

TODAY and TOMORROW

By WALTER LIPPMANN

**American Foreign Policy in the Making:
Senator Nye and Mr. Stimson**

EVERY one must wish that we had a clear foreign policy. But there is a reason why we do not have one. It is that we are trying to fit together the remnants of several different foreign policies and to reconcile a number of excellent but contradictory emotions. The difficulty can be studied in the matter of the Spanish embargo and of the neutrality act as applied to the Sino-Japanese War.

Here, for example, is Senator Nye who has done more than any other living American to convince the people that if they export munitions to a country that is at war they will eventually be drawn into that war. In the summer of 1938 a civil war broke out in Spain. But it was a civil war which was in part also an international war, with Russia supporting one side, Italy and Germany the other. The neutrality law then in force did not apply to a civil war. As soon as Congress assembled in January, 1937, the Administration asked for an embargo on munitions to Spain. Senator Nye voted for it. The House laid the embargo by a vote of 411 to 1; the Senate, after one day's debate, laid the embargo by a vote of 81 to 9.

But last spring Senator Nye introduced a resolution to lift the embargo in order that the Madrid government might get arms. He announced that as regards Spain "the purpose has not been served." Forced to choose between his old conviction that the export of munitions would draw us into war and his sympathy with the loyalist government, Senator Nye, who has always wanted to lay embargoes, decided that he wanted to lift the Spanish embargo.

And then he complains in a broadcast to the nation that we do not have a consistent and clearly defined foreign policy.

A much more impressive example of the contradictions that have to be resolved if we are to have a clear policy is to be found in the position of Mr. Henry L. Stimson. He does not, of course, see eye to eye with Senator Nye on the theory of embargoes. But at the present time Mr. Stimson is advocating a policy of embargo against Japan in the Pacific and of lifting the embargo in favor of loyalist Spain in the Atlantic.

Moreover, unless I am greatly mistaken, Mr. Stimson did not object to the Spanish embargo when it was laid two years ago, and probably he favored it. For Mr. Stimson believes in collective action and the embargo was laid in co-operation with Mr. Anthony Eden in England and M. Leon Blum in France.

I assume that Mr. Stimson was in favor of co-operation. For in October, 1935, at the time of the League's sanctions against Italy in the Ethiopian affair, he wrote in favor of giving the President the power to prohibit exports to Italy in order to co-operate with the League. In October, 1937, he wrote in favor of a collective embargo against Japan, and he still favors that.

Now the Spanish embargo of January, 1937, was, though many have now forgotten the fact, an attempt on the part of the United States to co-operate with Britain and France in localizing the Spanish War. The reason why Congress was unanimous for the Spanish embargo is that the isolationists like Mr. Nye saw it as a protection against entanglement and the believers in collective security saw it as a form of practical co-operation with Britain and France.

Mr. Stimson says today that the Spanish embargo was a violation of international law. And of course it was. But in 1936-37 those who believed in "collective security" believed that international law had been radically amended. And is not that what Mr. Stimson still believes when he thinks about the Japanese aggression in China?

I do not cite the difficulties of Mr. Stimson's position because I know how to clear them up, but in order to illustrate the inherent difficulties of the problem. When a man as high-minded, as learned, and as ex-

perienced as Mr. Stimson falls into such contradictions, it is certain that the formulation of American foreign policy is no simple matter.

What we are trying to do is to combine several different theories, each of which makes a strong appeal to American interest and American sentiment. We should like to maintain our traditional rights as neutrals in the event of war. We should like also to avoid being drawn into the war by American exporters who exercise the ancient rights of neutrals. We should like also to see aggression resisted; we do not wish to have our economic power used to help an aggressor; we should like it to support those who resist aggression. In short, we should like to remain at peace, and we should like to see righteousness prevail.

But the fact of the matter is that we cannot have all these things at once, and by trying to carry on all these policies at once, we get the disadvantages of all of them and none of the benefits of any one of them.

If we try to have a policy in Spain on the theory that collective action is a failure, and a policy in the Far East on the theory that collective action will work, we shall, I very much fear, get ourselves into trouble in both the oceans at once. If at this late date, we lift the embargo on Spain, we shall antagonize not merely General Franco, the Italians and the Germans, but the British and the French governments as well; we shall be giving feeble and altogether inadequate encouragement to the loyalists, and we shall be creating complete confusion in whatever the British and French policy may be.

And if on top of that we challenge Japan in the name of collective action, having just rebelled against collective action in Spain, we are likely to find ourselves trying to stop the Japanese in China by means sufficient to provoke them to anger but insufficient to bring them to terms.

My own view is that in the world as it is today we can have no policy except in regard to those things about which the nation is prepared to go to war. Policies based on measures short of war can lead only to humiliation and failure in a time when so many great powers are prepared to fight for what they want. We can have no real policy, I think, in China; we can have no real policy in Spain; we can have no real policy in central Europe. We do not intend to fight in those regions of the earth, and so the sooner we stop fighting among ourselves about the Chinese, the Spaniards and the central Europeans, the more clearly we shall begin to see our course in these difficult days.

The vital points of our foreign policy lie not in the interior of Europe and Asia, but in the two oceans that separate us from Europe and Asia. Our most vital interest is that there shall never be in those two oceans a power or a combination of powers capable of attacking us or of intimidating us. So we are vitally concerned with the development of Japanese naval power. We should be vitally concerned if the Germans and Italians broke through the French Army and the British Navy and established themselves as naval and air powers in the Atlantic in alliance with the Japanese power in the Pacific.

Our true national interest is to insist that the strategic points of control in the Pacific and Atlantic are either in our hands or in the hands of friendly powers that we can trust. That is, I believe, the working principle of an effective foreign policy in the world as it now is; whereas many of the other things we talk about are merely advertisements of our hopes and our preferences. What we do should be done for that reason, openly and avowedly, and not for sentiment, not for ideology, not for the sake of broken-down treaties, not for any theory about the causes of war, but simply and solely because that is the only way we can defend our peace.