

AFREE PRESS RANKLES F. D. R.;  
IT DOES MUSSOLINI, TOO

(From The Idaho Statesman)

A lesson for Americans, which our President already knows, trails the expulsion last week from Italy of John T. Whitaker, Rome correspondent of the Chicago Daily News.

The right arm of dictatorship is a muzzled press. To hoodwink his followers and remain in power, a dictator always must order what can and what cannot be reported. To hide his sorry plight, Mussolini evidently has put an end to factual reporting from Italy.

Since President Roosevelt proposed a fortnight ago that the American press impose a voluntary censorship, some worried scowls have creased editorial faces. His reprimand carried implications of a gagged, thwarted press.

Whenever the people of this nation permit their elected servants to dictate to a "free" press, the era of goose-stepping and "Heil, Eleanor" will have arrived. Mr. Roosevelt and some of his New Deal crackpots, "Charlie McCarthy" Harold Ickes and others, would like to do just that.

In a post-election blast, Sir Harold gurgled that newspapers should clean their own houses. He implied, of course, that the anti-Third term opinion which a large majority of editors held had been proved wrong, dastardly and un-American by the election result. In a Democracy, it would seem that some respect should be accorded the opinion of 23 million voters, including the editors, who disagreed with Ickes.

Now the President himself purrs out a suggestion that the press should paddle itself. The king-pin used the flimsy, far-fetched excuse that reporting the dispatch of five bombers to Pacific bases betrayed military secrets. He was unwilling to say what harm the stories had done.

In dismissing Newsman Whitaker, the Italian government was unwilling to cite specific inaccuracies or provocations in his dispatches. Nevertheless, Whitaker was told politely, but irrevocably, to leave Italy.

President Roosevelt also maneuvers politely.