per cent.

There has been progress towards neutrality legislation in the past year as the Senator cited the bills which prohibited the sale of goods or giving of credits to nations at war. Nye said, "If I had predicted passage of these bills a year ago I would have been considered an idealist."

Nye predicted that the War Profits bill, designed to tax individual incomes and profits to an absolute minimum the minute war begins, will be enacted at the current session of Congress.

As a permanent Neutrality and Peace program, (in February, the Neutrality Act had been extended to May 1, 1937 with an added ban on American loans or credits to belligerents) Nye urged these other points and urged his hearers to exert their influence for their enactment.

- (1) Write a tax bill so that we pay for a war while we're fighting it, instead of passing it onto the next generation. Depression is the direct result of the war.
- (2) Take the profits out of "preparedness" by getting the United States to make its own munitions. There's evidence of "collusion" among shipbuilders.
- (3) Coordinate the War and Navy departments under one National Defense secretary and create a Peace Department with a cabinet member, aimed to further the cause of peace.
- (4) Enact an amendment to the Constitution making it necessary for the people to decide whether to enter "someone else's war."²⁵

Dr. Tanger, who introduced the Senator, commented at the time, "I cannot recall anyone who gave as effective an address on as important a theme on this platform. The audience applauded him for nearly a minute at the conclusion."²⁶

The October 18 editorial page contained a very interesting International News Service release which stated, "Great Britain's envy of isolation from European political squabbles had reached the point where the startling proposal was being made publicly that English should be moved to Canada and seek peace in living side by side with the United States."²⁷ This radical proposal was made by Osbert Sitwell, noted British author and publicist, in an article published in the "London Referee."²⁸ Although the proposal was

not being taken seriously in responsible British quarters, it certainly indicated the increasing despair of English people over the future peace of Europe. The story intimated that "when an Englishman talks of deserting the British Isles for a new world, it can be understood how great is the despair of the British people."²⁹

Barber's verbalism about the European situation continues to appear. In an editorial headlined, "Future War," he wrote:

Less than a year ago newspaper front pages were crammed with pictures, maps, and details of the war between Italians and Ethiopians. To a certain degree, that war is still going on. One quarter—a rich section—of Ethiopia remains unconquered, and 50,000 natives are stoutly resisting the Italian columns. Nevertheless, you are lucky if you can find a small item about the Ethiopian situation in the back pages of your newspaper. (The *SUNDAY NEWS* being an exception).

Now newspaper front pages are crammed with pictures, maps and details of the Civil War in Spain.

Let's hope that a year from now a greater conflict will not have usurped the front pages. If it's hard to believe that may happen, remember that, a year ago, there was no outward sign of a coming Spanish war.³⁰

In another editorial based upon the Inter-American Conference meeting at Buenos Aires, Barber's typewriter pounded out an opinion on "Our Entire Duty."³¹

President Roosevelt's speech at Buenos Aires was not entirely pleasing to French officialdom, according to dispatches from Paris. The tone of the speech was liked, but various Paris Journals commented acidly on the President's failure to offer a plan for world peace; and *Le Temps* added: "International solidarity carries other moral and political obligations, and our American friends would do well to examine their consciences and ask themselves if they have done their entire duty in this respect."

Since this is the sort of thing we are going to hear from Europe in greater and greater volume, as the shadow of the next war grows longer, we might as well start reminding ourselves, right now, that we are entitled to form our own conception of what our "entire duty" happens to be.

We swallowed the foreign conception of it in 1917, went to war to save the world for democracy, and got pretty badly disillusioned. Can we be blamed for feeling that our principal duty is to mind our own business and keep out of European wars?³²

The retired editor of the *SUNDAY NEWS* feels today that President Roosevelt took the only course of action open to him. Public opinion in 1936 did not allow him to get the United States openly involved in conflict. "FDR," says Barber, "had to play the role of neutrality until the opportune moment arrived. Of course, December 7, 1941 provided this."³³

The page one headline in the *SUNDAY NEWS* greeting the new year read: "Neutrality Early Issue in Congress" (75th Congress).³⁴ The front page story informs Lancastrians that the neutrality legislation enacted May, 1936, has failed to isolate this nation from the Spanish Civil War. Congress will be asked for immediate reinforcement of the existing statute. President Roosevelt desires discretionary authority in applying embargoes against export of munitions to troubled areas.³⁵ Democratic congressional majorities are expected to support the President, and there will be minority de-

1936

	Democrat	Republican	Socialist	Prohibition	Communist	Ind. Lab.	Royal Oak
Lancaster city—							
First ward	395	362	4	.....	3	.....	6
Second ward—							
First precinct	338	519	3	3	1	.....	5
Second precinct	601	452	3	.....	1	.....	26
Third ward	715	439	8	1	6	.....	19
Fourth ward—							
First precinct	600	349	3	.....	.....	.....	21
Second precinct	388	217	1	1	.....	.....	8
Fifth ward—							
First precinct	387	366	2	.....	.....	.....	6
Second precinct	292	296	1	.....	.....	.....	7
Third precinct	309	405	1	.....	1	.....	11
Sixth ward—							
First precinct	417	426	1	.....	.....	.....	8
Second precinct	411	352	2	1	2	.....	17
Third precinct	451	538	2	2	1	.....	10
Fourth precinct	640	552	6	4	2	.....	11
Fifth precinct	466	329	3	2	.....	.....	5
Sixth precinct	551	464	4	2	.....	.....	12
Seventh ward—							
First precinct	584	302	4	.....	2	.....	24
Second precinct	558	343	.....	1	3	1	7
Third precinct	413	218	.....	8	.....	.....	1
Fourth precinct	469	202	3	2	1	.....	5
Fifth precinct	442	315	6	.....	1	.....	21
Sixth precinct	497	432	1	8	.....	.....	18
Eighth ward—							
First precinct	533	296	4	1	8	.....	41
Second precinct	562	175	1	.....	4	.....	17
Third precinct	502	282	1	.....	2	.....	22
Fourth precinct	511	527	4	8	2	.....	22
Fifth precinct	569	181	8	1	2	.....	97
Sixth precinct	667	255	4	.....	2	.....	49
Ninth ward—							
First precinct	513	305	2	1	2	1	10
Second precinct	289	164	1	1	8	.....	10
Third precinct	418	435	3	8	4	.....	14
Fourth precinct	298	246	1	1	.....	.....	10
Fifth precinct	285	559	2	.....	.....	.....	2
Total	15,081	11,325	84	36	48	2	548
Boroughs and Townships...	23,373	30,947	157	148	15	3	511
Grand Total	38,454	42,272	241	184	63	5	1,054

Presidential Election Returns for Lancaster, 1936

mands that embargoes be made mandatory upon the outbreak of international or civil war.

A week later, Barber prints his first editorial specifically naming "neutrality." His readers were told:

When Congress takes off its gloves and gets down to work on the new neutrality law, it ought to be possible to find out whether the American people are really in earnest when they say they want to keep out of the next war, no matter how much it costs them. The argument over the kind of embargo law we shall have—whether it shall apply automatically to all warring nations or may be applied to one side only, at discretion of the President—is really secondary, important as that issue is. The crux of the matter depends on what we are going to embargo.

Munitions of course. The old law cuts off the shipment of guns, shells, explosives, and fighting planes to warring nations; the new one unquestionably will do the same. Since very few of us own munitions company stocks or work for airplane manufacturers, it is easy for us to applaud.

1940

	Roosevelt	Willkie	Thomas	Browder	Aiken
	Democrat	Republican	Socialist	Communist	Ind. Gov.
Lancaster city—					
First ward	382	423	3	1	-----
Second ward—					
First precinct	257	600	5	1	1
Second precinct	532	519	2	2	-----
Third ward	705	485	-----	2	-----
Fourth ward—					
First precinct	538	415	-----	-----	-----
Second precinct	351	214	1	-----	1
Fifth ward—					
First precinct	342	450	-----	1	-----
Second precinct	263	352	4	-----	1
Third precinct	246	443	2	-----	-----
Sixth ward—					
First precinct	344	511	1	-----	-----
Second precinct	358	410	2	-----	-----
Third precinct	432	581	2	-----	1
Fourth precinct	599	699	5	2	-----
Fifth precinct	426	388	1	-----	-----
Sixth precinct	469	612	-----	1	1
Seventh ward—					
First precinct	494	377	3	-----	-----
Second precinct	515	265	4	-----	-----
Third precinct	403	242	1	2	3
Fourth precinct	409	222	2	-----	-----
Fifth precinct	387	348	2	1	-----
Sixth precinct	427	490	2	-----	-----
Eighth ward—					
First precinct	529	324	2	-----	-----
Second precinct	547	258	1	-----	-----
Third precinct	479	305	1	2	1
Fourth precinct	521	598	-----	-----	-----
Fifth precinct	488	256	2	-----	1
Sixth precinct	662	371	4	4	1
Ninth ward—					
First precinct	478	337	1	-----	-----
Second precinct	274	142	-----	5	-----
Third precinct	394	474	1	-----	-----
Fourth precinct	249	254	4	-----	-----
Fifth precinct	239	661	5	-----	-----
Total, Lancaster city	13,759	13,086	63	24	11
Totals, Boroughs and Townships	18,400	31,835	114	19	13
Soldier vote, Virginia Beach	50	17	1	-----	-----
Soldier vote, Fort Meade	1	1	-----	-----	-----
Grand Totals	32,210	44,939	178	43	24

Presidential Election Returns for Lancaster County, 1940

But that hardly scratches the surface.

Suppose a new world war should break out in Europe tomorrow. Both sides immediately would turn to the United States for supplies. But what kind of supplies would they be after?

Munitions? Yes, if they could get them. But every great power in Europe has been devoting the last decade to putting its own munitions plants in order. England, Germany, France, Italy—all these countries can make their own guns, shells, and airplanes, if they have to.³⁶

What they can't possibly make for themselves is the bulk of the great raw materials without which a war cannot be fought—wheat, beef, oil, cotton and the like. Those are the things they will be really anxious to buy from the outside; and those are precisely the things which America has to sell. Shall we have the courage to put an embargo on them?

It would be expensive; make no mistake about that. It would touch all of us in that sensitive pocketbook-nerve. A year's embargo on the shipment of such commodities would cost us stupendous sums.

But there is one thing that would cost a great deal more. That would be for us to get into the war ourselves. And just as oil, wheat, cotton and beef helped to get us into the last war, they could help to get us into the next one.³⁷

Then, the May 2 Sunday paper carried the word that President Roosevelt had signed the new Neutrality Act while cruising off the Gulf of Mexico on the yacht *Potomac*.³⁸ Surprisingly, the *SUNDAY NEWS*' editorial page remained silent about this latest maneuver of 1937 "escalation." The paper also had a two-column picture of president pro tempore of the Senate Key Pittman and Colonel Edwin Halsey, Senate secretary, which was captioned, "Stroke for Peace."³⁹ This act strengthened the previous neutrality acts, and prohibited the sale of arms and munitions to either side in the Spanish war.

The first page of the paper's second section on August 1 had a prominently placed story in which a Senator Lewis (the Associated Press stories at this time fail to list first names), an Illinois Democrat, said "the United States could be at war with China or Japan, or both within an hour if it complied with demands for immediate enforcement of the Neutrality Law."⁴⁰ The Senator continued:

Those who are demanding that the United States enforce its Neutrality Law at once, fail to see that the moment we announce either one of the nations as the aggressor and declared both as being at war, our ships of trade delivering American goods in the Orient would at once be seized by either China or Japan, or both, as bringing supplies to the enemy.

The American citizens would be seized and imprisoned, and then it is that America must go to the rescue of her people and her property, and this she must do by her American navy and America becomes at once involved in the war of China and Japan.

At present the American shipper can continue sending his goods to China and Japan, and unless they are munitions of war deliberately sent for the purpose of aiding the conflict, neither country has a grievance against America.

But, when once America attempts to apply her Neutrality Law, and stops her merchants from disposing of American goods to China or Japan the vessels of the Americans who are already on the seas for the purpose of delivering material—unconscious that they are violating any law—could be seized or fired upon and America, at once would be forced to resent these assaults, and America would be at war with the Orient.

For this reason—to avoid such a possibility—the President must continue his efforts to persuade those in conflict, both in Spain and in the Orient, to come to peace upon acceptable terms, and keep the United States from embroiling itself through its merchants and shippers, being seized as offenders and thus the United States be deprived of all influence in its efforts to mediate through good counsel and restore the conflicting forces to peace and good will of neighbors.⁴¹

Two issues later, an editorial appeared entitled, "The Hard Road Toward Neutrality," and it read in part:

As the Chinese-Japanese conflict dangerously approaches actual large-scale warfare, it is none too soon to begin thinking about neutrality. Already factors are beginning to pile up before there is any

formal war, which will make the neutral course hard . . . Neutrality means not getting into a war, and treating equally those who are in it. If the contestants are unequally matched, or find themselves in a spot where equal treatment helps one, hinders another, that is their hard luck. The conception of neutrality that argues that we are somehow bound to see that contestants are evenly matched and to back the weaker, is hard to understand.

Quite regardless of any sympathy one may have for China, neutrality means equal treatment for both, even if China gets the short end. Any other kind of neutrality, which would change policy with the wind to see that the odds were somehow evened, is not neutrality.⁴²

Barber's language in the above editorial is interesting to this writer because two years later, another journalist who was one of national prominence, namely Raymond Clapper wrote:

For us neutrality can only be a state of mind. It can be nothing more. If we embargo shipments, we give Germany tremendous additional leverage by leaving her opponents infinitely weaker. If we sell, we strengthen Britain. Thus, Americans are wrong to think neutrality neither aids nor injures either side. Translated into plain language, the arms embargo helps Germany and Italy.⁴³

A mid-September issue has a page one story about the American Legion takes an anti-war stand at their national convention in New York City,⁴⁴ and in November, the *SUNDAY NEWS* prints about the People's Congress for Democracy and Peace convening in Pittsburgh, Pa.⁴⁵ This Congress, sponsored by the American League Against War and Fascism, expected to draw 6,000 people on November 26.⁴⁶ It had four basic objectives:

- (1) Outline an effective American peace policy;
- (2) Develop further plans for the preservation of civil and democratic rights;
- (3) Devise means of effecting a reduction in war budgets and end militaristic activities among the youth of America;
- (4) Combat growth of Fascist organizations and defeat repressive legislation.⁴⁷

Six days before Christmas, Barber urged Lancastrians to sign a petition being circulated in the county, as well as over the nation, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The plea continued:

This petition calls on Congress and the President to keep the United States out of war. The petition here already has an impressive list of signers including the Mayor. There can be little doubt that this petition whether it gets its 25,000,000 signatures or not, pretty accurately reflects the feelings of the people of the United States. For although public opinion can be hard to gauge, there is one thing the overwhelming desire of the American people to keep out of war—about which there is no doubt . . . If you get a chance at the V.F.W. petition, Sing [sic] it.⁴⁸

Editor Barber continued to strike back at the Axis via the editorial "route," but local readers see only straight news wire stories on the pages of the *SUNDAY NEWS* during the first quarter of 1938. Then, on March 5, the noted author, lecturer and outstanding authority on the Orient, Upton Close visits Lancaster.⁴⁹ In an exclusive interview, he tells a reporter, "Americans are suddenly realizing

the meaning of huge armament appropriations and the meaning of being drawn into a conflict on the Pacific. Americans for the first time in the twenty years since I started lecturing are beginning to realize that relations do exist between the 'Green Pastures and the Slaughterhouse.' . . . the people of the United States now want a serious interpretation of world affairs and serious answers to their questions. And these questions all have to do with foreign relations, especially the Japanese question."⁵⁰

Taking a cue from the above statement, the *SUNDAY NEWS* printed a feature on its editorial page entitled, "Blockage Holds Spark—for Powder in the Pantry."⁵¹ Although it carries no byline, Barber today identifies the writer as Rollin C. Steinmetz, former city editor of the *SUNDAY NEWS*, and currently on the faculty at Millersville State College.⁵² Steinmetz explores local thinking of the times, and he writes:

The question is asked, "Would the U.S. Neutrality Act applied to blockage materials of war do the trick, or would it involve us as a combatant? The closet association with war probably seems to be to date the resolutions for peace passed by its various groups and by audiences, who have listened to anti-war speakers such as Senator Nye."⁵³

Its most recent contribution to the cause of peace was a resolution passed by three youth groups representing 80,000 young people against the "mad race of armament," and opposing the Sheppard-May Mobilization bill which would commandeer local industries and executives in war-time, on the grounds that it leaves us no alternative but to fight at the will of the government.

A survey of other peace contributions would be the activities of a whole group of organizations represented by the Lancaster Peace Council allied against war. And the whole movement seems to put us firmly and unalterably opposed to conflict.

Aside from that, Lancaster does not seem concerned with problems of war. But, it is as "we've got powder in the pantry."⁵⁴

Steinmetz emphasizes that food grown here in the Garden Spot is sent throughout the world; our cork industry supplies life-preservers; local firms manufacture parachutes and experimental planes; linoleum from the Armstrong Cork Company is used in battleships; silk and cotton mills here manufacture garments to be worn by the military; and Lancaster's old kitchen ranges, the worn rails of the Columbia and Lititz trolley lines were probably fed to the Japanese and Italian war machines.⁵⁵

On September 11, there appeared the first "Letter to the Editor" concerning the world situation since 1935. Steinmetz said in a recent interview that the dailies got more letters than the Sunday paper, "although we did everything in our power to arouse their interest. They just wouldn't write."⁵⁶ This letter written by "AN ALLIE (sic) of 1918" read:

Reading the Sunday News (sic), I noticed the item "Says France, U.S. Remain Allies." (This story had appeared September 4 under the headline, "Nazi Army is Massed on Border") . . . and according to the paper that means in peace and war.⁵⁷

Just what right has the Ambassador (in reference to U.S. Ambassador William C. Bullitt at Bordeaux, France, making an extemporaneous speech) to make such a statement? Our nation is still suffering

from the last time some "wiseboy" said we would be allies to some Nation whom in turn, might have just as well told us to go fly a kite.

In my mind, if the Ambassador would talk peace instead of war, he would be doing more good; unless of course, he himself and all his kind, intend to put on a uniform, shoulder a gun, and take a most active part in all the shooting, gassing and bombing that our boys were subjected to in 1918.

If this is not his intention he should not make rash promises for the youth of Our Nation.⁵⁸

October brings forth a feature on a Lancaster girl, Miss Julia Bowman, who had just returned from a bicycle trip through Germany.⁵⁹ Highlighting the story was the fact that she brought back a Hitler Guard knife with the words, "Blood and Honor" etched into the gleaming steel blade.⁶⁰ Miss Bowman relates to Lancaster readers that "young people over there are almost fanatically Nazi, and everybody has at least one uniform."⁶¹

An editorial in the same issue lists a general roundup of nations joining the Nazi bandwagon—Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Greece and Turkey.⁶² Barber writes this list "is the accumulation of a month, a month which may eventually mean the horror of years. Let's try to put a speed limit on history."⁶³

As the ball atop the spire of the *TIMES* Building, New York City, slowly descended to greet the new year, it also greeted a concerned and troubled nation. A month later, Lancaster took an active part in National Defense Week (February 6-12)⁶⁴ as the paper headlines grew blacker with each passing day. In March, Senator Key Pittman, chairman of Senate Foreign Relations Committee, proposed revision of neutrality legislation so as to prevent the sale of any American projects to warring nations except on a "cash and carry" basis.⁶⁵ The April 2 issue of the *SUNDAY NEWS* ran a full text of Adolf Hitler's speech at Wilhelmshaven where he heaped scorn on British-French anti-aggression drive, threatened denunciation of the 1935 Anglo-German Naval treaty and declared Germany would stand neither for intimidations or encirclement.⁶⁶ Two weeks later, this same paper had a box etched in black reminding Lancastrians of their present participation in the world crisis.⁶⁷

On June 18, a page two streamer told Lancastrians that the new proposed Neutrality bill faced a stiff fight in Congress,⁶⁸ and the readers prepared to sweat out its passage during the summer. But, the summer grew long and hot as debate over the new legislation continued. Finally, the November 5 Sunday paper announced its passage with a two-column front page story bannered "PRESIDENT BANS U.S. SHIPS FROM COMBAT ZONES." The sub headline read: "All Belligerent Nations' Ports Out of Bounds."⁶⁹ The new Act, signed by President Roosevelt November 4, excluded American shipping from virtually all European ports except those of neutral nations on the Mediterranean and Arctic oceans.⁷⁰ On page two of this issue are eighteen questions and their answers concerning this new legislation as the *SUNDAY NEWS* tried to keep its readers informed.⁷¹

Editor Barber's Armistice Day editorial read in this manner:

... For 21 years now it (Lancaster) has been marching in observance of a great blessing—peace! ... Up to now we have reassured ourselves with a lot of unique double-talk which runs something like this:

We hate war and America will do everything in its power to stay out;

But we might as well look at this thing realistically and sell our goods because it would be inhuman not to sell supplies to the warring countries. (Besides if we don't keep up our markets we'll lose them);

But we won't send our ship—that will prevent an overt act which might involve us;

But we will send our ships under another flag;

They'll carry air bombers and materials for making munitions so that our economic system can take advantage of the millions already spent here for the goods. And so we'll take their millions but we won't lend them any money;

And meanwhile we must watch the propaganda. For instance, in the last war we were sucked in on that gag about "Saving the World for Democracy." No more of that nonsense;

We might as well look at this realistically. What we've really got to do is to throw our support to the forces who are saving the world from Fascism ...

And so it goes.⁷²

Barber had earlier pinned down this double-talk with an editorial he called, "Spring Hats," and very aptly describes the times.

Two pictures come from Germany, telling a story:

One is that a young woman sporting the latest mode for millinery in that country. It is a steel helmet for protection against explosive and debris.⁷³

The other is that of a young mother carrying in one hand a small cradle like a basket. It is completely covered by an airtight rubber tarpaulin; the tiny life within is supported by a bellows-pump under the other arm of the mother; which supplies gas-filtered air to the covered basket-cradle.

"Rock-a-bye, baby, in your tight box,
While from the bombs the whole city rocks,
If the pump fails, your heart cannot beat,
Nevertheless, the contrivance was neat."

That might be a new European cradle song, except that behind her gas mask the mother could not sing it, and tucked into its airtight pre-casket, baby could not hear it.⁷⁴

Barber's final editorial of the year neatly summarizes the events which occurred during the past decade (1929-1939). A portion of which his wife describes Barber as "reading volume after volume of mysteries just in order to get his mind off the world crisis."⁷⁵ The December 31 editorial, very much to the point, following a diary of the aforementioned ten years states, "That's the picture at the end of the decade. What's coming up for 1940? Nobody can know that. But there can be no doubt that lessons have been learned. We've got a hunch people are being more considerate and cooperative. If that is so, let's not worry about what we ought to do, let's be careful that we don't disturb a tendril of this small, budding flower of national coherence that it may become a perennial bloom for the next ten promising years."⁷⁶

NOTES

- ¹Frederick Lewis Allen, *Since Yesterday* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), p. 321.
- ²Walter Johnson, *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1960), p. 110.
- ³SUNDAY NEWS, July 7, 1935, p. 1.
- ⁴*Ibid.*, p. 2.
- ⁵Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Oxford History of the American People* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 1062.
- ⁶SUNDAY NEWS, August 25, 1935, p. 1.
- ⁷*Ibid.*
- ⁸SUNDAY NEWS, September 1, 1935, p. 1.
- ⁹*Ibid.*
- ¹⁰Interview with J. Thomas Barber, December 23, 1966.
- ¹¹SUNDAY NEWS, September 29, 1935, p. 12.
- ¹²*Ibid.*
- ¹³Barber interview, December 23, 1966.
- ¹⁴SUNDAY NEWS, October 27, 1935, p. 1.
- ¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 8.
- ¹⁶Barber, *loc. cit.*
- ¹⁷SUNDAY NEWS, March 8, 1936, p. 17.
- ¹⁸*Ibid.*
- ¹⁹SUNDAY NEWS, April 19, 1936, p. 14
- ²⁰*Ibid.*
- ²¹Barber, *loc. cit.*
- ²²SUNDAY NEWS, May 3, 1936, p. 14.
- ²³SUNDAY NEWS, June 28, 1936, p. 1.
- ²⁴SUNDAY NEWS, May 17, 1936, p. 1.
- ²⁵*Ibid.*
- ²⁶*Ibid.*
- ²⁷SUNDAY NEWS, October 18, 1936, p. 16.
- ²⁸*Ibid.*
- ²⁹*Ibid.*
- ³⁰SUNDAY NEWS, November 22, 1936, p. 16.
- ³¹SUNDAY NEWS, December 13, 1936, p. 20.
- ³²*Ibid.*
- ³³Barber, *loc. cit.*
- ³⁴SUNDAY NEWS, January 3, 1937, p. 1.
- ³⁵*Ibid.*
- ³⁶SUNDAY NEWS, January 10, 1937, p. 12.
- ³⁷*Ibid.*
- ³⁸SUNDAY NEWS, May 2, 1937, p. 1.
- ³⁹*Ibid.*
- ⁴⁰SUNDAY NEWS, August 1, 1937, p. 20.
- ⁴¹*Ibid.*
- ⁴²SUNDAY NEWS, August 15, 1937, p. 13.
- ⁴³Raymond Clapper: *Watching the World*. Edited by Mrs. Raymond Clapper (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1944), p. 260.
- ⁴⁴SUNDAY NEWS, September 19, 1937, p. 13.
- ⁴⁵SUNDAY NEWS, November 7, 1937, p. 20.
- ⁴⁶*Ibid.*
- ⁴⁷*Ibid.*
- ⁴⁸SUNDAY NEWS, December 19, 1937, p. 14.
- ⁴⁹SUNDAY NEWS, March 6, 1938, p. 1.
- ⁵⁰*Ibid.*
- ⁵¹SUNDAY NEWS, June 12, 1938, p. 13.
- ⁵²Barber, *loc. cit.*

- 53SUNDAY NEWS, *loc. cit.*
 54Ibid.
 55Ibid.
 56Interview with Rollin C. Steinmetz, December 10, 1966.
 57SUNDAY NEWS, September 11, 1938, p. 12.
 58Ibid.
 59SUNDAY NEWS, October 23, 1938, p. 13.
 60Ibid.
 61Ibid.
 62Ibid., p. 14.
 63Ibid.
 64SUNDAY NEWS, February 5, 1939, p. 13.
 65SUNDAY NEWS, March 19, 1939, p. 1.
 66SUNDAY NEWS, April 2, 1939, p. 18.
 67SUNDAY NEWS, April 16, 1939, p. 13.
 68SUNDAY NEWS, June 18, 1939, p. 2.
 69SUNDAY NEWS, November 5, 1939, p. 1.
 70Ibid.
 71Ibid., p. 2.
 72SUNDAY NEWS, November 12, 1939, p. 13.
 73SUNDAY NEWS, May 7, 1939, p. 12.
 74Ibid.
 75Barber, *loc. cit.*
 76SUNDAY NEWS, December 31, 1939, p. 12.

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