

# AMERICANS

## AND THE HOLOCAUST

ISOLATION OR INTERVENTION?

A CASE STUDY ON  
THE LEND-LEASE ACT

# The Impact of World War I



Source: Imperial War Museum

American soldiers wear gas masks at a frontline trench, circa 1917–1918.

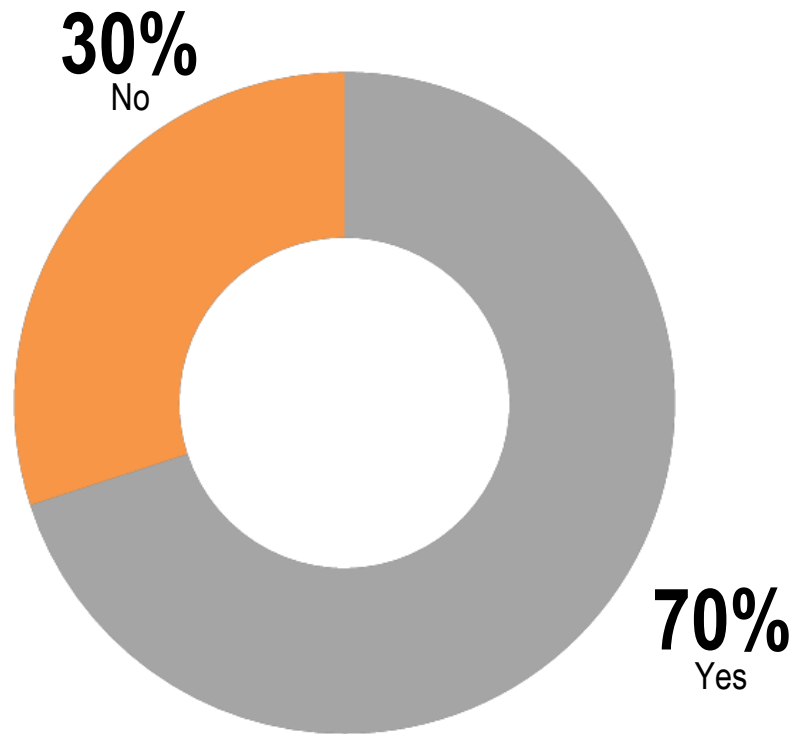
# Neutrality Act of 1935



Senator Gerald Nye of Nebraska argued that the Neutrality Act of 1935 would help the United States stay out of future wars. **Source:** Library of Congress

On August 31, 1935, Congress passed the first in a series of laws designed to prevent the United States from being embroiled in a foreign war. The 1935 Neutrality Act prohibited the export of “arms, ammunition, and implements of war” from the United States to foreign nations at war and required US arms manufacturers to apply for an export license.

# January 1937 Public Opinion Poll



“Do you think it was a mistake for the United States to enter World War I?”

Source: Gallup

# 1937–1938 Recession



Source: Library of Congress

A migrant family walks down a road, pulling its belongings in carts and wagons, in Pittsburg County, Oklahoma, in June 1938.

# November 1938: Kristallnacht (“The Night of Broken Glass”)



Source: National Archives and Records Administration

Germans pass by the broken shop window of a Jewish-owned business that was destroyed during the “Night of Broken Glass.” November 10, 1938.

# The Beginning of World War II



German soldiers parade through Warsaw a month after Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939.

October 5, 1939. Source: US Holocaust Memorial Museum

# Neutrality Act of 1939

## ROOSEVELT ASKS CONGRESS TO CHANGE NEUTRALITY ACT; OPPONENTS AWAIT REACTION

### AID TO PEACE SEEN

Mandatory Embargo Is  
Called Threat to Our  
Security as Nation

### HULL'S VIEWS IN MESSAGE

Secretary Says Present Law  
Fosters a General State of  
War in Europe and Asia

Roosevelt's neutrality message  
and Hull's statement, Page 2.

Special to The New York Times.  
WASHINGTON, July 14.—President Roosevelt sent to Congress today a special message asking for immediate amendment of the Neutrality Act to eliminate its compulsory arms embargo. This action was necessary, the Chief Executive declared, so that the United States might be on record on the side of preserving world peace, and so that the country would be in the best position to avoid involvement if a general war should break out despite preventive efforts.

Thus for the first time Mr. Roosevelt formally asked for specific changes in the neutrality law, although he has several times previously stated that he thought the statute was not satisfactory. The message took the form of a brief

Presidential introduction indorsing and calling to the attention of Congress a detailed statement on the subject by Secretary Hull. The act effect seemed to be that the President has transferred the issue of revision from Congress to the country. The message was received in the Senate and in the House largely on that basis, and it was believed that Mr. Roosevelt would have much to say about the neutrality situation on his trip around the country, which he has tentatively scheduled to start four days after the adjournment of Congress.

**European Situation Noted**  
The message pointed to the critical situation likely to prevail in Europe for the next several months, and divided, without naming them, the countries of the world into two categories: those bent on forceful change and those desiring to preserve peace.

Secretary Hull found that proponents and opponents of revision are agreed on four cardinal principles of American foreign policy. These he listed as the conviction that the United States must consider first its own peace and security; that the American Government must avoid being drawn into wars between other nations; that this country must steer clear of entangling alliances or involvements; and that this country must maintain strict neutrality to avoid being drawn into war.

The Administration, he said, believes that an arms embargo is a dangerous departure from the practices of international law, while the opponents of change believe the trade in armaments inevitably tends toward involvement and is "immoral."

After more than four years' experience with the various forms of "neutrality" legislation which have been in effect, Mr. Hull reached the conclusion that "the present embargo encourages a general state of war both in Europe and Asia."

**Sees Threat to This Country**  
The result, the Secretary stated, "is directly prejudicial to the highest interests and to the peace and to the security of the United States," since this country can be at its best only in a peaceful world. The aggressors are "more tempted to try the fortunes of war" if they know their less-prepared opponents "would be shut off from those supplies which, under every rule of international law, they should be able to buy in all neutral countries, including the United States."

The message pointed out that "almost all sales of arms and ammunition made in recent years by our nationals have been made to governments whose policies have been dedicated to the maintenance of peace."

Mr. Hull recalled the many years he spent as a member of both houses of Congress in asking for its cooperation on a non-partisan basis, in solving the external problems facing this country.

"A peaceful nation like ours cannot complacently close its eyes and ears in formulating a peace and neutrality policy, as though abhor-

Continued on Page Two

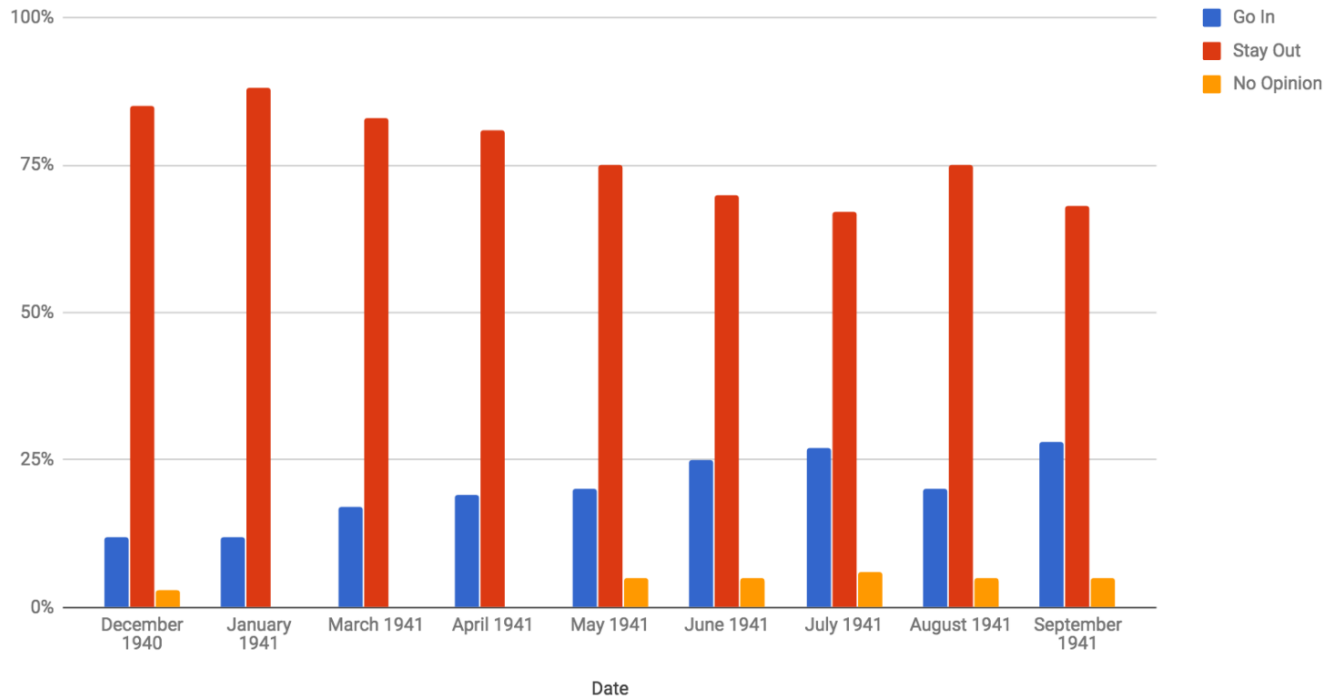
The Neutrality Act of 1939 lifted the arms embargo and put all trade with belligerent nations (Great Britain, France) under the terms of "cash-and-carry." The ban on loans remained in effect, and American ships were barred from transporting goods to belligerent ports.

Source: New York Times, July 14, 1939



# December 1940–September 1941: US Public Opinion about Going to War

If you were asked to vote today on the question of the United States entering the war against Germany and Italy, how would you vote - to go into the war or to stay out of the war?



Source: Gallup

# Non-Interventionist Groups



Source: Library of Congress

Charles Lindbergh speaks at an America First rally in Fort Wayne, Indiana, on October 5, 1941.

# Interventionist Groups



A poster created by the Committee to Defend America By Aiding the Allies on June 10, 1940.

Source: US Holocaust Memorial Museum

# A Peacetime Military Draft



Men stand in line to register for the draft in Seattle on October 16, 1940.  
**Source:** Museum of History and Industry, Seattle

In September 1940, Congress approved the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940. The act, which instituted the first peacetime military draft in US history, required men between the ages of 21 and 36 to register for the draft.

## December 29, 1940: President Roosevelt's "Fireside Chat"



President Franklin D. Roosevelt delivers "Fireside Chat Number 18" on September 11, 1941.

Source: FDR Presidential Library and Museum

In December 1940, Great Britain's prime minister, Winston Churchill, informed President Roosevelt that soon Britain would run out of cash to pay for transporting necessary war supplies. In response, Roosevelt told Americans during a "fireside chat" radio address on December 29 that the United States "must be the great arsenal of democracy," and needed to manufacture planes, ships, guns, and ammunition for Great Britain.

# Document Analysis

- What group or individual did you read about?
- Summarize this person's or group's stance on the bill.
- What evidence (if any) does your individual or group provide to support their/its argument?
- What external factors might have shaped this perspective? Consider political, social, and economic conditions.

# Class Discussion

- How would you characterize public opinion in America regarding the lead-up to and start of World War II from 1939–1941? As Americans engaged in debates over US involvement, what was happening in Europe?
- What factors influenced Americans' attitudes and opinions on these issues?
- Were there particular arguments that you found convincing? Why? Was there additional information you would need to accurately assess the validity of these arguments?

- What is the role of informed public debate about policy decisions in a democracy?
- What questions does this case study raise about America's role in the world?



# Lend-Lease Act Passed

**Weather Forecast**  
Partly cloudy, with a chance of showers. High 50, low 35. In the evening, high 45, low 30.

**Idaho Times**  
A Regional Newspaper Serving  
TWIN FALLS, IDAHO  
Nine Irregularly Held Counties

**Farmer Congress**  
Fourth annual Idaho State Farm Show, opening today at the Idaho State Fairgrounds, Twin Falls. Many invited to see Governor Thatcher!

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TWIN FALLS, IDAHO, TUESDAY, MARCH 11, 1941  
OFFICIAL CITY NEWSPAPER

## HOUSE APPROVES AID BILL SHIFTS

### U. S. Meet Asked to Draft Economic Constitution for Business, Labor, Farmers

**WYOMING SOLON WOULD CHARTER FEDERAL AGENCY**

By GEORGE E. REEDY Jr., Washington, March 11.—Senator Charles McNary, of Oregon, today introduced a bill to create a new federal agency to coordinate the economic activities of business, labor, and farmers. McNary's bill would establish a national economic council which would coordinate the economic activities of business, labor, and farmers. McNary's bill would establish a national economic council which would coordinate the economic activities of business, labor, and farmers.

**Off-to Berlin**

**BRITAIN EXPECTS AMERICAN CRAFT TO AID DEFENSE**

LONDON, March 11 (AP)—An American official here today said that "considerable" numbers of British aircraft will be sent to the United States for production. The official said that the British government expects to receive 100 to 150 aircraft from the United States in the next few months.

**Axis to Plan De Facto War Against U. S.**

Washington, March 11 (AP)—Official here today said that the Axis powers are planning a "de facto" war against the United States. The official said that the Axis powers are planning a "de facto" war against the United States.

**HEAD NAMED FOR MENTAL COLONY**

Washington, March 11 (AP)—The U. S. House today named a head for a mental colony. The head named for the mental colony is...

### British Plane



### Only Signatures Needed to Make Act Become Law

WASHINGTON, March 11 (UP)— President Roosevelt today signed the historic lend-lease bill and prepared to ask congress to appropriate \$7,000,000,000 to carry out its provisions for giving material war aid to Britain and other nations fighting against the axis.

WASHINGTON, March 11 (AP)—The house completed congressional action on the lend-lease bill today by concurring in great amendments.

The official copy of the bill then was prepared for signature by Speaker Sam Rayburn, Vice-President Henry Wallace and President Roosevelt.

After the measure was dramatically passed last night after the measure was introduced by Mr. Roosevelt as the president's first act, effective March 11, 1941.

In contrast to the frequently mentioned belief that earlier consideration of the bill would have been possible, the bill was passed in the house and passed their own for national unity and their own safety. The bill would be able to remain in place.

First Assistant Secretary Joseph W. Martin, Jr., Massachusetts, told the house that while he had opposed the bill vigorously as long as a great power in the world and that he favored it would lead the nation into a world war, he now supports the measure as a national policy.

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### DETROIT STRIKE CLOSES 3 LARGE AUTO FACTORIES

By David Price

DETROIT, March 11 (AP)—The Detroit auto industry today closed three of its largest factories as a result of a strike by the International Union of Automobile Workers. The strike is the result of a dispute over wages and working conditions.

### Roosevelt Will Ask \$7,000,000,000 for Aid to Democracies

By JOHN W. DEAN

WASHINGTON, March 11 (UP)—President Roosevelt, in a conference with congressional fiscal experts, decided today to ask \$7,000,000,000 in cash appropriations for aid to democracies under the lend-lease bill which he expects to sign tonight or tomorrow.

### SOFT LOOMS ON EXPENSE CLAIMS

WASHINGTON, March 11 (AP)—The U. S. House today passed a bill to provide for the payment of expenses to members of Congress. The bill is expected to be signed by the president.

The Lend-Lease Act passed both houses of Congress by wide margins on March 11, 1941. By the end of the war, the United States had transferred a total of \$50 billion to 38 Allied countries and had received goods valued at about \$8 billion.

Source: Idaho Evening Times, March 11, 1941

**The Museum wishes to acknowledge and thank the following donors  
to the Americans and the Holocaust Initiative:**

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Ruth Miriam Bernstein

Joyce and Irving Goldman Family Foundation

In Memory of Simon Konover

Philip and Cheryl Milstein Family

Benjamin and Seema Pulier Charitable Foundation

David and Fela Shapell Family Foundation

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