

Part Seven: Lend Lease Act

President Roosevelt: I ask this Congress for authority and for funds sufficient to manufacture additional munitions and war supplies of many kinds to be turned over to those nations which are now in actual war with aggressor nations. Our most useful and immediate role is to act as an arsenal for them as well as for ourselves. We shall send in ever increasing numbers ships, planes, tanks, guns. That is our purpose and our pledge.

Narrator: By an overwhelming majority Congress passed Lend-Lease – bill number 1776 – another declaration of independence, independence from tyranny, 1941-style.

On April 6, 1941 the Nazi juggernaut overran into Yugoslavia and Greece. On June 22, 1941, the success-crazy Nazis took their longest step toward world conquest. Without any declaration of war, they blitzed into Russia. We were determined not to let down any nations defending themselves against unprovoked attack, so we extended Lend-Lease to these new victims. Now the lend-lease products of our factories were being unloaded in the bombed ports of Great Britain; at the Red Sea ports for the British in Africa; lend-lease was being hauled over the Burma Road to China; lend-lease was piling up in Murmansk and Iran for Russia.

Why did we supply war materials to the countries defending themselves against Axis aggression? Was it our natural sympathies for people unwilling to lose their freedom? Was it our ancient antagonism to conquerors imposing their rule on others by force? Yes, partly, but principally it was because the American people had become certain that they were on the list of free nations to be conquered.

German-accented Speaker [quoting Hitler]: Two worlds are in conflict...two philosophies of life...one of these two worlds must break asunder.

Narrator: And we were the leading example of that free world that Hitler was committed to breaking asunder. What would have been our defensive position, if the aggressors had succeeded in conquering Britain, Russia, and China?

Narrator 3: German conquest of Europe and Africa would bring all their raw materials, plus their entire industrial development, under one control. Of the two billion people in the world, the Nazis would rule roughly one quarter, the 500 million people of Europe and Africa forced into slavery to labor for Germany. German conquest of Russia would add the vast raw materials and the production facilities of another of the world's industrial areas. And of the world's people, another 200 million would be added to the Nazi labor pile. Japanese conquest of the Orient would pour into their factory the almost unlimited resources of that area. And of the peoples of the Earth, a thousand million would come under their rule, slaves for their industrial machine.

Narrator: We in North and South America would be left with the raw materials of three-tenths of the earth's surface against the Axis with the resources of seven-tenths. We would have one industrial region against their three industrial regions. We would have one-eighth of the world's population against their seven-eighths. If we together with the other nations of North and South America could mobilize 30 million fully equipped men, the Axis could mobilize 200 million. Thus an Axis victory in Europe and Asia would leave us alone and virtually surrounded, facing enemies ten times stronger than ourselves.

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These are the reasons that led us, the American people, to change the Neutrality Act, to send aid to Britain, to Russia, to China, to make ourselves the arsenal of democracy. These are the reasons why now the first American troops set forth into the Atlantic, to occupy new bases in Greenland and Iceland with the consent of their local governments. In our hands, bases of defense; in Nazi hands, bases of offense.