

## A.P. U.S. HISTORY NOTES

# Chapter 37: “Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Shadow of War”

~ 1933 – 1941 ~

- I. The London Conference
  1. The 1933 **London Conference** of the summer of 1933 was composed of 66 nations that came together to try to make a worldwide solution to the **Great Depression**.
    - i. U.S. President **Franklin D. Roosevelt** at first agreed to send Secretary of State **Cordell Hull** but withdrew that agreement and scolded the other nations for trying to stabilize currencies.
    - ii. As a result, the conference adjourned accomplishing nothing, furthermore strengthening extreme nationalism.
- II. Freedom for (from?) the Filipinos and Recognition for the Russians
  1. With hard times, Americans were eager to do away with their liabilities to the Philippine Islands, and American sugar producers wanted to get rid of the Filipino sugar makers due to competition.
  2. In 1934, Congress passed the **Tydings-McDuffie Act**, stating that the Philippines would receive their independence after 12 years of economic and political tutelage, in 1946.
    - i. Army bases were relinquished but naval bases were kept.
  3. Americans were freeing themselves of a liability, creeping into further isolationism, while militarists in Japan began to see that they could take over the Pacific easily without U.S. interference or resistance.
  4. In 1933, FDR finally formally recognized the **Soviet Union**, hoping that the U.S. could trade with the USSR and that the Soviets would discourage German and Japanese aggression.
- III. Becoming a Good Neighbor
  1. In terms of its relations with Latin America, the U.S. wanted to be a “good neighbor,” showing that it was content as a regional power, not a world one.
  2. In 1933, FDR renounced armed intervention in Latin America at the **Seventh Pan-American Conference** in Montevideo, Uruguay, and the following year, U.S. marines left Haiti.
  3. U.S. also lifted troops from Panama, but when Mexican forces seized Yankee oil properties, FDR found himself urged to take drastic action.
    - i. However, he resisted and worked out a peaceful deal.
    - ii. His “good neighbor” policy was a great success, improving the U.S. image in Latin American eyes.
- IV. Secretary Hull’s Reciprocal Trade Agreement
  1. Secretary of State Hull believed that trade was a two-way street, and he had a part in Congress’s passing of the **Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act** in 1934, which activated low-tariff policies while aiming at relief and recovery by lifting American trade.
    - i. This act whittled down the most objectionable schedules of the **Hawley-Soot** law by amending them, lowering rates by as much as half, provided that the other country would do the same for the United States.

2. The Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act reversed the traditional high-tariff policy that had damaged America before and paved the way for the American-led free-trade international economic system that was implemented after **World War II**.
- V. Impulses Toward Storm-Center Isolationism
1. After **World War I**, many dictatorships sprang up, including **Joseph Stalin** of the Soviet Union, **Benito Mussolini** of Italy, and **Adolph Hitler** of Germany.
    - i. Of the three, Hitler was the most dangerous, because he was a great orator and persuader who led the German people to believe his “big lie,” making them think that he could lead the country back to greatness and out of this time of poverty and depression.
  2. In 1936, Nazi Hitler and Fascist Mussolini allied themselves in the **Rome-Berlin Axis**.
  3. Japan slowly began gaining strength, refusing to cooperate with the world and quickly arming itself by ending the **Washington Naval Treaty** in 1934 and walking out of the London Conference.
  4. In 1935, Mussolini attacked Ethiopia, conquering it, but the **League of Nations** failed to take effective action against the aggressors.
  5. America continued to hide behind the shell of isolationism, believing that everything would stay good if the U.S. wasn’t drawn into any international embroilments.
    - i. The 1934 **Johnson Debt Default Act** forbade any countries that still owed the U.S. money from borrowing any more cash.
  6. In 1936, a group of Princeton University students began to agitate for a bonus to be paid to the **Veterans of Future Wars** (VFWs) while the perspective front-liners were still alive.
- VI. Congress Legislates Neutrality
1. The 1934 **Nye Committee** was formed to investigate whether or not munitions manufacturers were pro-war for the sole purpose of making more money and profits, as the press blamed such producers for dragging America into the First World War.
  2. To prevent America from being sucked into war, Congress passed Neutrality Acts in 1935-37, acts which stated that when the president proclaimed the existence of a foreign war, certain restrictions would automatically go into effect: no American could legally sail on a belligerent ship or sell or transport munitions to a belligerent, or make loans to a belligerent.
    - i. The flaw with these acts was that they were designed to prevent America from being pulled into a war like World War I, but World War II would prove to be different.
- VII. America Dooms Loyalist Spain
1. During the **Spanish Civil War** (1936-39), Spanish rebels led by the Fascist General **Francisco Franco** rose up against the leftist-leaning republican government.
    - i. In order to stay out of the war, the U.S. put an embargo on both the loyalist government, which was supported by the USSR, and the rebels, which were aided by Hitler and Mussolini.
    - ii. The U.S. just stood by while Franco smothered the democratic government, letting a fellow democracy die just to stay out of war, and it also failed to build up its fleet, since most people believed that huge fleets led to huge wars.
      - a. It was not until 1938 that Congress passed a billion-dollar naval construction act, but then it was too little too late.
- VIII. Appeasing Japan and Germany
1. In 1937, Japan essentially invaded China, but FDR didn’t call this combat “a war,” thus allowing the Chinese to still get arms from the U.S., and in Chicago of that year, he

merely verbally chastised the aggressors, calling for “a quarantine” of Japan (through economic embargoes, perhaps); this was his famous “Quarantine Speech.”

- i. However, this speech angered many isolationists, and FDR backed down a little from any more direct actions.
  2. In December 1937, the Japanese bombed and sank the American gunboat, the *Panay*, but then made the necessary apologies, “saving” America from entering into war against it.
    - i. To vent their frustration, the Japanese resorted to humiliating White civilians in China through slappings and strippings.
  3. Meanwhile, Hitler was growing bolder and bolder after being allowed to introduce mandatory military service in Germany, take over the German Rhineland, persecute and exterminate about six million Jews, and occupy Austria—all because the European powers were appeasing him.
    - i. They hoped that each conquest of Germany would be the last.
  4. However, Hitler didn’t stop, and at the September 1938 **Munich Conference**, the Allies agreed to let Hitler have **Sudetenland** of neighboring Czechoslovakia, but six months later, in 1939, Hitler pulled the last straw and took over *all* of Czechoslovakia.
- IX. Hitler’s Belligerency and U.S. Neutrality
1. On August 23, 1939, the USSR shocked the world by signing a nonaggression treaty with Germany.
    - i. Now, it seemed that Germany could engulf all of Europe, especially without having to worry about fight a two-front war in case war occurred.
  2. In 1939, Hitler invaded Poland, and France and Britain finally declared war against Germany, but America refused to enter the war, its citizens not wanting to be “suckers” again.
    - i. They were anti-Hitler and anti-Nazi and wanted Britain and France to win, but they would not permit themselves to be dragged into fighting and bloodshed.
  3. European powers needed American supplies, but the previous Neutrality Acts forbade the sale of arms to nations in war, so a new Neutrality Act of 1939 allowed European nations to buy war materials, but only on a “cash-and-carry” basis, which meant that they’d have to provide their own ships and pay for the arms in cash.
    - i. Since the British and French controlled the seas, the Germans couldn’t buy arms from America—as it was intended.
- X. Aftermath of the Fall of France
1. After the fall of Poland, Hitler positioned his forces to attack France, leading to a lull in the war (so that men could move) that was pierced only by the Soviet Union’s attack and conquering of Finland, despite \$30 million from the U.S. (for *nonmilitary* reasons).
  2. Then, in 1940, the “phony war” ended when Hitler overran Denmark and Norway, and then took over the Netherlands and Belgium.
    - i. Blitzing without stop or mercy, he then forced a paralyzing blow toward France, which was forced to surrender by late June of that year.
    - ii. The fall of France was shocking, because now, all that stood between Hitler and the world was Britain: if the English lost, Hitler would have all of Europe to operate, and he might take over the Americas as well.
  3. Finally, Roosevelt moved and called for the nation to massively build up its armed forces, with expenses totaling more than \$37 million, and he also had Congress pass the first peacetime draft in U.S. history on September 6, 1940.
    - i. 1.2 million troops and 800,000 reserves would be trained.
  4. At the **Havana Conference**, the U.S. warned Germany that it could not take over orphan colonies in the Americas, as such action wouldn’t be tolerated.

- XI. Bolstering Britain with the Destroyer Deal (1940)
1. Now, with Britain the only power fighting against Germany, FDR had to decide whether to remain totally neutral or to help Britain.
    - i. Hitler launched air attacks against the British in August 1940 and prepared an invasion scheduled to start a month later, but the tenacious defense of the British Royal Air Force stopped that.
  2. Those who supported helping Britain formed the **Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies**, while those for isolationism (including **Charles A. Lindbergh**) were in the **America First Committee**, and both groups campaigned and advertised for their respective positions.
  3. Britain was in dire need for destroyers, and on September 2, 1940, FDR boldly moved to transfer 50 old-model, four-funnel destroyers left over from WWI, and in return, the British promised to give the U.S. eight valuable defensive base sites stretching from Newfoundland to South America.
    - i. These would stay in American ownership for 99 years.
    - ii. Obviously, this caused controversy, but FDR had begun to stop playing the silly old games of isolationism and was slowly starting to step out into the spotlight.
- XII. FDR Shatters the Two-Term Tradition (1940)
1. At first, it was thought that **Robert A. Taft** of Ohio or **Thomas E. Dewey** would be the Republican candidate, but a colorful and magnetic newcomer who went from a nobody to a candidate in a matter of weeks, **Wendell L. Willkie**, became the Republican against Democratic candidate...Franklin D. Roosevelt, who waited until the last moment to challenge the two-term tradition.
    - i. Democrats felt that FDR was the only man qualified to be president, especially in so grave of a situation as was going on.
  2. Willkie and FDR weren't really different in the realm of foreign affairs, but Willkie hit hard with his attacks on the third term
  3. Still, FDR won because voters felt that, should war come, FDR was the best man to lead America.
- XIII. Congress Passes the Landmark Lend-Lease Law
1. Britain was running out of money, but Roosevelt didn't want all the hassles that came with calling back debts, so he came up with the idea of a lend-lease program in which the arms and ships, etc... that the U.S. lent to the nations that needed them would be returned when they were no longer needed.
    - i. Senator Taft retorted that in this case, though, the U.S. wouldn't want them back because it would be like lending chewing gum that was chewed, then taking it back.
  2. The lend-lease bill was argued over heatedly in Congress, but it passed, and by war's end, America had sent about \$50 billion worth of arms and equipment.
    - i. The lend-lease act was basically the abandonment of the neutrality policy, and Hitler recognized this.
    - ii. Before, German submarines had avoided attacking U.S. ships, but after the passage, they started to fire upon U.S. ships as well, such as the May 21, 1941 torpedoing of the *Robin Moor*.
- XIV. Hitler's Assault on the Soviet Union Spawns the Atlantic Charter
1. On June 22, 1941, Hitler attacked Russia, because ever since the signing of the nonaggression pact, neither Stalin nor Hitler had trusted each other, and both had been plotting to double-cross each other.

- i. Hitler assumed his invincible troops would crush the inferior Soviet soldiers, but the valor of the Red army, U.S. aid to the USSR (through lend-lease), and an early and bitter winter stranded the German force at Moscow and shifted the tide against Germany.
  - 2. The **Atlantic Conference** was held in August 1941, and the resort was the eight-point **Atlantic Charter**, which was suggestive of **Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points**.
    - i. There would be no territorial changes contrary to the wishes of the natives.
    - ii. The charter also affirmed the right for people to choose their rulers (i.e. no dictators).
    - iii. It declared disarmament and a peace of security, as well as a new League of Nations.
  - 3. Critics charged that "neutral America" was interfering, ignoring that America was no longer neutral.
- XV. U.S. Destroyers and Hitler's U-Boats Clash
  - 1. To ensure that arms sent to Britain would reach there, FDR finally agreed that a convoy would have to escort them, but only as far as Iceland, as Britain would take over from there.
  - 2. There were clashes, as U.S. destroyers like the *Greer*, the *Kearny*, and the *Reuben James* were attacked by the Germans.
  - 3. By mid-November 1941, Congress annulled the now-useless Neutrality Act of 1939.
- XVI. Heading for the Surprise Assault at Pearl Harbor
  - 1. Japan was still embroiled in war with China, but when America suddenly imposed embargoes on key supplies on Japan in 1940, the imperialistic nation had no choice but to either back off of China or attack the U.S.; they chose the latter, obviously.
  - 2. The American had broken the Japanese code and knew that they would declare war soon, but the U.S. could not attack, so based on what the Japanese supposedly planned, most Americans thought that the Japanese would attack **British Malaya** or the **Philippines**.
  - 3. However, the paralyzing blow struck **Pearl Harbor**, as on December 7, 1941, Japanese air bombers suddenly attacked the naval base located there (where almost the entire U.S. fleet was located), wiping out many battleships and killing or wounding 3000 men.
  - 4. The next day, the one after "a date which will live in infamy" (FDR), the U.S. declared war on Japan, and on December 11, 1941, Germany and Italy declared war on the U.S.
- XVII. America's Transformation from Bystander to Belligerent
  - 1. Up until the day of the Pearl Harbor attack, most Americans still wanted to stay out of war, but afterwards the event sparked such passion that it completely inflamed Americans into wanting to go into war.
  - 2. This had been long in coming, as the U.S. had wanted to stay out of war but had still supported Britain more and more, and the U.S. had been against the Japanese aggression but had failed to take a firm stand on either side.
  - 3. Finally, people decided that appeasement didn't work against "iron wolves," and that only full war was needed to keep the world safe for democracy and against anarchy and dictatorship.