

Viewpoint: Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Teacher Created Materials, Inc. World War II.

An overwhelming number of Americans do not want to get mixed up in the troubled affairs of the world. Americans do not realize that it is a responsibility they must shoulder, sooner or later, to make the world a safe place for all people. Hitler is a threat to the peace of Europe and the world. Hitler is also a threat to the people of the United States, even if they don't know it yet. Many of our people were disillusioned by the last war, which accomplished little and instead created a situation where more trouble could brew in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Americans are naïve to believe that the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans will shield us from enemies determined to destroy us.

For over a year, England has fought alone against the Nazis, and there was little that I could do to give aid and assistance to Churchill and his people. The American people and Congress are determined to stay clear of Europe's troubles. I want to help England, but the isolationists in Congress carefully scrutinize every step I take. The Neutrality Acts passed by Congress impose conditions limiting what I can do to help England and the Allies. If England wants supplies and war materials from the United States, they must pay in cash and carry everything back to England on British ships. Fifty obsolete, decrepit destroyers from World War I were sent to England in exchange for the use of British bases in our hemisphere, but even that aroused anger among the isolationists who saw it as a step toward involving the U.S in Europe's war. Those destroyers were not much help to England, but they boosted the morale of the English people, who could see that they were not alone and America was trying to help. My Lend-Lease (borrowing war material and paying it back later) proposals stirred up quite a debate, but Congress passed them. England and Russia can now get supplies and materials they need to battle the Nazi aggressors, and they can pay us later or return whatever they can in kind.

The newspaper publisher Robert C. McCormick and his *Chicago Tribune*, the Patterson's and their *New York Daily News*, and the *Washington Times-Herald* are all making accusations that this administration is dragging our nation into war. Charles Lindberg and the American First Committee, along with that rabble-rousing priest on the radio, Father Coughlin, are making me out to be a warmonger who wants to get the United States involved in dangerous adventures. Ernst Kuhn and the German-American Bund haven't let up in their agitation to keep us out of Europe's war. Even John L. Lewis has taken a stand against me because of my support for England.

Everyone is keeping a careful watch on the destroyers I send into the Atlantic to help pass along the conveyers to the British people. If any of those ships that patrol the Atlantic Ocean were to be placed in danger, the isolationists would back away from a war and blame me for putting American boys in harm's way. I would have to take the blame. All the supplies and materials that are being sent to England and Russia are begrudged by our own military, which feels we should be rearming. We're giving away everything that we ourselves will eventually need. If we are ever to get involved in the war, it will have to be through an overt act, a direct attack upon the United States.

The Japanese are stirring up trouble in the Pacific. They've been fighting in China for four years, and there is no end in sight, as the people of China continue to hold out. Japan is angered by the aid we've given to Chiang Kai-shek. The creation of a Pacific Fleet stationed at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii also has the Japanese emperor and his military people a bit flustered. They want trade with the United States and badly need the raw materials that we can sell them, but they don't appreciate my precondition that they withdraw the Imperial Japanese Army from China before any negotiations take place. If Japan wants trade – and they need oil, steel, and aviation gasoline from the U.S. – they're going to have to take that first step and pull out of China and French Indochina.