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American Entry into World War II: A Historiographical Appraisal

BY WAYNE S. COLE

The aggressive expansion of the Axis powers in Europe and Asia in the 1930's aroused an impassioned debate on American foreign policy. "Isolationists" contended with "interventionists" over the policies adopted by the Roosevelt administration. Though few, if any, of the so-called isolationists wanted literally to isolate the United States from the rest of the world, they joined in opposition to what seemed the major trend in foreign affairs under President Roosevelt. A second phase in the dispute over policy was inaugurated by the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, for with that event the old quarrels became academic. But the policies of the Roosevelt administration continued as the core of dispute between two schools of historians who launched their own war of words over the background of America's entry into war. In the years after 1941 the "internationalist" writers were met by the "revisionists" — the latter term now used almost universally to describe the historians who have written critically of Roosevelt's pre-Pearl Harbor foreign policies and of American entry into World War II.¹ Since the controversy is a continuing one, and because the

¹The terms commonly used on this subject are somewhat less than satisfactory. The term "isolationist" was widely used to describe the opponents of Roosevelt's foreign policies before Pearl Harbor, but the term "non-interventionist," though used much less frequently before Pearl Harbor, is a more accurate description of opponents of Roosevelt's foreign policies.

The term "internationalist" was a satisfactory description of many defenders of Roosevelt's foreign policies before Pearl Harbor. It was perhaps inappropriate, however, for many others who supported his foreign policies by 1941, such as the American Legion. The term "interventionist" likewise has inaccurate connotations. It is acceptable only if defined to include those who wished the United States to limit its "intervention" to methods short of war, as well as those who wanted full military intervention. The term "court historian," used by Harry Elmer Barnes and Charles C. Tansill to describe pro-Roosevelt writers, is, like the term "isolationist," unsatisfactory on two counts: (1) It is not literally accurate. (2) It carries such a high emotional content that it interferes with dispassionate thought on the subject. The term "in-

books and articles on the subject have grown to confusing proportions, some orientation is necessary both for the reader who must work his way through the published historical materials and for those attracted to the problem as a field for further research and writing.

Histories of American entry into World War II published during the war defended the pre-Pearl Harbor policies of the Roosevelt administration. Forrest Davis and Ernest K. Lindley had close ties with the administration which enabled them to obtain important data for their volume, *How War Came*.² Walter Johnson's book, *The Battle against Isolation*,³ published in 1944, was a study of the most powerful interventionist pressure groups before Pearl Harbor. Johnson, unlike some later writers, based his study upon previously unused manuscripts—principally the William Allen White papers. In the same year Dexter Perkins provided a concise survey in *America and Two Wars*.⁴ The authors of these books shared and endorsed most of the assumptions and convictions of the interventionists and the Roosevelt administration on foreign affairs. The emotional atmosphere of the war years, the necessity for unity in the prosecution of the war, and the inadequacy of available source materials combined to prevent any serious challenge to the pro-Roosevelt interpretation during the war. Pamphlets by John T. Flynn, published in 1944 and 1945, advanced the revisionist point of view, but they received relatively little attention.⁵

During and since World War II growing quantities of raw materials for historical research and interpretation on the subject have been published and made available to scholars. The United States government published special sets of documents related to American entry into the war, beginning with the publication in 1943 of *Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy, 1931-1941*.⁶ In addition,

ternationalist" is reasonably satisfactory for most historians who have defended Roosevelt's prewar foreign policies. The use of this term for pro-Roosevelt writers implies, however, that revisionists are not "internationalists." This implication may be valid for some; but other historians who believe the United States should not have entered World War II are in fact "internationalists."

² *How War Came: An American White Paper, from the Fall of France to Pearl Harbor* (New York, 1942).

³ (Chicago, 1944).

⁴ (Boston, 1944).

⁵ *The Truth about Pearl Harbor* (New York, [1944]); *The Final Secret of Pearl Harbor* (New York, [1945]).

⁶ Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: Japan, 1931-1941* (2 vols., Washington, 1943); Department of State, *Peace*

the regular *Foreign Relations* series is now being brought close to Pearl Harbor.⁷ Military leaders and civilians associated with the Roosevelt administration published personal accounts. Among Americans whose memoirs or letters have been published in full or in part are Raymond Moley, William E. Dodd, Joseph E. Davies, Sumner Welles, Frances Perkins, John G. Winant, Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Henry L. Stimson, Cordell Hull, James A. Farley, Sherman Miles, Eleanor Roosevelt, William D. Leahy, Samuel I. Rosenman, Joseph C. Grew, Ernest J. King, Harold L. Ickes, Husband E. Kimmel, and Jay P. Moffat.⁸ Several key figures thus far have not published memoirs — including George C. Marshall, Harold R. Stark, Walter C. Short, Frank Knox, and President Roosevelt. Edited volumes of Roosevelt's speeches, press conferences, and personal letters, however, have been published.⁹ Documents, testimony, and reports of the several Pearl Harbor investigations were made available with the publication in 1946 of a total of forty vol-

and War: United States Foreign Policy, 1931-1941 (Washington, 1943); Department of State, *Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-1941* (Washington, 1948); *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers; The Soviet Union, 1933-1939* (Washington, 1952). See also, Office of Naval Intelligence, *Fuehrer Conferences on Matters Dealing with the German Navy, 1939-1941* (5 vols., Washington, 1947).

⁷ Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1861-1941* (Washington, 1861-1956). The series has been completed through the year 1938. Three of the five volumes for 1939, one of the five for 1940, and one for 1941 have also been published.

⁸ In the order of publication: Raymond Moley, *After Seven Years* (New York, 1939); William E. Dodd, Jr., and Martha Dodd (eds.), *Ambassador Dodd's Diary, 1933-1938* (New York, 1941); Joseph E. Davies, *Mission to Moscow . . .* (New York, 1941); Joseph C. Grew, *Ten Years in Japan* (New York, 1944); Sumner Welles, *The Time for Decision* (New York, 1944); Frances Perkins, *The Roosevelt I Knew* (New York, 1946); John G. Winant, *Letter from Grosvenor Square: An Account of a Stewardship* (Boston, 1947); Henry Morgenthau, Jr., "The Morgenthau Diaries," *Collier's* (New York), October 4, 11, 18, 25, 1947; Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War* (New York, 1948); *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull* (2 vols., New York, 1948); James A. Farley, *Jim Farley's Story: The Roosevelt Years* (New York, 1948); Sherman Miles, "Pearl Harbor in Retrospect," *Atlantic Monthly* (Boston), CLXXXII (July, 1948), 65-72; Eleanor Roosevelt, *This I Remember* (New York, 1949); William D. Leahy, *I Was There: The Personal Story of the Chief of Staff to Presidents Roosevelt and Truman* (New York, 1950); Samuel I. Rosenman, *Working with Roosevelt* (New York, 1952); Joseph C. Grew, *Turbulent Era: A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years, 1904-1945* (2 vols., Boston, 1952); Ernest J. King and Walter M. Whitehill, *Fleet Admiral King: A Naval Record* (New York, 1952); Harold L. Ickes, *The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes* (3 vols., New York, 1953-1954); Husband E. Kimmel, *Admiral Kimmel's Story* (Chicago, 1955); Nancy H. Hooker (ed.), *The Moffat Papers: Selections from the Diplomatic Journals of Jay Pierrepont Moffat, 1919-1943* (Cambridge, 1956).

⁹ Samuel I. Rosenman (ed.), *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt* (13 vols., New York, 1938-1950); Elliott Roosevelt (ed.), *F. D. R.: His Personal Letters* (4 vols., New York, 1947-1950).

umes covering the work of the Joint Congressional Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack.¹⁰ The war crimes trials in Nuremberg and the Far East added pertinent documents and testimony.¹¹ Documents on British and German foreign policy before the war have been published.¹² Memoirs of leaders of European states were printed, containing much information of value for an understanding and analysis of American policies. The volumes by Winston Churchill and Count Ciano's diaries are two important examples.¹³ And gradually in recent years historians have obtained increased opportunities for research in unpublished manuscripts.

Most of the histories published from 1947 to 1950 on American entry into World War II were based almost exclusively on published sources — particularly on the volumes growing out of the Pearl Harbor investigations and on the memoirs of Hull, Stimson, and others. Most of these early books followed the lead of either the majority (pro-Roosevelt) or the minority (anti-Roosevelt) report of the congressional investigation committee. Among the volumes of this sort defending Roosevelt's foreign policies were *This Is Pearl*, by Walter Millis,¹⁴ and *Roosevelt, from Munich to Pearl Harbor*, by Basil Rauch.¹⁵ Revisionist volumes, based largely on published sources, included *Pearl Harbor*, by George Morgenstern;¹⁶ *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War, 1941*, by

¹⁰ *Hearings before the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*, 79 Cong., 2 Sess. (39 parts, with exhibits; Washington, 1946); *Report of the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*, 79 Cong., 2 Sess. (Washington, 1946).

¹¹ International Military Tribunal, *Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal, Nuremberg* (42 vols., Nuremberg, 1947-1949); Office of the United States Chief Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression* (11 vols., Washington, 1946-1948); International Military Tribunal for the Far East, *Record of Proceedings* (Washington, 1946).

¹² *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939* (Third Series, 9 vols., London, 1949-1955); and *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945: From the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry* (Series D, 9 vols. to date, Washington, 1949-). The British series, now complete, covers the period from March 9, 1938, to September 5, 1939. The German documents in this series begin in 1936 and have now been brought to June 22, 1940. In addition, several European governments published sets of selected documents in 1939 and 1940 around the time of the outbreak of war.

¹³ Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War* (6 vols., Boston, 1948-1953); Hugh Gibson (ed.), *The Ciano Diaries, 1939-1943: The Complete Unabridged Diaries of Count Galeazzo Ciano, Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs* (Garden City, 1946). See also Togo Shigenori, *The Cause of Japan* (New York, 1956).

¹⁴ *This Is Pearl! The United States and Japan — 1941* (New York, 1947).

¹⁵ *Roosevelt, from Munich to Pearl Harbor: A Study in the Creation of a Foreign Policy* (New York, 1950).

¹⁶ *Pearl Harbor: The Story of the Secret War* (New York, 1947).

Charles A. Beard;¹⁷ *America's Second Crusade*, by William Henry Chamberlin;¹⁸ *Design for War*, by Frederic R. Sanborn, published in 1951;¹⁹ and *The Final Secret of Pearl Harbor*, by Robert A. Theobald, published in 1954.²⁰

Gradually in the late 1940's and early 1950's scholars began to expand into new frontiers by research in unpublished manuscripts. Most of this group wrote from points of view sympathetic with the policies followed by the American government before Pearl Harbor. Robert E. Sherwood used the files of Harry Hopkins as the basis for his Pulitzer-prize-winning *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, published in 1948.²¹ *The Battle of the Atlantic* and *The Rising Sun in the Pacific*,²² by Samuel Eliot Morison, traced the naval side of the background of American entry into the war. *Chief of Staff: Prewar Plans and Preparations*, by Mark S. Watson, analyzed the role of the Army.²³ Herbert Feis's study of American relations with Japan, entitled *The Road to Pearl Harbor*, was based on more extensive research than earlier volumes on that subject.²⁴ The culmination of the internationalist interpretation came with the publication in 1952 and 1953 of the two-volume work by William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason under the general title of *The World Crisis and American Foreign Policy*.²⁵ This massive study, covering the years from 1937 to 1941, was sponsored and financed by the Council on Foreign Relations and the Rockefeller Foundation. These volumes were based not only on published materials but also on extensive research in the records of the Department of State and in the material at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library at Hyde Park. Since

¹⁷ *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War, 1941: A Study in Appearances and Realities* (New Haven, 1948). See also Charles A. Beard, *American Foreign Policy in the Making, 1932-1940: A Study in Responsibilities* (New Haven, 1946).

¹⁸ (Chicago, 1950).

¹⁹ *Design for War: A Study of Secret Power Politics, 1937-1941* (New York, 1951).

²⁰ *The Final Secret of Pearl Harbor: The Washington Contribution to the Japanese Attack* (New York, 1954).

²¹ *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (New York, 1948).

²² These are Volumes I (1947) and III (1948) of Morison, *History of the United States Naval Operations in World War II* (10 vols. to date, Boston, 1947-).

²³ (Washington, 1950). This is a volume in the series entitled *United States Army in World War II*, being prepared by the Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army.

²⁴ *The Road to Pearl Harbor: The Coming of the War between the United States and Japan* (Princeton, 1950).

²⁵ *The Challenge to Isolation, 1937-1940* (New York, 1952); and *The Undeclared War, 1940-1941* (New York, 1953).

the publication of the Langer-Gleason work, the most recent book written from this same general point of view is *The Passing of American Neutrality, 1937-1941*, by Donald F. Drummond, published in 1955.²⁶ On the revisionist side, Charles Callan Tansill, after research comparable to that of Langer and Gleason, published his *Back Door to War* in 1952.²⁷ Harry Elmer Barnes, who had published several pamphlets on the subject earlier, edited a volume called *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace* that included essays written by most major revisionists.²⁸ Richard N. Current's critical study, *Secretary Stimson*, was published in 1954.²⁹ In addition, other books and numerous articles have appeared, particularly since 1950, on specialized aspects of the subject.³⁰

The interpretative controversies among historians concerning American entry into World War II are in part a direct extension of the pre-Pearl Harbor debate between interventionists and non-interventionists. Writers of history have not only dealt with the same basic subject and issues, but have also used the same arguments, made the same fundamental assumptions, and advanced similar hypotheses. For most major hypotheses advanced by post-war historians, counterparts could be found in the writings and speeches of prewar interventionists and non-interventionists. Furthermore, the debate among historians aroused some of the same emotional heat, the same ideological dogmatism, the same intoler-

²⁶ (Ann Arbor, 1955).

²⁷ *Back Door to War: The Roosevelt Foreign Policy, 1933-1941* (Chicago, 1952).

²⁸ *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace: A Critical Examination of the Foreign Policy of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Its Aftermath* (Caldwell, Idaho, 1953).

²⁹ *Secretary Stimson: A Study in Statecraft* (New Brunswick, 1954).

³⁰ For examples in addition to items cited elsewhere in this article, see: Hans L. Trefousse, *Germany and American Neutrality, 1939-1941* (New York, 1951); William L. Langer, *Our Vichy Gamble* (New York, 1947); Edgar E. Robinson, *The Roosevelt Leadership, 1933-1945* (Philadelphia, 1955); Fillmore H. Sanford, "Public Orientation to Roosevelt," *Public Opinion Quarterly* (Princeton), XV (Summer, 1951), 189-216; Immanuel C. Y. Hsu, "Kurusu's Mission to the United States and the Abortive *Modus Vivendi*," *Journal of Modern History* (Chicago), XXIV (September, 1952), 301-307; Norman L. Hill, "Was There an Ultimatum before Pearl Harbor?" *American Journal of International Law* (Washington), XLII (April, 1948), 355-67; Richard N. Current, "How Stimson Meant to 'Maneuver' the Japanese," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* (Cedar Rapids), XL (June, 1953), 67-74; William L. Neumann, "Franklin D. Roosevelt and Japan, 1913-1933," *Pacific Historical Review* (Berkeley), XXII (May, 1953), 143-53; Tracy B. Kittredge, "The Muddle before Pearl Harbor," *United States News and World Report* (Washington), XXXVII (December 3, 1954), 52-63, 110-39; Joseph W. Ballantine, "Mukden to Pearl Harbor: The Foreign Policies of Japan," *Foreign Affairs* (New York), XXVII (July, 1949), 651-64; Herbert Feis, "War Came at Pearl Harbor: Suspicions Considered," *Yale Review* (New Haven), XLV (Spring, 1956), 378-90.

ance of conflicting views, and the same black-and-white portraits — on both sides — as were aroused in the “Great Debate” before Pearl Harbor. There are exceptions, of course, but there were also exceptions before Pearl Harbor.

In many instances the individuals who have written scholarly histories on the subject were involved directly (sometimes prominently) in the pre-Pearl Harbor foreign policy debate — and on the same side that they are now defending in their histories. There is no evidence that any of these writers was persuaded to change his basic point of view as the result of historical research after the war. It is true, of course, that Walter Millis’ *Road to War*, published in 1935, was a major revisionist interpretation of American entry into World War I. Millis, however, was on the editorial staff of the interventionist New York *Herald Tribune*, and by 1939 he publicly endorsed the interventionist position. In June, 1940, he signed a petition urging an American declaration of war on Nazi Germany. In 1941 he was a sponsor of the Fight for Freedom Committee — a major pressure group advocating full United States participation in the war against the Axis.³¹ Robert E. Sherwood’s Pulitzer-prize-winning play, *Idiot’s Delight*, with its arraignment of war and war passions, undoubtedly aroused pacifist and non-interventionist emotions. By 1939-1941, however, Sherwood was an interventionist. He actively and prominently supported William Allen White’s Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies. Harry Hopkins assured himself of the vigor of Sherwood’s interventionist views before he added the playwright to President Roosevelt’s speech-writing staff in 1940.³²

Barnes and Tansill refer to the internationalist writers as “Court Historians.” One need not endorse the sinister implications of this sobriquet. Many internationalist writers, however, did have sympathetic personal ties and friendships with key figures in the events they described in their histories. Several of them have held important government positions in the administration whose foreign policies they were analyzing and evaluating. Ernest K. Lindley’s personal friendship with President Roosevelt and other key administration figures enabled him to obtain special interviews and

³¹ Walter Millis, “1939 Is Not 1914,” *Life* (New York), VII (November 6, 1939), 69-75, 94-98; Johnson, *Battle against Isolation*, 114-15, 247, 251-52.

³² Johnson, *Battle against Isolation*, 43, 70 n, 85-88, 94 n, 116 n, 152-53, 206; Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, 49-50, 167, 303.

inside information for the preparation of his sympathetic volume.³³ Robert E. Sherwood assisted President Roosevelt with the writing of his speeches from 1940 until the President's death in 1945.³⁴ Herbert Feis was an economic adviser in the Department of State from 1931 to 1943 and was special consultant to the Secretary of War from 1944 to 1946. William L. Langer from 1941 to 1946 held various positions in the Office of Coordinator of Information, the Office of Strategic Services, and the Department of State. He served the Central Intelligence Agency in 1950-1951. S. Everett Gleason was with the Office of Strategic Services from 1943 to 1945 and the Department of State in 1945. He has served as deputy executive secretary to the National Security Council since 1950. Samuel Eliot Morison was commissioned in the naval reserve with the sole duty of preparing the history of United States naval operations in World War II. He rose to the rank of rear admiral by the time he retired in 1951. Mark S. Watson's book is a part of the official history of the Army in World War II. None of the major revisionist writers, on the contrary, held important administrative positions under either President Roosevelt or President Truman.³⁵

All revisionists for whom specific evidence is available adhered to the non-interventionist position before Pearl Harbor. Charles A. Beard's prewar "Continentalism" as expressed in such books as *The Open Door at Home*³⁶ and *A Foreign Policy for America*³⁷ is well known. He publicly endorsed (but did not join) the America First Committee, the leading non-interventionist pressure group before Pearl Harbor.³⁸ He also testified against Lend-Lease before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.³⁹ Harry Elmer Barnes, one of the leading and more uncompromising revisionists regarding the origins of World War I, spoke at meetings of the America First

³³ Davis and Lindley, *How War Came*, vii-viii; Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War*, 243 n.

³⁴ Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, 183-84.

³⁵ Biographical data in this and the following paragraph were obtained largely from *Who's Who in America* and from the contents and jackets of the various books written by these men.

³⁶ *The Open Door at Home: A Trial Philosophy of National Interest* (New York, 1934).

³⁷ (New York, 1940).

³⁸ *New York Times*, September 9, 1940; Wayne S. Cole, *America First: The Battle against Intervention, 1940-1941* (Madison, 1953), 75.

³⁹ *Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations* [on S. 275], *United States Senate*, 77 Cong., 1 Sess. (Washington, 1941), 307-13.

Committee in 1941.⁴⁰ Charles C. Tansill in 1938 published the best of the revisionist studies of American entry into World War I.⁴¹ George Morgenstern joined the editorial staff of the non-interventionist *Chicago Tribune* in 1941. For revisionist as well as internationalist it is possible to discern a continuity in viewpoint, extending from the pre- to the post-Pearl Harbor period.

Any brief summaries of the revisionist and internationalist interpretations of American entry into World War II can at best be no more than simplified versions of detailed and complicated accounts. It is necessary in presenting such a summary to pass over countless important details and individual variations in interpretation. There is, nevertheless, a wide area of agreement among writers on each side of the interpretative controversy.

Internationalist writers, looking back to the days before Pearl Harbor, view the Axis powers as extremely serious threats to American security and interests. They point to the strength and speed of the Axis forces which by the middle of 1940 had rolled over Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Luxemburg, Belgium, and France. Britain alone was successfully resisting Nazi assaults on her home islands. By May, 1941, Hitler was in control of the Balkan Peninsula and was threatening the Middle East. Most authorities at the time expected the Soviet Union to fall quickly after Hitler's *Blitzkrieg* was turned against Russia on June 22, 1941. Axis successes in North Africa raised fears that control of that continent might prove a stepping-stone to the Western Hemisphere. In the meantime Japan took advantage of the European crises to step up her aggressive campaigns in Asia.

According to the internationalist interpretation, President Roosevelt believed the United States could most effectively increase the possibility of peace in the 1930's by using its power to discourage potential aggressors from provoking war. In this aim, however, he was handicapped by the "isolationist" attitude of the American people and particularly by the powerful opposition in Congress. After war began in Asia and in Europe, according to this interpretation, the President hoped to prevent the United States from

⁴⁰ Harry Elmer Barnes, *The Genesis of the World War: An Introduction to the Problem of War Guilt* (New York, 1926); Cole, *America First*, 45, 76, 79.

⁴¹ *America Goes to War* (Boston, 1938).

becoming involved in the hostilities — providing that could be accomplished without sacrificing American security, vital interests, and principles.

President Roosevelt and his major advisers believed that aggression by Germany and Italy in Europe constituted a more serious threat to American security than did Japanese actions in the Far East. In general, internationalist writers follow the administration view that the defeat of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy was essential to American peace and security. Like the Roosevelt administration, most of these writers tend to rule out a negotiated peace as a possible acceptable alternative in Europe — particularly after the fall of France. President Roosevelt hoped that his policy of extending aid short of war to the victims of Axis aggression in Europe would prevent the defeat of Great Britain, contribute to the essential defeat of the Axis powers, and thereby enable the United States to maintain both its peace and its security. Among the many steps taken by the Roosevelt administration to aid the victims of aggression in Europe were repeal of the arms embargo, the destroyer deal, Lend-Lease, the Atlantic patrol system, occupation of Iceland, the shoot-on-sight policy, arming of American merchant ships, and permitting the use of those ships to transport goods directly to England.

According to the internationalist interpretation, Roosevelt and Hull wanted to prevent war between the United States and Japan — in part because such a war would interfere with the main task of defeating Hitler. They believed that the best way to preserve American peace and security in the Pacific was to take steps short of war to check Japanese aggression. Among American actions of this sort were the “moral embargo,” the termination of the commercial treaty with Japan, various forms of aid to Chiang Kai-shek, keeping the American fleet at Pearl Harbor, and freezing Japanese assets in the United States. The United States was eager to seek a peaceful settlement with Japan — providing such a settlement would not jeopardize American security and principles, and providing it would not require the United States to abandon China, Britain, France, and the Netherlands in the Pacific. As it became increasingly apparent that compromise was impossible on terms acceptable to both countries, the Roosevelt administration tried to delay war to gain time for military preparations.

With regard to the European theater as well as the Pacific, there were distinct variations in the views of administration leaders before Pearl Harbor about implementing American policies and presenting them to the American people. Cordell Hull, hoping to avoid war and fearful of non-interventionist opposition, generally advised caution. He favored limiting action to steps short of war and he explained each step in terms of peace, security, and international morality. Henry L. Stimson, Frank Knox, Henry Morgenthau, Jr., and others were critical of this indirect and step-at-a-time approach. They early came to believe that aid short of war would not be sufficient to insure the defeat of the Axis and they urged the President to take more vigorous action against the aggressors. Stimson believed the American people would support the President in a declaration of war even before Pearl Harbor. Of a different temperament, President Roosevelt, like Hull, was fearful of arousing effective public opposition to his policies and adhered to the step-at-a-time, short-of-war approach.⁴²

Internationalist interpretations tend to reflect these variations in attitudes among prewar interventionists. Feis treats Hull with considerable respect. Rauch's interpretation is similar to that advanced by Hull, though the hero in Rauch's book is definitely President Roosevelt. A number of writers, like Davis, Lindley, Millis, and Sherwood, generally feel that in view of conditions then existing President Roosevelt's decisions and methods on foreign policy matters were wise and sound at most crucial points before Pearl Harbor. Dexter Perkins has emphasized that Roosevelt's actions to check the Axis in Europe short of war reflected and expressed the desires of the majority of the American people. Langer and Gleason are sympathetic with the more direct and vigorous approach urged by Stimson — particularly as applied to the European theater. They believe that Roosevelt overestimated the strength of the opposition to his policies among the American people.⁴³

⁴² For example, see Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service*, 365-76; Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, 132-35; Langer and Gleason, *Challenge to Isolation*, 5-9; Langer and Gleason, *Undeclared War*, 457-58.

⁴³ Davis and Lindley, *How War Came*, 23-29, 332; Millis, *This Is Pearl*, x-xi; Rauch, *Roosevelt, from Munich to Pearl Harbor*, 3-6, 22-23, 495-96; Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, 133, 151; Dexter Perkins, "Was Roosevelt Wrong?" *Virginia Quarterly Review* (Charlottesville), XXX (Summer, 1954), 359-64; Langer and Gleason, *Challenge to Isolation*, 5-6; Langer and Gleason, *Undeclared War*, 195-97, 441-44.

Writers of the internationalist school find the fundamental causes for American involvement in the war in developments in other parts of the world — beyond the American power to control by 1941. They do not find the explanation within the United States — except in so far as non-interventionist opposition inhibited administration actions that might have prevented the war from beginning or from reaching such a critical stage. Nearly all internationalist histories are highly critical of the opponents of Roosevelt's foreign policies. Needless to say, they all deny that President Roosevelt wanted to get the United States into war. They are convinced that the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was a genuine surprise to the members of the Roosevelt administration. These leaders knew that Japanese armed forces were under way and that war was imminent, but they expected the blows to fall in the southwest Pacific. In that event, administration leaders believed the United States would have to fight — though they were worried about the reaction of the American people to a declaration of war on Japan if American territory were not attacked. In so far as there was any American responsibility for the disaster at Pearl Harbor most internationalist writers blame the military commanders in Hawaii — Admiral Husband E. Kimmel and General Walter C. Short. None of them believe that there were any alternatives available to President Roosevelt by 1940-1941 which could have prevented American involvement in World War II without sacrificing American security and principles.⁴⁴

Revisionists have formed an entirely different estimate of Roosevelt's role and policies. Most of the revisionist interpretation can be summarized under four major headings. First, revisionists believe the Axis powers did not (or, need not — if the United States had followed wiser policies) constitute a serious threat to American security and vital interests. Second, they contend that President Roosevelt followed policies that he knew (or should have known) would lead to war in Asia and Europe and would involve the United States in those wars. Third, while leading the nation to war, the President deceived the American people by telling them he was working for peace. And fourth, revisionists maintain that American policies before and during World War II contributed to the rise

⁴⁴ For example, see Millis, *This Is Pearl*, x-xi; Morison, *Rising Sun in the Pacific*, 127-42; Langer and Gleason, *Undeclared War*, 936-37; Rauch, *Roosevelt, from Munich to Pearl Harbor*, 467-93; Watson, *Chief of Staff*, 498-520.

of a much more serious threat to peace and security — Communist Russia and her satellites.

In striking contrast to the internationalist interpretation, the revisionists minimize or reject the idea that the Axis powers constituted a threat to American security. They point out that Hitler had no concrete plans for attacking the Western Hemisphere. They portray the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor as an action provoked by American restrictions that threatened Japanese security and vital interests. In so far as revisionists concede the reality of an Axis threat to the United States, they believe it was caused largely by American shortsighted and provocative policies. Like non-interventionists before Pearl Harbor, the revisionists maintain that the issue was not primarily security but instead was war or peace. And revisionists hold that the United States government had the power to choose for itself whether it would or would not enter the war. Thus, in contrast to internationalists, the revisionists find the explanation for American entry into World War II primarily within the United States rather than in the actions of nations in other parts of the world. In seeking the explanation within the United States, they focus their attention almost exclusively upon administration and military leaders — and particularly upon President Roosevelt.

Some revisionist historians believe that the Roosevelt foreign policies helped to provoke and prolong war in Asia and Europe.⁴⁵ They interpret Roosevelt's steps to aid Britain short of war as actually steps *to* war. Opinions of revisionists vary on the question of whether Roosevelt deliberately meant these as steps to war. In any event, they contend, these actions did not provoke Hitler into war against the United States; and the shooting incidents that occurred in the Atlantic did not arouse American enthusiasm for entering the European war.

⁴⁵ Tansill contends (and Barnes concurs) that "There would seem to be only one logical explanation for Roosevelt's insistence on peace at the time of Munich and his pressure for an Anglo-French-Polish stand which he knew meant war in 1939, namely, that he did not want any war to start in Europe which might terminate so rapidly that the United States could not enter it. In September, 1938, the French, British, Russian, and Czech armies could have faced Hitler and might have defeated him rather rapidly. By summer, 1939, the situation had drastically changed. Russia became aligned with Germany and the Czech Army had been immobilized. War, in 1939, might stretch on indefinitely and afford Roosevelt ample time to involve the United States." Barnes (ed.), *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, 171, 201-202 n. See also Chamberlin, *America's Second Crusade*, 59-60. Most revisionists do not take such an extreme position.

Instead, according to most revisionist writers, the Roosevelt administration got the United States into war through the Asiatic “back door” by provoking the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.⁴⁶ This was accomplished by increasing pressures on Japan while refusing any compromise that the Japanese could accept. The decisive economic pressure in 1941 was exerted through the curtailment of oil shipments, and the key issue on which compromise proved impossible was China. The freezing of Japanese assets in the United States on July 26, 1941, accompanied by parallel action by the British and Dutch, virtually terminated American trade with Japan. This was particularly serious in cutting Japan off from her essential oil supplies. On August 17, 1941, at the suggestion of Churchill, President Roosevelt presented a formal and vigorous warning to the Japanese against further expansion. The President then rejected Premier Konoye’s proposal for a personal meeting between the two leaders. Then, Secretary of State Hull, after objections from China and Britain, abandoned the idea of proposing a *modus vivendi*. Instead, on November 26, Hull (though aware that time was running out) submitted a ten-point program to Japan — including the demand that the Japanese withdraw from China and Indo-China. This proposal (which revisionists generally call an “ultimatum”) was so extreme that Hull knew in advance that Japan would not accept it. According to most revisionists these and other actions by the Roosevelt administration (out of either design or blunder) provoked war with Japan. The United States confronted Japan with the alternatives of backing down or fighting. With oil reserves falling dangerously low, and believing that their vital interests and security were at stake, the Japanese chose to fight.⁴⁷

Through all of this, according to the revisionists, President Roosevelt deceived the American people concerning his policies and objectives in foreign affairs. Revisionists maintain that Roosevelt publicly committed his administration to a policy of peace while secretly leading the nation to war — a war that these writers consider contrary to national interests and contrary to the desires of

⁴⁶ Morgenstern, *Pearl Harbor*, 283-84; Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War*, 564-66; Tansill, *Back Door to War*, 615-16; Barnes (ed.), *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, 220-21.

⁴⁷ For example, see Barnes (ed.), *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, 299-307, 327-86.

80 per cent of the American people. The most famous expression of this thesis is in Beard's last book and particularly in his final chapter.⁴⁸

Most revisionists maintain that administration and military leaders in Washington gave inadequate, ambiguous, and belated warnings to the commanders in Hawaii and withheld essential information from them. According to their contention, officials in Washington had sufficient information — including that obtained by breaking the Japanese secret diplomatic code — to anticipate an early Japanese attack. Furthermore, most of the revisionists believe that data at the disposal of leaders in Washington were sufficient (if properly analyzed) to have warned of a possible attack on Pearl Harbor. After Pearl Harbor, they say, the administration attempted unjustly to make General Short and Admiral Kimmel, the commanders in Hawaii, scapegoats for the tragedy. Instead of blaming the commanders in Hawaii, the revisionists place the main responsibility upon civilian and military leaders in Washington — including Marshall, Stark, Stimson, Knox, and particularly President Roosevelt. Tansill phrased the idea of Washington responsibility for the war most starkly when he wrote: "It seems quite possible that the Far Eastern Military Tribunal brought to trial the wrong persons. It might have been better if the tribunal had held its sessions in Washington."⁴⁹ On this, as on other phases of the subject, some revisionists, including Beard, Current, and William L. Neumann, write in more restrained and qualified terms than either Tansill or Barnes.

Finally, the revisionists insist that the Roosevelt foreign policies failed to serve American national interests. If, as Roosevelt and Hull contended, American aid to the victims of aggression was designed to keep America out of war, these policies obviously failed. If the Roosevelt policies were designed to protect American security, they were, according to revisionists, of questionable success. By helping to crush Germany and Japan the United States removed two major barriers to Soviet expansion and created power vacuums and chaos which contributed to the rise of the Soviet Union to world power and to the resultant explosive Cold War situation. China, which was considered too vital to compromise in 1941, is

⁴⁸ Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War*, 573-91.

⁴⁹ Tansill, *Back Door to War*, 629.

now in Communist hands — in part, some revisionists say, because of Roosevelt's policies before and during World War II. Revisionists maintain in general that American involvement left the United States less secure, more burdened by debts and taxes, more laden with the necessity of maintaining huge armed forces than ever before in American history. Some revisionists predict that unless the United States returns to a policy of "continentalism" the nation may be headed for the nightmare described by George Orwell in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and toward World War III.⁵⁰

It is probable that the reception accorded the revisionist or the internationalist interpretation has been affected as much by the climate of thought and the international developments since Pearl Harbor as by the specific evidence and reasoning relied upon by historians. Emotional, ideological, political, economic, and military conditions from 1942 to 1950 contributed to a widespread acceptance of the internationalist interpretation. The historian who conformed to prevailing modes of thought in the profession did not seriously question the pro-Roosevelt interpretation of American entry into World War II. Revisionist hypotheses were viewed for the most part as biased and unsound. Critical references to the Beard group were in vogue.

With the breakdown of bipartisanship around 1950, the beginning of a new "Great Debate," the development of neo-isolationism of the Hoover-Taft-Knowland variety, and the Republican campaign of 1952, revisionist interpretations found a somewhat more receptive environment. The Cold War tensions and insecurity encouraged the conviction that American entry into World War II had some aftereffects dangerous to American security. These developments were supplemented by a growth of political, economic, and intellectual conservatism that encouraged a more critical attitude toward Roosevelt's prewar domestic policies as well as his actions in foreign affairs. Revisionist volumes and articles were published in increasing numbers. Although most historians continued to express themselves sympathetically toward Roosevelt's foreign policies before Pearl Harbor, there was a more widespread inclination to question specific features of the internationalist interpretation. Internationalist historians, such as Feis, or Langer and Gleason, phrased their accounts in moderate, restrained, and quali-

⁵⁰ Barnes (ed.), *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, viii-ix, 69, 502-42.

fied terms. At the same time some revisionist historians became less defensive and more positive in their phrasing. But the neo-isolationism of the early 1950's did not win the dominant position in popular thought or national policies. And revisionist interpretations still failed to gain a really large following among American historians.⁵¹ It well may be that the future attitudes of many historians and of the American people toward American entry into World War II will be shaped as much by the future course of the United States as by the evidence uncovered by historical research.

Historians need not speak disparagingly, however, of the results of their inquiries during a period of only fifteen years on the subject of American entry into World War II. A prodigious amount of research has been accomplished. The diplomatic and military phases have been examined with striking thoroughness within the limits of available sources. Important beginnings have been made in the study of other aspects of the subject. Both revisionist and internationalist writers have advanced provocative and stimulating interpretations and have buttressed them with impressive documentation.

Despite these major accomplishments, there are important deficiencies and much work remains. Individuals will vary widely in their evaluations of what has been done and what remains to be done, but many of the criticisms of existing studies (criticisms which suggest possible directions for future efforts) may be analyzed under two major headings. In the first place, the narrow focus of most publications has left major areas almost untouched by serious historical research. Secondly — though the problem is probably incapable of final solution — there is need for a serious re-examination of the role and limitations of historical interpretation.

When measured by the standards of the "actualities" of pre-Pearl Harbor events, the scope and depth of available publications on American entry into World War II have been quite narrow in terms of time covered, subject matter, and source materials. Only a few books dealing specifically with this subject put it in the time context of the two World Wars. The volumes by Perkins, Chamberlin, Tansill, and Barnes all have this merit. Most studies of American entry into World War II, however, begin with 1940

⁵¹ The analysis in this paragraph is not meant to suggest that all revisionists are "neo-isolationists" or conservative. But the growth of "neo-isolationism" and conservatism did provide a more receptive environment for their interpretations.

or 1937. This point of departure is defensible if the scholar remains sensitively aware that he is examining only a tiny segment of the path that led to Pearl Harbor. Many historians, however, write almost as though the years from 1937 through 1941 were separated from and uninfluenced by earlier developments. For example, from a study of most available volumes a reader would not learn that these years were preceded by a devastating world depression with jolting economic, social, ideological, emotional, political, and power consequences that influenced the course of nations to December 7, 1941. Despite many important volumes and articles now available, there is much need for substantial research on foreign affairs in the years from 1921 to 1937. And a more meaningful perspective might be obtained if the subject were put in the broader context of the long-term but changing power relationships, industrialization of the world, the rise of the common man, and the development of secular ideologies designed to explain the mysteries of social, economic, and political changes whose ultimate form can only be dimly and imperfectly perceived.

Most published volumes are concerned largely with diplomatic, military, and some political aspects of the subject. The authors trace in intricate detail the policy planning, the minutiae of diplomatic exchanges, and the reactions of statesmen to the developments abroad. These phases are of major importance. They do not, however, constitute the whole story nor necessarily the most meaningful part. Economic, social, psychological, ethnic, religious, and political conditions that help to give direction and meaning to the diplomacy have been inadequately and imprecisely studied.

Political influences have been given much attention. Even the political analyses, however, often leave much to be desired when the subject is American entry into World War II. A good many historians on both sides have followed the almost standard procedure of charging individuals whose foreign policy views they do not like with partisan political motives. Writers on both sides often seem blind to political influences among those with whom they sympathize.⁵² Political analysts also have directed their attention largely to the top administration, military, and diplomatic officials.

⁵² For examples, see Morgenstern, *Pearl Harbor*, 327; Tansill, *Back Door to War*, 476-77; Langer and Gleason, *Undeclared War*, 574; Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, 367-68.

There has been relatively little serious study of the influence of individual congressmen and of state political organizations on the nation's foreign policies before Pearl Harbor. Furthermore, most references to political figures — even the prominent administration leaders — are of a two-dimensional variety. There is need for thorough biographies of scores of individuals. Frank Freidel's excellent biography of Franklin D. Roosevelt, now being published, suggests the sort of work needed on countless other figures in the story.⁵³ Some important beginnings have been made, too, in studying sectional variations, but this subject has by no means been exhausted.⁵⁴

One need not be an economic determinist to be disturbed by the neglect of economic influences in existing histories of American entry into World War II. How did foreign policies affect those groups of persons who shared a particular economic interest? How did such effects influence the attitude of those groups toward foreign policy? What influence did those groups exert on policy making? Articles by John W. Masland and Roland N. Stromberg provide important beginnings on this phase of the subject, but much more remains to be done.⁵⁵

Samuel Lubell and John Norman have published studies on the foreign policy attitudes of German-Americans and Italian-Americans.⁵⁶ There is need, however, for additional research on the role of numerous ethnic and religious groups in the history of American foreign affairs before Pearl Harbor. Volumes have been published on such pressure groups as the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies, the Fight for Freedom Committee, the America

⁵³ Frank Freidel, *Franklin D. Roosevelt* (3 vols. to date, Boston, 1952-).

⁵⁴ George L. Grassmuck, *Sectional Biases in Congress on Foreign Policy* (Baltimore, 1951); Ralph H. Smuckler, "The Region of Isolationism," *American Political Science Review* (Menasha, Wis.), XLVII (June, 1953), 386-401; Jeannette P. Nichols, "The Middle West and the Coming of World War II," *Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Quarterly* (Columbus), LXII (April, 1953), 122-45; Wayne S. Cole, "America First and the South, 1940-1941," *Journal of Southern History* (Lexington, Ky.), XXII (February, 1956), 36-47.

⁵⁵ John W. Masland, "Commercial Influence upon American Far Eastern Policy, 1937-1941," *Pacific Historical Review*, XI (October, 1942), 281-99; Roland N. Stromberg, "American Business and the Approach of War, 1935-1941," *Journal of Economic History* (New York), XIII (Winter, 1953), 58-78.

⁵⁶ Samuel Lubell, "Who Votes Isolationist and Why," *Harper's Magazine* (New York), CCII (April, 1951), 29-36; John Norman, "Influence of Pro-Fascist Propaganda on American Neutrality, 1935-1936," in Dwight E. Lee and George E. McReynolds (eds.), *Essays in History and International Relations in Honor of George Hubbard Blakeslee* (Worcester, 1949), 193-214.

First Committee, and the American Legion.⁵⁷ But studies are needed on the attitudes and influence of countless other organized pressure groups of all sorts on American foreign policies before Pearl Harbor. Several books and articles have analyzed the non-interventionists and interventionists — but neither of these groups has by any means been exhausted as a field for constructive historical research.⁵⁸

There has been almost no serious research on the influence of psychological and emotional factors. Both revisionists and internationalists write almost as though the actions of the key figures could all be explained in intellectual and rational terms. It is conceivable that historians could learn as much about American entry into World War II by studying the psychological and emotional make-up of the individuals involved, as by studying the phrasing of the diplomatic dispatches and state papers. Ralph K. White, Harold Lavine, and James Wechsler have published suggestive studies on the role of propaganda in pre-Pearl Harbor developments,⁵⁹ but for the most part the role of psychological influences on the attitudes of the American people and of American statesmen has scarcely been touched.

Results of the limited research on these non-diplomatic influences have seldom been integrated into the major works. Thomas A. Bailey's interpretative survey, *The Man in the Street*, contains more data on these phases of the subject than do any of the major volumes on American entry into World War II.⁶⁰ But his study is suggestive rather than definitive.

In addition to the narrowness of approach with regard to time span and subject matter, there has been a narrowness in terms of the

⁵⁷ Johnson, *Battle against Isolation*; Cole, *America First*; Roscoe Baker, *The American Legion and American Foreign Policy* (New York, 1954). See also Robert Edwin Bowers, "The American Peace Movement, 1933-1941," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1949).

⁵⁸ Johnson, *Battle against Isolation*; Cole, *America First*; Smuckler, "Region of Isolationism," *American Political Science Review*, XLVII (June, 1953), 386-401; Lubell, "Who Votes Isolationist and Why," *Harper's*, CCII (April, 1951), 29-36; John C. Donovan, "Congressional Isolationists and the Roosevelt Foreign Policy," *World Politics* (New Haven), III (April, 1951), 299-316; William Appleman Williams, "The Legend of Isolationism in the 1920's," *Science and Society* (New York), XVIII (Winter, 1954), 1-20.

⁵⁹ Ralph K. White, "Hitler, Roosevelt, and the Nature of War Propaganda," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* (Albany), XLIV (April, 1949), 157-74; Harold Lavine and James Wechsler, *War Propaganda and the United States* (New Haven, 1940).

⁶⁰ *The Man in the Street: The Impact of American Public Opinion on Foreign Policy* (New York, 1948).

source materials used. If the focus of the subject matter is to be broadened as suggested in this article, historians will have to demonstrate a high degree of ingenuity in tapping additional source materials — including manuscripts in private hands. This appeal for greater breadth and depth is not meant to disparage the work thus far completed. But much of great importance remains to be done by scholars on the subject of American involvement in the war.

Montaigne's assertion that "nothing is so firmly believed as what we least know" suggests a second deficiency in most major volumes on American entry into World War II. The most heated controversies among historians do not center on those matters for which the facts and truth can be determined with greatest certainty. The interpretative controversies, on the contrary, rage over questions about which the historian is least able to determine truth. Despite the thousands of documents and tons of manuscripts, the written record and the physical remains constitute only a tiny fraction of the reality of America's course toward World War II — and these remains do not necessarily represent the "truth."

With the relatively inexact methods and incomplete data at his command, even the finest historian can often make only semi-informed guesses concerning motives, causes, and wisdom of pre-Pearl Harbor decisions. As Herbert Butterfield phrased it, the historian "can never quite carry his enquiries to that innermost region where the final play of motive and the point of responsibility can be decided. . . . He does not study human nature, therefore, in the way that an omniscient deity might observe it, with an eye that pierces our unspoken intentions, our thick folds of insincerity and the motives that we hardly avow to ourselves."⁶¹ The historian can determine that certain events preceded American entry into World War II and he may find circumstantial evidence suggesting possible causal relationships. But he cannot conduct controlled experiments to measure with any degree of certainty the causal significance of antecedent developments and incidents. Furthermore, these various interpretations of individual historians are based upon different opinions concerning the wisdom of possible pre-Pearl Harbor policies as judged in terms of certain criteria, such as world peace and security, American peace and security, economic order and prosperity, and freedom and democracy. As Sumner Welles phrased

⁶¹ Herbert Butterfield, *History and Human Relations* (New York, 1951), 116-17.

it, "The wisdom of any foreign policy can generally be determined only by its results."⁶² But in order to measure this wisdom, the results of policies that were actually followed would have to be compared with the results of possible alternative policies that were not followed. It is, of course, impossible to run controlled experiments to determine what would have happened if alternative policies had been followed. Furthermore, the possible alternatives were not necessarily of the simple "either/or" variety. The path to Pearl Harbor was filled with millions of decisions, great and small, each based upon other decisions which preceded it. There were countless forks in the road that led to Pearl Harbor. And no historian can know for certain what lay at the end of the paths that were not followed.

Writers on both sides, of course, are conscious of limitations inherent in historical interpretation. All of them qualify their generalizations with references to the inadequacy of their sources. But they recognize the limitations more clearly when referring to interpretations with which they do not agree. Sanborn, a revisionist, wrote that the internationalists' "first line of defense has always rested and still rests upon a foundation blended of faith, emotion, and hypothesis."⁶³ Dexter Perkins, on the other side, has written that revisionism is "shot through with passion and prejudice. . . . It also rests upon hypotheses which . . . cannot be demonstrated."⁶⁴ To a certain extent both Sanborn and Perkins are correct. But their generalizations apply in varying degree to books on *both* sides in the interpretative controversy.

Probably no one would want the historian to refrain from interpreting the course of events simply because he cannot scientifically prove the truth of his interpretations. The historian could not avoid some degree of interpretation even if he tried. Inadequate though his analyses may be, who is better qualified to perform the function? Both revisionist and internationalist historians have a responsibility to attempt to explain American entry into World War II as they understand it.

Nevertheless, considering the incompleteness and inexactness of their knowledge and understanding, historians do not seem justified

⁶² Welles, *Time for Decision*, 288.

⁶³ Barnes (ed.), *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, 190.

⁶⁴ Perkins, "Was Roosevelt Wrong?" *Virginia Quarterly Review*, XXX (Summer, 1954), 372.

in the cavalier, dogmatic tone that they so frequently use. They base their interpretations in part on a personal faith in the wisdom of the policies they support. Like devout believers in less secular faiths, writers on both sides tend to be intolerant of conflicting beliefs. This may not be true of all writers on the subject, but it does apply in varying degree to many on both sides. Historians need to emphasize the limits of their knowledge as well as the expansiveness of it. There is need for more awareness of the tentative nature of human inquiry, for self-criticism and the humility of an Albert Einstein, rather than the positive, dogmatic, self-righteousness of the propagandist. Perhaps in the furious twentieth-century struggle for men's minds there can be no real place for moderation and restraint — even in historical interpretation. Numerous critics, however, both here and abroad, are fearful of the immaturity of American attitudes toward international affairs. If the historian is sensitive to the many-sided complexities of issues and demonstrates intellectual humility and ideological tolerance, perhaps others, influenced by his example, may be less inclined to grasp at simplified, crusading, utopian theories regarding contemporary international affairs.