

The History of the Twentieth Century

Episode 344

“America First”

Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

With the 1940 Presidential election safely behind him, Franklin Roosevelt spent 1941 inching the United States as close as possible to an alliance with the British, while still technically remaining neutral.

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

[music: Opening War Theme]

Episode 344. America First.

I’ve talked many times about how difficult times were for farmers after the First World War. I’ve mentioned it often enough that you’re probably sick of hearing about it by now, but it connects with much of the history of the period, and it’s important to take note of it.

I want to begin today’s episode by talking about the trials that a certain group of American farmers faced; those farming the Great Plains, particularly the region including parts of Missouri, Arkansas, and Texas, and larger parts of Kansas, Nebraska, and especially Oklahoma, the region known as the High Plains.

Since the early days of the Republic, the US government had been handing out free parcels of land in the undeveloped West of the country, known as homesteads. Some of the very last of the homesteads distributed were in the region I just described and were given out in the late 19th and early twentieth centuries.

These lands were the last to be distributed for a few reasons, principally because they were dry. Not quite desert, but not far removed either. To compensate for the agricultural marginality of these lands, the US government increased the size of the homesteads it was offering from the customary 160 acres—about 65 hectares—to expanses of land double or even quadruple that amount.

In the early twentieth century, just as these homesteads were being settled, the region received unusually high amounts of rainfall. That, plus agricultural mechanization, which allowed a lone farmer to plant and harvest much larger expanses of land, made farming these lands seem feasible. And then there was the widespread belief of the time that “rain follows the plow,” as it was often summarized. That is, the very act of cultivating land in itself increased rainfall and could make barren lands bloom.

The sharp increase in the price of agricultural products during the First World War encouraged wheat production on these lands. When the Twenties came, and wheat prices plunged, farmers here, like everywhere in the advanced nations, tried to compensate by using modern mechanized farming methods to increase yields, which meant intensive plowing.

The farmers’ luck with the weather ran out in the 1930s. That decade would be one in which the region received less than average rainfall instead of the greater than average rainfall to which the farmers had become accustomed. The result was an ecological disaster which struck at the worst possible time, coinciding with the Great Depression.

You see, farmers were plowing the land, which destroyed the native grasses that were adapted to drought and the roots of which helped hold the topsoil together. Farmers replaced them with wheat or left fields fallow. After the wheat was harvested, farmers burned the stubble to discourage the return of native grasses.

When the drought came, the dryness reduced the topsoil in the region to a fine powder, which led to massive wind erosion, in a region where high winds are common. Tremendous dust storms blew up, storms so intense they blackened the sky and turned the land dark at noon. Visibility was reduced to virtually nothing. These fine particles fouled the engines of tractors and other machines and vehicles. It got into the eyes and the throat and sickened people. Clouds of dust sometimes ranged as far as the east coast of the United States, fouling the air of major cities and dirtying even the snow that fell in winter.

As the decade of the 1930s progressed, increasing numbers of family farms failed altogether, due to the loss of topsoil and the destruction of family homes. An estimated three million people fled the region over the decade, leaving in battered cars or trucks into which they piled as many personal possessions as they could carry. Climate refugees, we might call them today. Many traveled as far as California, a state that was weathering the Depression better than most and in which agriculture was still viable. They often became poorly paid migrant farm laborers, taking work wherever they could find it.

Many of these internal migrants were unwelcome in their new homes where work was already hard to get because of the Depression. They were labeled with derisive names like Arkie and Texie and especially Okie, derived from the names of the states they had fled.

It was one of the biggest ecological disasters the world had ever seen in historical times and it was entirely human-made. It has become known to history as the Dust Bowl.

The one bright spot was that a disaster like this could be addressed by the creation of yet another three-letter agency as part of the New Deal, which was developing at the same time. In 1933, the Soil Erosion Service was created within the Department of the Interior. The Soil Erosion Service could offer farmers in the region technical advice on erosion control; things like farming techniques that didn't require the kind of deep plowing farmers had previously used, and windbreaks in the form of lines of trees that would dampen wind gusts and help prevent soil erosion. The CCC sent laborers to help plant the trees and native grasses and rebuild the farms.

At first, funding for these programs was slight. In 1935, the Roosevelt Administration requested increased funding for the Soil Erosion Service. The story goes that Congress was skeptical of the need, but changed their minds after Washington DC was struck by a dust storm originating in the Great Plains, allowing Members to see the problem first hand and convincing them to approve the funding. The Soil Erosion Service was moved to the Department of Agriculture and renamed the Soil Conservation Service. The agency still exists in our time; it is now known as the Natural Resources and Conservation Service.

The plight of these migrants was immortalized in the 1939 John Steinbeck novel *The Grapes of Wrath* and its 1940 film adaptation, as well as in the photography of Dorothea Lange and the songs of Woody Guthrie, himself an Okie who migrated to California.

Yeah, as for that name Okie. It was originally used derisively, but has over time become a more neutral term, even in some cases a badge of honor. One milestone in removing the stigma of the name began with country music singer-songwriter Merle Haggard, born in California in 1937 to Okie parents. In 1969, Haggard released a hit song titled "(I'm Proud to Be an) Okie from Muskogee" that redefined Okie to mean "Middle American."

When Congress allotted seven billion dollars in 1941 for American defense, the Okie community in California found better jobs, thanks to the expanded manufacture of armaments there. There are an estimated seven million descendants of Okies living in California in our time, and although many Okies returned to their homes when times improved, many others in California and in other parts of the United States chose to remain in their new homes. Some of their descendants retain their own unique culture and identity, even in our time.

[music: Brannan, "Livin' the Dream"]

I've talked here and there about Charles Lindbergh. I already told you about his famous flight and the publication of his autobiography, titled *We*. I think I should take up the story from there and fill in some of the gaps.

After his celebrated flight, Lindbergh became a noted advocate for aviation and for air mail and is responsible for a boom in both fields. He made goodwill visits to a number of Latin American countries on behalf of the United States. In 1927, the US ambassador to Mexico, Dwight Morrow, invited Lindbergh and the humorist, entertainer, and aviation enthusiast Will Rogers to visit that country. During the visit, Lindbergh met Ambassador Morrow's daughter Anne and began a relationship with her. They were married about a year and half later and made their home in a rural location near Hopewell, New Jersey.

A year after they were married, Anne Morrow Lindbergh gave birth to their first child, Charles Lindbergh, Jr. On the evening of March 1, 1932, as Anne was pregnant with their second child, twenty-month-old Charles Jr. was discovered to be missing from his crib in the Lindbergh home. When Charles Sr. investigated, he found a ransom note in an envelope on the windowsill in the baby's bedroom. The note, written in poor English that suggested the writer was German, demanded \$50,000 for the return of the child.

Lindbergh took a gun and searched the grounds around the house and discovered a broken wooden ladder and a baby blanket. Lindbergh then contacted the Hopewell police department and the New Jersey State Police. The police searched the house and grounds but found no footprints or fingerprints. The only real clue was the ladder, which appeared to be home-made by someone with experience in carpentry.

News of the kidnapping spread quickly. Everyone knew the name Lindbergh from his famous flight five years earlier and the kidnapping shoved the name Lindbergh back into the headlines. Tart-tongued journalist H.L. Mencken declared the Lindbergh baby kidnapping the biggest news story since the Resurrection. A number of well-meaning amateurs volunteered to help investigate. A number of them searched the grounds, finding nothing but surely destroying any footprints that might have been there. President Hoover, and later President Roosevelt, offered the services of the FBI, even though kidnapping was not a Federal crime at the time.

On March 6, the Lindberghs received a second note from the kidnapper, postmarked March 4 in Brooklyn, New York. The note upped the ransom demand to \$70,000 and identified John Condon, a well-known figure in the Bronx, as the go-between between the kidnapper and Lindbergh. The note also demanded the money be delivered in a wooden box of specified dimensions.

Condon met with a shadowy figure claiming to be the kidnapper at night in a cemetery in the Bronx. The figure assured Condon that the baby was well, but would only return him after the ransom was paid. When Condon questioned whether the figure actually had the baby, the man promised proof. A few days later, Condon received in the mail a baby's sleeping suit, which the Lindberghs confirmed belonged to their child.

On April 2, Condon met with the shadowy figure again and gave him a wooden box containing \$50,000. He told the man that was all the money the Lindberghs had been able to raise. The man

accepted it and told Condon the baby was in the care of two women who did not know his identity and he would identify them to Condon later.

The bills that had been paid to the ransomer had not been marked, but their serial numbers had been recorded. Many of the bills were in the form of gold certificates. It was hoped gold certificates would be conspicuous if and when the kidnapper tried to spend them.

Six weeks passed with no further news about the child. On May 12, 1932, two truck drivers pulled over to the side of the road at a point about five miles from the Lindbergh home because one of them had to pee. He went into a wooded area to take care of the matter discreetly and found the body of Charles Lindbergh, Jr. Examination showed that the baby had been killed by a blow to the head. The body showed significant decomposition, indicating it had been there for some time.

The police issued hundreds of thousands of pamphlets in and around New York City, listing the serial numbers of the bills that had been included in the ransom payment. Individual bills were discovered here and there, as far away as the Midwest, but none of them could be linked to the person who had spent them.

In late April 1933, more than a year after the ransom had been paid, a man brought nearly \$3,000 in gold certificates into a bank in New York City to exchange them, per the Roosevelt Administration's ban on private holding of gold or gold certificates. The owner of the bills had given a false name and an address in Harlem.

Another year and a half passed with no leads in the case. Police did notice that the money from the ransom occasionally turned up, most often along the route of the Lexington Avenue subway, which runs along the East Side of Manhattan and on into the Bronx. On September 15, 1934, a bank teller in New York received a \$10 gold certificate that was part of the ransom money. It had a license plate number written on it. The teller was able to identify the person who brought it in, the manager of a nearby gas station. When the gas station manager was contacted, he told the police he had received the bill from a customer, whom he judged suspicious. He feared the bill might have been counterfeit, so he had written the customer's license plate number on the bill, in case that proved to be true.

The license plate was matched with a car owned by a man named Bruno Richard Hauptmann, a resident of the Bronx. Hauptmann was placed under police surveillance for four days, until he realized he was being followed and attempted to escape by driving through the Bronx at high speed. This didn't work—it never works; please don't ever try to flee the police—and he was taken into custody.

Hauptmann proved to be a German immigrant working as a carpenter. Hmm. German, carpenter, lives in the Bronx. Any of this ring any bells? Here's some more biographical information about Hauptmann: He was born in Germany and served on the Western Front during the First World

War. After the war he committed robberies and burglaries, including one burglary that involved climbing a ladder and entering the victim's home through a second-story window. Hauptmann served three years in a German prison for these crimes; soon after his release he was arrested and charged with more.

He then fled Germany for the United States, stowing away on a passenger ship and entering the US illegally in 1923. In the US he gained a degree of protection within the German-American community in New York City and found work as a carpenter.

The police interrogated Hauptmann and in 1934, interrogation might include beating the suspect, so yes, there was that. Police searched Hauptmann's home and found \$14,000 of the ransom money, Joe Condon's phone number, and evidence that the lumber used in making the ladder had been taken from the wooden structural members of Hauptmann's home.

The newspapers called Hauptmann's trial the Trial of the Century. Sigh. Please stop saying that. This is the fifth Trial of the Century we've covered on the podcast, after those of Leon Czolgosz, Fatty Arbuckle, Leopold and Loeb, and John Scopes, and we're only a third of the way through the century. Everybody knows the real Trial of the Century was the Nuremberg Trials.

The newspapers also called Hauptmann "The Most Hated Man in the World," which was probably untrue. I would nominate Joseph Stalin as the most hated man in the world in 1936, since Adolf Hitler was then only beginning to get up to speed. The newspapers wrote extensively about the evidence and basically convicted Hauptmann before the court had a chance to, which it did. He was sentenced to death; the governor of New Jersey offered Hauptmann leniency in exchange for a confession; Hauptmann refused. He was executed in the electric chair at Trenton State Prison in New Jersey on April 3, 1936, proclaiming his innocence until the very end.

I should note that there are those who believe Hauptmann was wrongly convicted and that much of the evidence against him was fabricated. Certainly the press whipped up a great deal of animosity against him. His wife Anna spent the rest of her life, until her death in 1994, arguing and litigating her husband's innocence, with no success. Either way, what is clear is that the press coverage and the trial were deeply unfair.

But whatever you think about Hauptmann's guilt or innocence, or how he was treated by the justice system, there can be no doubt that the long investigation, the incessant press coverage, and the trial must have been deeply traumatic for Charles and Anne Lindbergh. They feared for the safety of their second child, Jon Lindbergh, born during the media frenzy over the kidnapping of his elder brother.

Just before Christmas 1935, and a few months before the execution of Hauptmann, Charles and Anne and three-year-old Jon fled the United States in secret for Europe. They stayed for a time in Wales, then bought a house in Kent. In 1938, Lindbergh bought a small island off the coast of Brittany, in France, and moved his family there.

During their time in Europe, the Lindberghs made several visits to Germany, the first for the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, where he got VIP treatment from the Nazi government. This drew criticism from some in the United States; however, though it was not public knowledge at the time obviously, the Germans were showing off their latest aircraft to Lindbergh and Lindbergh was reporting what he saw back to the US military, which was valuable information. Lindbergh was one of the few foreigners offered the opportunity to fly a Messerschmitt 109, for instance.

Lindbergh also shared his views on the European situation with the French and British governments in 1938, around the time of the Sudetenland Crisis. He told leaders of both countries that they were much weaker than Germany and that a military response against Germany would be disastrous.

In October 1938, the US ambassador in Berlin, Hugh Wilson, hosted a dinner at the embassy in honor of Lindbergh. Among those in attendance were several leading figures in German aviation, including Hermann Göring, the Reichsminister of Aviation. At the dinner, Göring surprised the Americans by offering Lindbergh the Order of Merit of the German Eagle, which was an award created by the Nazi government that was primarily given to foreigners. This is the same medal given to Henry Ford a few months earlier, which I mentioned in episode 251.

Kristallnacht occurred just a few weeks afterward, and Lindbergh came under criticism in the US for accepting the medal and was called upon to return it, which Lindbergh declined to do. Ambassador Wilson backed him up on the first point, arguing that Göring had surprised the Americans by offering the award and that to refuse it would have been a serious insult. As for the second point, Lindbergh himself argued that the award had been offered in friendship and that to return it would be to insult the German government for no good reason.

Lindbergh was shopping for a house in Berlin at this same time. He considered renting a nice home, but it was owned by Jewish people and the Nazis discouraged him from leasing it. Many of his friends discouraged him from settling in Germany at all until in early 1939, he and his family returned to the United States at the request of the US Army Air Corps. Lindbergh was a colonel in the reserves and the Corps asked him to return to active duty to assist the Air Corps in evaluating and developing new military aircraft.

In the US, Lindbergh spoke out against military aid to the Allies, equating it with “capitaliz[ing] on the destruction and death of war.”

In August 1939, when Albert Einstein signed Leo Szilard’s letter, episode 307, and they were looking for an intermediary to deliver it to President Roosevelt, Einstein suggested Lindbergh. Both he and Szilard wrote to Lindbergh, requesting his assistance, but neither received a reply. In September, Lindbergh gave a nationwide radio address opposing US involvement in the war, speaking sympathetically of Germany and accusing the US news media of conspiring to turn

public opinion against the Germans, a thinly veiled bit of anti-Semitism. This persuaded Einstein and Szilard to ask someone else.

In October, in a subsequent address, Lindbergh criticized Canada for declaring war on Germany. He argued that the nations of the Western Hemisphere should remain aloof from the European conflict, and complained that Canada had chosen fealty to the British Crown over solidarity with its hemispheric neighbors.

In November, the magazine *Reader's Digest* printed an article by Lindbergh that called for a German attack on the Soviet Union.

During the second half of 1940, after it became clear that both major political parties had nominated interventionist candidates for President, a college student at Yale University formed the America First Committee, which grew rapidly to become the principal organization opposed to US involvement in the war. Prominent Americans who joined the group included Henry Ford, actress Lillian Gish, architect Frank Lloyd Wright, First World War flying ace Eddie Rickenbacker, socialite Alice Roosevelt Longworth, the daughter of that other President Roosevelt, and Charles Lindbergh.

The group quickly became controversial for the many anti-Semitic and pro-Nazi views expressed by some of its most prominent members. Charles Lindbergh became the group's most visible advocate, the public face of America First. In 1941, he testified before Congress in opposition to Roosevelt's Lend-Lease plan. You heard me quote some of his other public statements against US involvement in the war in episode 333. The President publicly called Lindbergh a "defeatist and appeaser." In response, Lindbergh resigned his commission in the Army Air Corps.

Privately, Roosevelt told his Treasury Secretary, Henry Morgenthau, "I am absolutely convinced Lindbergh is a Nazi." That may have been going a bit too far, but only a bit. Lindbergh was certainly a Nazi sympathizer and clearly a racist, who championed the importance of solidarity with other white nations in opposition to the rest of the world, and identified Communism as an ideology that sought to destroy the white race. These remarks were quoted and publicized with approval in Germany.

Lindbergh would continue to oppose US involvement in the war until the day Germany declared war on the United States.

[music: Tyers, "Panama"]

Speaking of hemispheric neighbors, during his first inaugural address back in March of 1933, President Roosevelt articulated his foreign policy this way: "I would dedicate this nation to the policy of the good neighbor...the neighbor who respects the sanctity of his agreements in and with a world of neighbors."

He was speaking of the whole world, but later that year, his Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, at a conference in Montevideo, declared to Latin American representatives that it was the position of the United States that no nation had the right to intervene in the internal or external affairs of another. After that, the Good Neighbor Policy, as it had come to be called, was seen primarily as a reset of US relations with Latin America.

In accordance with the Good Neighbor policy, the US withdrew its occupation forces from Haiti in 1934. Following a military coup in Cuba, the US recognized the new government and negotiated a new treaty arrangement that nullified the parts of the 1903 treaty between the US and Cuba that were most offensive to the Cubans, especially the one that granted the US the right to intervene militarily in Cuba as it saw fit.

What were the Roosevelt Administration's motives in pursuing the Good Neighbor Policy? Well, I'd like to think that simple human decency played an important role. Apart from that, the Great Depression had hit Latin America hard and there was a concern that hard times might push some of these countries toward fascism.

Beyond that, American attitudes toward Latin Americans had changed. During the Administrations of the first President Roosevelt, of William Howard Taft, and of Woodrow Wilson, US government officials largely regarded Latin Americans as incapable of running their own countries and saw US intervention as necessary, indeed inevitable. Among these officials we must include Woodrow Wilson's Undersecretary of the Navy, Franklin Roosevelt.

But like many Americans, Franklin Roosevelt changed his mind on this question between 1914 and 1934. The Roosevelt Administration advocated for closer relations between the USA and the nations of Latin America, and that these relations be more equal and mutually respectful.

After the Second World War began, the Roosevelt Administration created the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs and appointed as its head the 32-year-old Nelson Rockefeller, son of John D. Rockefeller Jr. and thus grandson of the original oil magnate, John D. Rockefeller Sr. Rockefeller's office was tasked with improving relations between the US and its Latin American neighbors by promoting cultural understanding. They worked with CBS to create a Pan-American radio network to share news and cultural programming, and with Walt Disney to create two animated films to encourage inter-American understanding: 1942's *Saludos Amigos*, and 1944's *The Three Caballeros*.

Also, shortly after the war began, US and Latin American representatives met at the Panama Conference to discuss American security. These nations issued the Panama Declaration, proclaiming the waters of the Americas off limits to military action by belligerent navies. Canada, Bermuda, and the Falkland Islands were exempt because they were belligerents. International law permitted every neutral nation to declare a maritime security zone extending 300 nautical miles from its coast, but this Pan-American Security Zone, as it was called, extended beyond that in many places, in some as far as 1000 nautical miles. In the North

Atlantic, the Zone extended as far as the 60° west meridian. The signatories also agreed not to allow submarines of belligerent nations to dock at their ports.

These declarations clearly advantaged the British and disadvantaged the Germans. Nevertheless, the first major violation was made by the Royal Navy when they attacked the *Graf Spee* off the coast of Uruguay. Western Hemisphere nations sent diplomatic protests to London but otherwise took no action.

In 1941, when the Lend-Lease Act was passed, the U-boat war against British shipping was sinking British ships three times faster than British shipyards could build new ones. The US government was concerned that the billions of dollars of military aid sent to Britain on British ships would end up at the bottom of the Atlantic.

The US Navy began escorting British ships through the Pan-American Security Zone, thus easing the burden on the Royal Navy. On April 9, 1941, the first anniversary of the German occupation of Denmark, the US State Department signed a treaty with Denmark—well, actually Denmark was under German occupation and the treaty was signed with the Danish Ambassador to the US, who had been appointed before the war and was refusing to accept instructions from Copenhagen as long as it was occupied. So in fact the State Department signed a treaty with the ambassador, granting the US permission to establish bases in Greenland. Greenland was practically an independent nation that set its own policy after the occupation of Denmark. Now it would become a *de facto* US protectorate.

The next day, the US extended the Security Zone east from 60° west to 24° west. Now it reached almost to Iceland, which was the gathering place for British convoys on their way east. US Navy ships would patrol this zone, and if they sighted a German U-boat, they would announce the sighting in an open radio broadcast that could be monitored by any British ship that cared to.

Roosevelt told his Cabinet this new declaration was a step forward. Secretary of War Stimson replied, “Keep on walking, Mr. President. Keep on walking.”

Public opinion polls gave Roosevelt a 73% approval rating, but still showed strong resistance to entering the war. US Navy Chief Admiral Harold Stark complained privately that the future of American democracy was in the hands of George Gallup, the pollster. King George VI, perhaps more perceptively, wrote to Roosevelt to tell him “I have been so struck by the way you have led public opinion by allowing it to get ahead of you.”

On May 27, 1941, with Yugoslavia and Greece now fallen, Roosevelt gave his first fireside chat of the year. He warned the American people of the threat facing them from Nazi Germany, and declared a national emergency. He vowed the US Navy would use any means necessary to ensure US military aid reached Britain.

He proved it in July when the US and Iceland signed an agreement under which America took on the responsibility for defending Iceland for the duration of the war. The agreement included language guaranteeing Icelandic independence. The British garrison in Iceland was replaced by an American garrison, which peaked at 40,000 soldiers, which was more adult men than were in the native population of Iceland at the time.

At home, Roosevelt was facing a difficult problem in race relations. African-American leaders were complaining that defense contractors were refusing to hire qualified African-Americans, meaning African-Americans were not sharing in the prosperity that came with the increased military spending. They called for a march on Washington and predicted a crowd of 100,000.

Roosevelt, who well remembered the racial violence in Washington back in 1919, feared another round of violence and met with African-American leaders at the White House, along with Navy Secretary Knox, War Secretary Stimson, and New York Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, whom Roosevelt had just appointed director of the new Office of Civilian Defense. The meeting was tense at first, until LaGuardia suggested that everyone but the President adjourn to the Cabinet Room to see if they could draft an executive order that everyone could live with. They did, and came back to the President with an agreed-upon order. In fact it took a week before they could craft language everyone could accept. When it was presented to Roosevelt, he signed it.

The order banned discrimination in Federal government employment and among military contractors on the basis of “race, creed, color, or national origin,” and it represented the biggest step forward in civil rights in the United States so far this century. It became official policy of the Federal government not to discriminate among its own employees, and for the first time, private employers were required not to discriminate as a condition of contracting with the Federal government. The *Amsterdam News* declared that Abraham Lincoln had freed African-Americans from physical captivity and Franklin Roosevelt had freed them from economic captivity.

On June 22, 1941, Germany invaded the Soviet Union. The British government under Winston Churchill immediately promised to assist the USSR in its war against Germany. In the United States, the question immediately arose as to whether the US would provide Lend-Lease aid to the Soviets as it was already doing for the British and the Chinese. In contrast to Churchill, Roosevelt was at first evasive on the question. Republican Senator Robert Taft publicly declared, “The victory of Communism would be far more dangerous to the United States than a victory of Fascism.”

In 1937, Pope Pius XI had promulgated an encyclical which declared that no supporter of Christian civilization may give Communism assistance “in any undertaking whatsoever.” The President’s representative to the Holy See reported that in 1941, Church leaders still regarded Communist atheism as more dangerous than Nazi paganism. US military leaders told the President that the USSR was doomed; Germany would defeat it in one to three months.

Roosevelt sent his close advisor Harry Hopkins to Moscow to meet with Stalin and the Soviet leadership. When he returned to Washington, Hopkins reported the strength of Soviet resolve. In July, Roosevelt declared the defense of the Soviet Union vital to the defense of the United States, which cleared the way for Lend-Lease aid to the USSR. Roosevelt ordered that aid to the Soviets be put on a higher priority than aid to the UK.

Roosevelt then made a personal appeal in a letter to Pope Pius XII, arguing that the survival of Communism represented less of a threat to the Christian Church or to humanity in general than would the survival of Nazism. The Pope's reply to Roosevelt was ambiguous, but then he also called the attention of the American Church to a different paragraph in his predecessor's encyclical, in which Pius XI distinguished between Communism, which the Church deplored, and the Russian people, whom the Church regarded with affection. The implication was clear. Aid to Communists is bad, but aid to the Russian people is an entirely different matter.

Roosevelt wanted a face-to-face meeting with Churchill, and Churchill agreed. Churchill set off for North America on August 4, along with the British service chiefs, General Sir John Dill, Admiral Sir Dudley Pound, and Air Chief Marshall Sir Wilfred Freeman. It is quite a remarkable thing to see the Prime Minister and Britain's senior military command all aboard one ship, plying an Atlantic Ocean known to be infested with German U-boats. Some in Britain recalled with dread how the war minister, Lord Kitchener, had died at sea when his ship struck a mine as he was on his way to a meeting in Russia.

Churchill and his service chiefs traveled aboard HMS *Prince of Wales*, Britain's newest and most modern battleship, which maintained radio silence and pursued a zig-zag course across the ocean, escorted halfway by British destroyers, and the rest of the way by Canadian destroyers. In Parliament, Deputy Prime Minister Clement Atlee spoke for the government; he steadfastly refused to discuss the Prime Minister's whereabouts.

In Washington, Franklin Roosevelt left aboard the Presidential yacht *Potomac* for what was billed as a fishing vacation off the coast of New England. There, the yacht rendezvoused with the heavy cruiser USS *Augusta*. Roosevelt transferred to that ship, where he met up with America's three service chiefs, General George Marshall, Admiral Harold Stark, and Major General Henry Arnold, along with Harry Hopkins and Averell Harriman, the President's special envoy to Europe.

Potomac spent the week off the coast of New England with a member of its crew, dressed like the President, sitting on the deck, fishing. Not even the cabinet, not even the Secret Service, not even Eleanor Roosevelt knew Franklin's true whereabouts.

Augusta sailed to Newfoundland, escorted by another heavy cruiser, USS *Tuscaloosa*, and five destroyers. There the American flotilla met *Prince of Wales* at the US naval base at Argentia, one of the bases leased to the US under the Destroyers for Bases program.

Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt met in person for the first time aboard *Prince of Wales*. They had lunch together and got on like a house on fire; by the time the meal was over, they were addressing each other as “Franklin” and “Winston.” Churchill later said of Roosevelt, “I formed a very strong affection, which grew with our years of comradeship.” Roosevelt described Churchill as an English version of New York Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia.

Churchill tried to get Roosevelt to commit to a declaration of war against Germany. Roosevelt turned him down, pleading that it would be difficult to get such a declaration through Congress. Instead, he told Churchill, the US Navy would take a greater role in patrolling the Atlantic, and if the Germans didn’t like it, they were free to declare war on America.

The two leaders agreed that in the event of war against Japan, both of their nations would adhere to a “Germany first” strategy. They sent a joint message to Joseph Stalin, promising both their countries would send military assistance to the Soviet Union.

But the most important thing to come out of this meeting was a joint statement that came to be known as the Atlantic Charter. The Charter was not a formal agreement between the UK and the US; it was merely a statement of principles, but it was a bold statement. In the Charter, both countries disavowed any interest in increasing their territory as a result of the war. It affirmed the principle of self-determination and proclaimed that any border changes after the war must be in accord with the wishes of the people concerned. It called for disarmament and global economic cooperation in terms of freedom of the seas, lower trade barriers, and a world free from want and fear. The terms explicitly affirmed that these benefits should be available to victor and vanquished on equal terms, thus implicitly rejecting a punitive peace agreement in the mold of the Treaty of Versailles.

It was the British Labour Party newspaper, the *Daily Herald* that first called it the Atlantic Charter. In the month of September, the governments-in-exile of Czechoslovakia, Poland, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Yugoslavia and Greece all endorsed the Charter, as did the Soviet Union and the Free French. Remarkably, the United States, technically a neutral power, entered into this declaration along with the belligerent powers aligned against the Axis.

In Washington, the Administration asked Congress for an 18-month extension of the Selective Service Act. The bill passed the Senate easily, but ran into difficulties in the House of Representatives, where a number of Democrats opposed it. In the end, the bill squeaked by with the narrowest possible margin: 203-202.

Also in September, a German U-boat fired two torpedoes at the American destroyer USS *Greer*. Both torpedoes missed. In hindsight, it is entirely possible the German commander didn’t realize he was targeting an American ship, but after the incident, Roosevelt ordered that henceforth US Navy ships in the Pan-American Security Zone west of Iceland would fire on sight at any German or Italian submarine.

The Atlantic Charter's language about self-determination was quickly embraced by subjects of the British Empire, particularly in India, and in French colonial holdings. Churchill found himself in the embarrassing position of seeming to have inadvertently endorsed the dissolution of the British Empire. When questioned, Churchill insisted the language on self-determination was intended to apply only to territories conquered by Germany. In India, newspaper headlines mocked the Charter, declaring that it didn't apply to brown people.

We'll have to stop there for today. I thank you for listening, and I'd especially like to thank Andrew for his kind donation, and thank you to Ross for becoming a patron of the podcast. Donors and patrons like Andrew and Ross help cover the costs of making this show, which in turn keeps the podcast available free for everyone, so my thanks to them and to all of you who have pitched in and helped out. If you'd like to become a patron or make a donation, you are most welcome; just visit the website, historyofthetwentiethcentury.com and click on the PayPal or Patreon buttons.

The podcast website also contains notes about the music used on the podcast. Sometimes it's my own work, sometimes it's licensed, but many times, the music you hear here is free and downloadable. If you hear a piece of music on the podcast and you would like to know more about it, including the composer, the performers, and a link to where you can download it, that would be the place to go. While you're there, you can leave a comment and let me know what you thought about today's show.

And I hope you'll join me next week, here on *The History of the Twentieth Century*, as we return to the war in Europe, which is about to take a dramatic turn as Germany launches a surprise invasion of the Soviet Union. Operation Barbarossa, next week, here, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and one more thing. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, Charles Lindbergh asked to be recommissioned in the US Army Air Forces, but Secretary of War Stimson refused, citing Lindbergh's past statements in support of Nazi Germany. Instead, Lindbergh worked for US aviation companies as a technical consultant in the Pacific Theater, where he sometimes took part in combat missions, despite being a civilian.

After the war, Lindbergh continued to be an outspoken critic of Communism. He published an autobiography, *The Spirit of St. Louis*, recounting the events leading up to his 1927 transatlantic flight. This book won the 1954 Pulitzer Prize for biography. That same year he was commissioned as a general in the United States Air Force Reserve.

Lindbergh fathered a total of six children with his wife, Ann Morrow. Beginning in 1957, he engaged in secret long-term relationships with no less than three different women in Germany and fathered a total of seven children with them. The truth about these children and these relationships would not become public until after his death.

In 1969, he attended the launch of Apollo 11, and afterward discussed the mission on live TV with Walter Cronkite.

In his later life, Charles Lindbergh took up a number of environmental causes, including advocating for protection of lands in Hawaii, Africa, and the Philippines, and for endangered species, such as the humpback whale. He spent his final years living on the Hawaiian island of Maui.

He died in 1974, at the age of 72. Anne Morrow Lindbergh became a writer and poet after the war, publishing six nonfiction books and a collection of poetry. She died in 2001, at the age of 94.

[music: Closing War Theme]