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 rears 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)
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)