



# Road to WWII in America

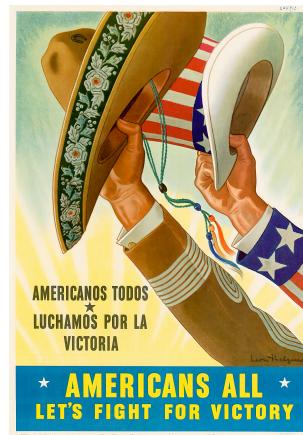
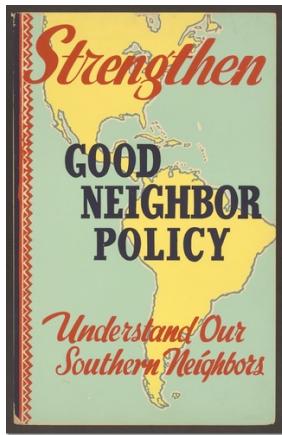
# Stephen Ambrose

- Pop Historian (1936-2002)
- Wrote *Undaunted Courage*, *Band of Brothers*, the official biography of Eisenhower & 27 other books; acted as a technical advisor on *Saving Private Ryan*
- "I am an unabashed triumphalist. I believe this is the best and greatest country that ever was."
- "I am not out there stealing other people's writings. If I am writing up a passage and it is a story I went to tell and this story fits and a part of it is from other people's writing, I just type it up that way and put it in a footnote."



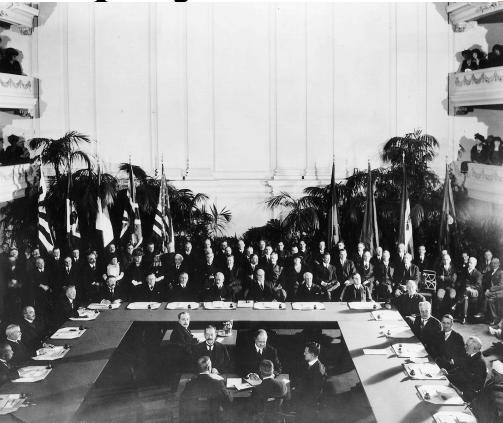
# Good Neighbor Policy

- FDR, but started w/ Henry Clay.
  - Security of W. Hemisphere depended on US/LA relations
  - By 1933, both regions decided US no longer had right to intervene in LA.
    - Marines out of Haiti
    - Platt Amendment expires in 1934
    - Won't intervene in Panama & canal will transfer
    - No "Dollar Diplomacy" in Dominican Republic
    - No intervention on Mexican oil seizure by Cardenas



# US Response to Fascism

- Isolation – Domestic policy & Depression focus.  
Don't want to be dragged into war again
  - **Washington Naval Conference** (1921) → 5,4,9 Power Treaties (JPN & USSR not happy)
  - **Kellogg-Briand** (1928) – Makes war illegal → nope.
  - **Geneva** (1932) – US non-committal; Congress: arms embargo for all belligerents → FDR forced into neutrality
- US tries to est. Soviet market in '30s → they don't pay debts → no trade. JPN too imperialistic for trade.



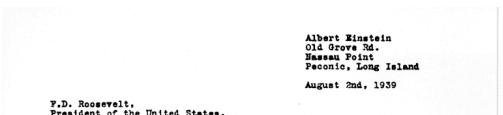
# Revisionist Opinion

- The US joined WWI for imperialistic reasons, so...
  - **Nye Committee** (1934-35) – US entered war to assure intl. bankers so they would pay debts to US
  - **Johnson Act** (1934) – Prohibits loans to nations in default
  - Mandatory arms embargo from 1935-37
  - US wanted Italian oil embargo after Abyssinian Crisis
  - **Quarantine Speech** (1937) – FDR



# Baby Steps...

- **Naval Expansion Act (1938)** – US rearms a little
- **Declaration of Lima (1938)** – Americas resist fascism
- **Cash and Carry (1937)** – US wanted to trade w/ democracies, so if they came & got non-mil goods, ok.
  - AMBROSE: Not willing to pay a high price to stop Hitler (3)
- **Einstein's Letter (1939)** – GER is building a bomb, so...
- **Manhattan Project (1939-45)**



Sir:

Some recent work by E. Fermi and L. Szilard, which has been communicated to me in manuscript, leads me to expect that the element uranium may be turned into a new and important source of energy in the immediate future. Certain aspects of the situation which has arisen seem to call for watchfulness and, if necessary, quick action on the part of the Administration. I believe therefore that it is my duty to bring to your attention the following facts and recommendations:

In the course of the last four months it has been made probable - through the work of Joliot in France as well as Fermi and Szilard in America - that it may become possible to set up a nuclear chain reaction in a large mass of uranium, by which vast amounts of power and large quantities of new radium-like elements would be generated. How it appears almost certain that this could be achieved in the immediate future.

This new phenomenon would also lead to the construction of bombs, and it is conceivable though much less certain that extremely powerful bombs of a new type may thus be constructed. A single bomb of this type, carried by boat and exploded in a port, might very well destroy the whole port together with some of the surrounding territory. However, such bombs might very well prove to be too heavy for transportation by air.

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The United States has only very poor ores of uranium in moderate quantities. There is some good ore in Canada and the former Czechoslovakia, while the most important source of uranium is Belgian Congo.

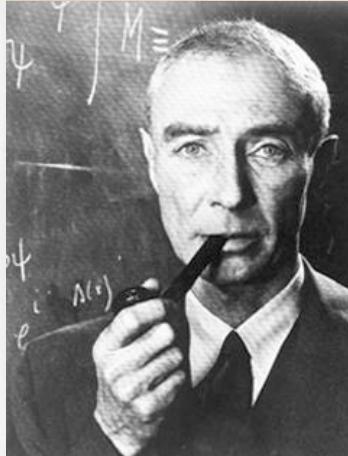
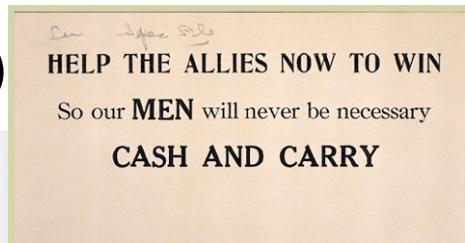
In view of this situation you may think it desirable to have some permanent contact maintained between the Administration and the group of physicists working on chain reactions in America. One possible way of achieving this might be for you to entrust with this task a person who has your confidence and who could perhaps serve in an unofficial capacity. His task might comprise the following:

a) to approach Government Departments, keep them informed of the further development, and put forward recommendations for Government action, giving particular attention to the problem of securing a supply of uranium ore for the United States;

b) to speed up the experimental work, which is at present being carried on within the limits of the budgets of University laboratories, by providing funds, if such funds be required, through his contacts with private persons who are willing to make contributions for this cause, and perhaps also by obtaining the co-operation of industrial laboratories which have the necessary equipment.

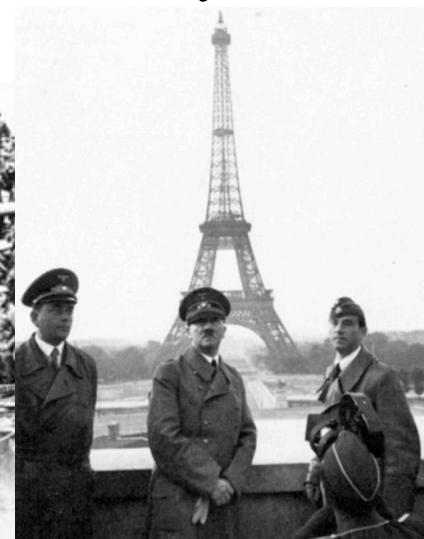
I understand that Germany has actually stopped the sale of uranium from the Czechoslovakian mines which she has taken over. That she should have taken such early action might perhaps be understood on the ground that the son of the German Under-Secretary of State, von Weizsäcker, is attached to the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut in Berlin where some of the American work on uranium is now being repeated.

Yours very truly,  
(Albert Einstein)



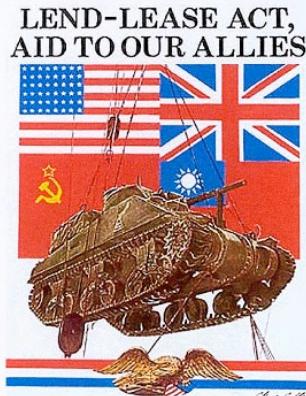
# US at the Dawn of War

- FDR – US not going to war, but can't “stay neutral in mind or conscience”
  - Polls: 62% favor Allies, but <30% favor US entering
- 1940 – GER Blitz: DEN, NOR, NED, BEL, LUX
  - UK evacuation of Dunkirk, Fall of Paris →
- FDR needs more \$\$\$ for defense
  - US Army: 217K to 275K, agrees to trade UK destroyers for Naval bases, National Guard resumes duty



# Lend-Lease & Aftermath

- 12/7/1940 – UK can no longer pay for supplies →
  - US “arsenal of democracy” (7); \$7B to start
  - Isolationist objection: Alliance!? Can’t *loan* arms!
  - **Stimson**: “Declaration of Economic War” (8)
    - » AMBROSE: Not enough to help UK or scare Hitler
- April 1941 – US fighting GER in Atlantic; “Shoot on sight”
- May – FDR: “Unlimited national emergency”; troops to ICE
- **Atlantic Charter** (Aug.) – Churchill & FDR
  - Disarmament of aggressors through collective security (UN?)
  - Disclaim territorial expansion
  - Self-determination of nations
  - Equality of trade



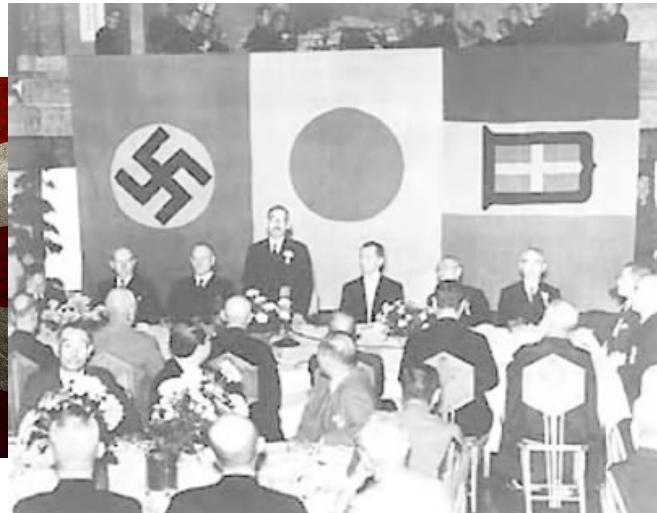
# Inevitable?

- Draft (Sept.) – Passed narrowly; 1.6M in army
- **Neutrality Act** – Revised in Nov. after U-Boats shoot at US vessels → let merchants carry arms
- AMBROSE (9) – Roosevelt knew AH wouldn't let US keep bringing arms to UK; war inevitable. US FP didn't really do anything; hinged on USSR & UK holding on.



# On the other side of the world...

- JPN wants “Asia for the Asians” (9)
  - Wants CHN, NEI, SING & other EUR-held nations
- US wants to help CHN against JPN after 1937
  - JPN needed US for raw materials; US stops in 1939
  - 1940 – JPN takes over all FRA/NED territory in E. Asia
- Sept. 1940 – **Tripartite Pact** w/ GER&ITA
  - US embargo; freeze JPN assets after refusal of ultimatum



- 11/41 – Hideki Tojo becomes PM
- US decodes messages that say attack is coming, but don't know when or where
- **12/7/1941 – Pearl Harbor attack led by Yamamoto**
  - 12/8 – US declares war on JPN
    - 2400 men killed; 200 Planes/8 ships destroyed; 1200 wounded
    - Negotiations held until now, but not in good faith as JPN was never going to give up CHN.
  - 12/11 – GER & ITA declare war on US & vice versa
    - AMBROSE: No one understands why. (14)

Tojo



I fear all we have done is to awaken a sleeping giant and fill him with a terrible resolve.

(Isoroku Yamamoto)