ALL observers seem to agree—at least the various polls confirm it—that a great majority of the American people believe that a world war is in the making and that the chances are one in two that the United States will have to stay out of it. If this illusion of peace is indeed assumed, we may hope that whatever we do to prevent war, we will be able to stay out of it. For, whatever the outcome, another world war would be one of the great catastrophes of all time.

For my part, I do not believe that war is inevitable, and from what I can learn, this is the view of the men, here and abroad, who have the best means of knowing the actual situation in the world. If the British, with the backing of public opinion, are sufficiently cool and resolute, the peace can still be saved by diplomacy.

The situation, though not at all desperate, is critical. To say that it is mild means more specifically that, according to the most reliable information available, there are no immediate indications of a general war, and that there are either no other countries or no one among Germany, Italy, or Japan, and now, among nations, on which one can base a decision whether there will or will not be war. Apparently, it is Japan which will cast the deciding vote.

The reason why Japan has the deciding vote is that Great Britain and France are now too strong in Europe to be attacked by Germany and Italy alone. Though London and Paris would suffer terrible damage in an attack from the air, they cannot be attacked by invasion from the air. Their naval superiority is overwhelming greater, and the French Army, standing behind the Maginot Line, is still the best army in the world. Backed up by the resources of the British Empire which the navy and the merchant marine can bring, the military power of the United States is probably sufficient to make a European war an impossible adventure.

That is where Japan comes into it. If Japan were to join in the attack on the British and French, the United States would have the arms and men to hold them back. But that would be a world war, and Japan would be caught in a long-distance But there Is to be war or whether there is not to be war, then it is not hard to understand why the war party to Rome, Berlin, and Tokyo is so merry at the American armament program and at the President for helping the French and British to prepare for war and the very best airplanes at that, and at the report that he regards it as a vital interest of the United States that the French Army and British Navy should not be destroyed.

The armament program has impressed the peace party in Japan; the help that it is being given to the French and British, and also, one might add, the Netherlands, has strengthened the peace party, and the fact that the United States has become a world power is a thing in Germany and Italy. As a result, the chances of war are even more certainly much less than they were before the President began asking for more armaments and began helping the British and French to strengthen their defenses.

There are many things that the Administration has done which seem to me unwise or badly done, it ought to have been done differently. It ought to have emphasized the fact that war is a terrible thing, and the fact that the United States is not strong enough to take part in it.

For my own part, I do not believe that the President says publicly all that he expects about the dangers of the situation, he may increase the dangers by accusing Panama and he will surely be accused of making mistakes. He is making mistakes. He is trying to do his job. He is trying to avert war, and if he does not succeed, it will be his fault. He is making mistakes, and he will be accused of being wrong. But that he is trying to avert war, that is clear. In Germany and Italy, as a vital interest of the United States, the French Army and British Navy are perfectly safe if they decide to go to Congress and try to get more armaments, and if the United States tells Japan, Germany, and Italy that the French Army and British Navy will not be destroyed, that is the way to avert war.

And since almost every one as Mr. Hoover has said, would not dare to go to Congress to try to make more money for the French Army and British Navy, and if they decided to do so, they would be betrayed and they would be accused of having concealed purposes. He is trying to do his job. He is trying to avert war, and it is not hard to understand why the war party is so confident of victory in Japan.

The problem is more difficult. For if the Administration says publicly all that he expects about the dangers of the situation, he may increase the dangers by accusing Panama and he will surely be accused of making mistakes. He is making mistakes. He is trying to do his job. He is trying to avert war, and if he does not succeed, it will be his fault. He is making mistakes, and he will be accused of being wrong.