

America and European Wars

(Delivered by Charles Lindberg September 15, 1939)

In times of great emergency, men of the same belief must gather together for mutual counsel and action. If they fail to do this, all that they stand for will be lost. I speak tonight to those people in the United States of America who feel that the destiny of this country does not call for our involvement in European wars.

We must band together to prevent the loss of more American lives in these internal struggles of Europe. We must keep foreign propaganda from pushing our country blindly into another war. Modern war with all its consequences is too tragic and too devastating to be approached from anything but a purely American standpoint. We should never enter a war unless it is absolutely essential to the future welfare of our nation.

This country was colonized by men and women from Europe. The hatreds, the persecutions, the intrigues they left behind, gave them courage to cross the Atlantic Ocean to a new land. They preferred the wilderness and the Indians to the problems of Europe. They weighed the cost of freedom from those problems, and they paid the price. In this country, they eventually found a means of living peacefully together – the same nationalities that are fighting abroad today. The quarrels of Europe faded out from American life as generations passed. Instead of wars between the English, French, and Germans, it became a struggle of the new world for freedom from the old – a struggle for the right of America to find her own destiny. The colonization of this country grew from European troubles and our freedom sprang from European war; for we won independence from England while she was fighting France.

No one foresaw the danger ahead of us more clearly than George Washington. He solemnly warned the people of America against becoming entangled in European alliances. For over 100 years, his advice was followed. We established the Monroe Doctrine for America. We let other nations fight among themselves. Then, in 1917, we entered a European war. This time we were on England's side, and so were France and Russia. Friends and enemies reverse as decades pass – as political doctrines rise and fall.

The Great War ended before our full force had reached the field. We escaped with the loss of relatively few soldiers. We measured our dead in thousands. Europe measured hers in millions. Europe has not yet recovered from the effects of this war and she has already entered another. A generation has passed since the Armistice of 1918, but even in America we are still paying for our part in that victory – and we will continue to pay for another generation. Now that war has broken out again, we in America have a decision to make on which the destiny of our nation depends.

We must decide whether or not we intend to become forever involved in this age-old struggle between the nations of Europe. Let us not delude ourselves. If we enter the quarrels of Europe during war, we must stay in them in time of peace as well. It is madness to send our soldiers to be killed as we did in the last war if we turn the course of peace over to the greed, the fear, and the intrigue of European nations. We must either keep out of European war entirely or stay in European affairs permanently.

Arbitrary boundaries can only be maintained by strength of arms. The Treaty of Versailles either had to be revised as time passed, or England and France, to be successful, had to keep Germany weak by force. Neither policy was followed. As a result, another war has begun, a war which is likely to be far more prostrating than the last, a war which will again kill off the best youth of Europe, a war which may even lead to the end of our Western civilization.

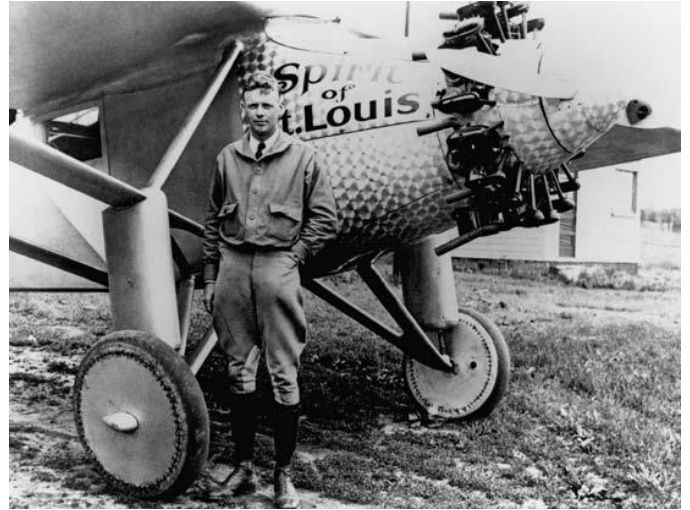
We must not permit our sentiment, our pity, or our personal feelings of sympathy, to obscure the issue, to affect our children's lives. We must be as impersonal as a surgeon with his knife. Let us make no mistake about the cost of entering this war. If we take part successfully, we must throw the resources of our entire nation into the conflict. Munitions alone will not be enough. We cannot count on victory merely by shipping abroad several thousand airplanes and cannon. We are likely to lose a million men, possibly several million – the best of American youth. We will be staggering under the burden of recovery during the rest of our lives. Democracy itself may not survive. If we enter the fighting for democracy abroad, we may end by losing it at home.

Our safety does not lie in fighting European wars. It lies in our own internal strength, in the character of the American people and of American institutions. As long as we maintain an Army, a Navy, and an Air Force worthy of the name, as long as America does not decay within, we need fear no invasion of our country.

And if Europe is prostrated again by war, as she has been so often in the past, then the greatest hope for our Western civilization lies in America. By staying out of war ourselves, we may even bring peace to Europe more quickly. Let us look to our own defenses and to our own character. If we attend to them, we have no need to fear what happens elsewhere. If we do not attend to them, nothing can save us.

Charles Lindbergh on WWII

1. Charles Lindbergh feels the US should:
 - a. Join the fight against the Nazis
 - b. Support England in WWII
 - c. Stay out of European Wars
 - d. Become more interventionist
2. According to Lindbergh, how can the US achieve this?
3. Under what circumstances should the US enter a war?



4. According to Lindbergh, why did most Europeans emigrate to America?

5. How does Lindbergh characterize Europe?
 - a. Peaceful
 - b. Civilized
 - c. Squabbling
 - d. Organized
6. George Washington gave us what advice?
 - a. Don't chop down cherry trees.
 - b. Don't become entangled in European alliances.
 - c. Spread democracy around the world.
 - d. We should always enter wars on England's side.
7. What international declaration follows Washington's advice?
 - a. Treaty of Versailles
 - b. Open Door Policy
 - c. Monroe Doctrine
 - d. Dollar Diplomacy



8. Do you agree or disagree with Lindbergh's opinion? Explain your answer.