

FROMM INSTITUTE

The United States and the Second World War

Peter O'M. Pierson

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**AMERICAN REACTION TO EVENTS IN EUROPE AND ASIA 1931-40:**

The Far East. Mukden Incident Sept. 1931 & Kwantung Army; 1932 Manchukuo, Emperor Puyi (1906-67); leaves League of Nations 1933; gov't by assassination

Stimson Doctrine: Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of State, refusal of recognition

Roosevelt and Foreign Policy League of Nations; Cordell Hull, Secretary of State

Armed Forces. Cuts to Army and MacArthur reaction

Recognition of Soviet Union

"Good Neighbor Policy," FDR Caribbean and Latin American trips

London Economic Conference, currency stabilization

Neutrality Act, Aug. 1935; arms embargo

Italy & Ethiopia: War Oct. 1935- May 1936

Roosevelt and World Court at The Hague; failed to get two-thirds of Senate

Public Debate: Senator Huey Long, Father Charles Coughlin; Gerald L. K. Smith; John T. Flynn; H. L. Mencken; Sinclair Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here* (1935, about Fascist takeover of U.S. government)

Neutrality Act, Feb. 1936

USSR and Popular Fronts: France, Spain

[The Berlin Olympics, August 1936] **Rome-Berlin Axis, 25 Oct. 1936**

Civil War in Spain (Neutrality act loophole for civil wars); 17 July 1935-1 April 1939

U.S. Sympathies; Roman Catholics; Abraham Lincoln Brigade; Ernest Hemingway

Civil War in Spain (Neutrality act loophole for civil wars)

Neutrality Act of Jan. 1937; closed loophole; "cash and carry" provision

1937: Marco-Polo Bridge incident, July, & Japan-China war; Nanking, *Panay* Incident 12 Dec.; Japanese apologies

U.S. WAR PLAN ORANGE from 1919 onward. Pacific War and Philippines (1934 Act granted independence in 10 years)

U.S. RAINBOW PLANS 1-5: Joint Board (chiefs, Army, Navy), for war on multiple fronts

With end in 1936 of Naval Treaties, battleships *North Carolina* and *Washington* ordered; carriers

*Yorktown* and *Enterprise* launched; *Wasp* started, *Hornet* ordered; a dozen new cruisers, 25 new destroyers, 25 more ordered, 60 improved U.S. submarines 1930-1939; 1900 aircraft.

Army Air Corps B-17; Norden bombsight. Army: M-1 Garand rifle; Maj. Gen. Adna R.

Chaffee Jr. and armored units

1938 House Committee Investigating Un-American Activities (Martin Dies Jr, D-Tex), succeeded 1934-37 Special Committee: Nazis, Communists, KKK

1938: March: Anschluss (Germany annexes Austria); Sudetenland (Czechoslovakia)

1938, Sept. Munich Agreements (Hitler, Mussolini, Neville Chamberlain, Edouard Daladier)

Nov. 10-11 Kristallnacht, anti-Jewish pogroms; Hitler and Armed Forces (Wehrmacht)

1939: March 15, German occupation of Bohemia; breakup of Czechoslovakia

U.S. Congress authorized Air Corps 5,500 planes, 3250 new. Battleships (BB) *Iowa* and *New Jersey*

1939: 23/24 August, Molotov-Ribbentrop (Hitler-Stalin) Pact

U.S. Public Opinion; Communist Parties; German American Bund ("Führer" Fritz Julius Kuhn, "Frank D. Rosenfeld," Madison Square Gardens, Feb. 1939); War in Europe

1939: 1 September, Germany invades Poland; 3 Sept., Britain & France declare war on Germany

Blitzkrieg and the Fall of Poland, September-October. Germany, pop. 69,800,000; Poland, 34,000,000

Panzer Divisions; Luftwaffe Stuka Ju 87; Messerschmitt Bf 109, Bf 110 fighters; Junkers 88 bomber

1939, November; U.S. Neutrality Act;

1939-40 winter: "Phoney War" in West; Maginot Line, Siegfried Line

Russo-Finnish War 30 Nov.-13 March 1940; Baltic States incorporated into USSR

1940: 9 April; Denmark, Norway (9 April-June) John Steinbeck, *The Moon Is Down* (1942); King Haakon VII; Vidkun Quisling; Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim, Narvik

1940: 10 May: The Low Countries and France. Planning: Gerd von Rundstedt; Erich von Manstein  
Allies: Maurice Gamelin (replaced 17 May by Maxime Weygand); Charles DeGaulle; BEF, John Vereker, Viscount Gort; Alan Brooke (later Viscount Alanbrooke);  
Winston Churchill named Prime Minister (Paul Reynaud, French prime minister since March)  
Allied aircraft: Hawker Hurricane; Fairey Battle; Morane-Saulnier 406; Dewoitine 520  
Belgium, Sedan, "Sichelschnitt;" Dunkirk 27 May-4 June; Fall of France; Henri Philippe Pétain; Armistice, 20/22 June 1940; Vichy France. Admiral William Leahy, U.S. ambassador

U.S. Public Opinion; America First Committee (Charles A. Lindbergh, Senators Burton Wheeler, Gerald Nye, Col. Robert McCormick, *Chicago Tribune*; Keep America Out of War Committee; Socialist Norman Thomas; Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies; Hollywood: Charlie Chaplin, *The Great Dictator* (Oct. 1940); *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939)

U.S. DEFENSE May 1940, "Two Ocean Navy" Nine new battleships, 11 new *Essex* class carriers; 46 cruisers, 200 destroyers, 190 submarines, 7500 aircraft order. Grumman F4F "Wildcat" fighters; Douglas SBD "Dauntless" dive bombers, TBD "Devastator" torpedo bombers; Consolidated PB4Y "Catalina" patrol bombers

U.S. Army from 150,000 to 240,000 men, National Guard 250,000; improved tanks; Air Corps ordered Lockheed P 38, Bell P 39 and Curtiss P 40 fighters

U.S. 1940 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Republican Convention Philadelphia 24 June: Robert Taft, Arthur Vandenberg, isolationists; 'dark horse' Wendell Willkie (6<sup>th</sup> ballot), v.p. Charles McNary (Oregon progressive)

FDR nominates Republicans Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of War, Frank Knox, Secretary of the Navy  
Democratic Convention, July, Chicago: "voice from sewer": FDR and Henry A. Wallace

1940 Battle of Britain July-September Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring & Luftwaffe: Bombers  
Junkers Ju 88, Heinkel He 111; fighters Messerschmitt Bf 109, Bf 110.

Radar, Enigma (Ultra Secret, Alan Turing); Air Marshall Hugh Dowding; RAF Spitfire & Hurricane fighters; RAF bombers: Vickers Wellington; Armstrong Whitworth Whitley; Short Stirling; Lockheed Hudson

September-May 1941 "Blitz" (Hollywood 1941: *Yank in the RAF*; *Suicide Squadron*)

U.S. SELECTIVE SERVICE ACT

September 1940: Males ages 21-36 to register (November 1942, ages 18-45)

ELECTION: 5 November 1940

Roosevelt-Wallace, 27.3 million, 449 Electoral votes

Willkie-McNary, 22.3 million, 82 Electoral votes

Recommended Readings

Alistair Horne, *To Lose a Battle: France 1940* (1969)

Len Deighton, *Fighter: The True Story of the Battle of Britain* (1977)

Correlli Barnett, *Engage the Enemy More Closely: The Royal Navy in the Second World War* (1991)