

America's reaction to
the beginning of
world war ii in europe
us enters the great...



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The act of the US entering the World War II has often been questioned by many who know how much devastation and loss of life has been caused by the previous wars as:

1. The Civil War (1861-1865)
2. The World War 1 (1914-1918)
3. The Korean War (1950-1953)
4. The Vietnam war (1961-1973).

By 1939, the United States had not fully recovered from the long-term effects of World War 1 and its devastation nor had she regained the level of industrial output of 1929, except for the boost to production it gave that pulled the US out of the famous ' Depression' in history.

Most of us are unfamiliar with the international situations and events of the pre-World War II period. Hitler's name is quite often used disparagingly by some people without even knowing much about how his policies caused the war in Europe. But before we discuss what led the US to enter into the war despite her earlier inhibitions, it is important that we first have a glance of a brief overview of the events in world war II.

A Brief Summary of The World War II Events (1939-1945)

A new dimension was added to international politics, when Hitler acceded to power in 1933. Soon after he put Germany's shattered economy back on its feet by 1936, Hitler entered into foreign pacts. The re-occupation of the Rhineland, the denunciation of the Locarno treaties, the Rome-Berlin axis, and the anti-Comintern Pact with Japan, demonstrated the new German

policy. The unopposed annexation of Austria and the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia in 1938 showed Hitler's thrust of Germany's fresh designs. Hitler miscalculated that the notorious Nazi-Soviet pact of August 23, 1939, would deter the western powers from intervention, when German troops invaded Poland in September 1, 1939. Much against his expectation, England and France declared war..

For the first three years the German armies, with their Blitzkrieg strategy, succeeded extraordinarily. After the fall of Poland Hitler halted, hoping that the western powers would negotiate a compromise peace. Then in April 1940, he launched his attack in the west, overran Denmark and Norway, and turned against France, knocking her out of the war in June 1940. But the new Churchill government in London refused to concede defeat, and Hitler launched a major air offensive, intended to prepare the way for invasion. The victory of the Royal Air force in the battle of Britain forced Hitler to call off the invasion on September 17, 1940. Instead, Hitler decided to attack Soviet Russia. The directive for ' Operation Barbarossa' was issued in December 1940, the invasion of Russia launched on June 22, 1941. But before the tide turned, German armies were outside Moscow and Leningrad and had overrun southern Russia to the Black Sea and the Caucasus.

Meanwhile two others events intervened. One was the lack of success of Italy, which had entered the war in 1940, which forced Hitler, in 1941, to divert troops to conquer Yugoslavia and Greece and to reinforce the African front. Secondly the United state, entering the war in 1941 supplied Britain and Russia, which much needed arms and equipment, and also provided help to defeat the German submarine campaign in the Atlantic.

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Strengthened by America's involvement in the war, the major success by the Allied forces included:

1. The British victory at El Alamein (October 1942).
2. Capitulation of the Italian and German armies in Africa (May 1943),
3. The Anglo-American invasion of Sicily and then Italy, and
4. The fall of Mussolini (July 1943),
5. Russian victory at Stalingrad (January 1943).

The Germans' last major offensive in the East at Kursk failed in July 1943, and on May 7, 1945 Germany surrendered unconditionally.

Franklin D. Roosevelt's recognition of the U. S. S. R. was a new departure from previous administrations. The Roosevelt-Litvinov pact did not bring about a great increase in trade with the U. S. S. R. though Franklin D. Roosevelt had hoped to alleviate the Depression through increased foreign trade. This pact did not work out well for the U. S. because the Russians never offered a debt settlement satisfactory to American negotiators, nor did they buy much American goods. Nor did the Russians refrain from continuing their support of subversive agents in our country.

The earlier Neutrality Acts dealt with war among nations and did not deal with civil wars. The new Neutrality Act of 1937 hurt the Loyalist government in Spain. According to Robert A. Divine, this Neutrality Act of 1937 made U. S. " a silent accomplice of Hitler" since Germany was not hampered in sending supplies to General Franco's rebel forces, while the United States was hampered in sending supplies to the Loyalist government. To the

Germans, this evidence of American isolation simply reinforced the Anglo-French appeasement policies. This Act also did not help the Chinese who were fighting against the Japanese invasion.

However, Roosevelt tried to arouse the American public with his "Quarantine" speech in Chicago in 1937. He proposed to quarantine aggressors by joining other powers in such an effort. Isolationist feelings were still too strong among the American people and he was, therefore, unsuccessful.

The German persecution of German-Jews during 1934-1936 brought loud protestations by different Jewish-American organizations, including a mock trial at Madison Square Garden in March, 1934. The German ambassador protested, but Secretary of State Cordell Hull could not stop the rally. There was no enthusiasm for the idea to bring German-Jews to America because the economics of the Depression governed official mentality in 1933. With high unemployment Roosevelt's government upheld Hoover's executive order not to admit to the United States persons "who were likely to become public charges."

Franklin D. Roosevelt's government refused to give even a "token" amount of contributions to the League of Nations' High Commission for Refugees (Jewish and others) coming from Germany until other countries made contributions first. The scheme of Hjalmar Schacht, president of the German Reichsbank, to use one-quarter of the German-Jewish assets to finance purchases of German machinery after the Jews settled in the U. S., fell through. According to Arnold Offner, "conceivably Germany's Jews might have been spared future destruction had this plan been implemented." Later <https://assignbuster.com/americas-reaction-to-the-beginning-of-world-war-ii-in-europe-us-enters-the-great-war-of-europe/>

in 1938 the German foreign minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, said that the question of German-Jews was “ an internal German problem and was not subject to discussion” at the Evian Conference.

The deliberate Japanese attack upon the American gunboat Panay in China left Americans unmoved. The majority of Americans thought that the United States should get out of China completely. The Japanese were willing to pay for the damages. In 1939, Roosevelt supplied Nationalist China with some supplies because Japan had not declared war on China even though it was fighting a war. This lack of declaration of war of the part of Japan provided a loophole in the Neutrality Act so Roosevelt was able to send aid to China. This technicality in the Neutrality Act made it possible for Japan to fulfill 90% of its needs for copper and metal scrap by buying it from the United States. The cash-and-carry provision that Bernard Baruch had earlier proposed for the Neutrality Act of 1937 helped Japan but not China. Japan had a great merchant fleet and the necessary cash for American resources.

A Cause Strong Enough for the US to Plunge into World War II

The war in the Far East, which had begun in 1937, merged with the war in Europe by 1941. But England and France preoccupied with the threat from Nazi Germany could not spare forces for the Far East, and in the United States, isolation was still upheld. The decisive turning point came with the German victory in Europe in May 1940, which placed the French, British and Dutch colonies at the mercy of Japan. A Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy (1940) and a Neutrality Pact with the Soviet Union (1941) paved the way for a Japanese advance south. The only question was whether the United States could be neutralized. When this proved impossible, the <https://assignbuster.com/americas-reaction-to-the-beginning-of-world-war-ii-in-europe-us-enters-the-great-war-of-europe/>

Japanese prepared the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. The attack on Pearl Harbor took place on December 7, 1941, bringing the United States into war. Pearl Harbor temporarily crippled the American Pacific Fleet, and the Japanese then advanced in three major directions:

1. Against the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies.
2. Against Malaya, Burma, and India, and
3. Into Oceania (Guam, New Guinea, Solomon Islands)

And within six months Japan had become the master of virtually the whole of South-east Asia. But by 1942 the United States had recovered completely.. Thus on August 7, 1942, American forces under General Mac-Arthur landed at Guadalcanal (Solomon Islands), and the attack on the Japanese perimeter began. It was an arduous slogging match, leapfrogging from island to island, and in 1944 April, the Japanese abandoned their southern base at Rabaul. More decisive were the great naval battles, which cut Japanese supply lines and prevented reinforcements. After the battle of the Coral Sea, the United States re-occupied the Gilbert and Marshall Islands. By the mid 1944, it was clear that had lost the war.

Then began the re-conquest of Burma, and the American aircrafts based in China began attacks on the Japanese mainland. After the American occupation of Iwo Jima and Okinawa, the US stepped up its air offences.. Tokyo and other major cities of Japan were destroyed. It was in these circumstances that President Truman who had succeeded President Roosevelt, decided to use the atom bomb. The first atom-bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, and the second three days later on Nagasaki. Just then Russia

also declared war on Japan. On September 2, 1945. Japan was finally capitulated.

America's final plunge into the war

After Russia was attacked by Germany in June 1941, President Roosevelt stated, " We are going to give all the aid we possibly can to Russia." He added that the U. S. would give forty million dollars worth of goods and the use of American ships. (The 40 million dollars were Russian assets that were frozen.) Roosevelt did not intend to invoke the Neutrality Act for the Russo-German war. He did not launch any immediate program to assist Russia in spite of his earlier remarks.

On July 1, 1941, the U. S. and Iceland reached an agreement to allow 4, 000 marines to be sent to Iceland to forestall a German invasion.

By August 1941, the U. S. gave Russia its first formal commitment of assistance.

Even though the U. S. was neutral, Roosevelt met Churchill off the coast of Newfoundland on a British warship. He resisted Churchill's efforts to make him declare a warning to Japan that their continued aggression in Asia would bring war with the U. S. A.

Churchill and Roosevelt drew up the Atlantic Charter with the following statement of principles, among them:

1. A pledge against aggression
2. A promise of self-determination in territorial changes.
3. Respect for the right of self-government and freedom of speech.

4. A creation of an effective international organization. (Roosevelt rejected it.)

On July 26, 1941, the United States declared a full-scale embargo ending all trade with Japan. Great Britain and her Dominions and the Dutch authorities did the same. It was disastrous for Japan.