

75th Anniversary Special

THE SATURDAY EVENING  
**POST**

# PEARL HARBOR

AMERICA'S BEST  
REPORTING  
Exactly as It Was

Dec 7, 1941

**“A Date  
Which Will  
Live in  
Infamy”**

**The Forgotten Hero  
Who Fought Back That Day**

His Incredible 12-Page Story

**What REALLY Happened**

Surprising Myths and Truths  
About the Brutal Attack

**PLUS:**

**Norman Rockwell's  
Homefront**

**The Ghosts  
of War**  
by Joan Didion



© M. Kinotler  
86

The Iconic **POST** Opens Its WWII Vaults for the First Time





*Anti Aircraft, Stevan Dohanos, March 7, 1942, The Saturday Evening Post*

# REMEMBERING PEARL HARBOR

SPECIAL COLLECTOR'S EDITION

“A date which will live in infamy”

The *Post*'s special commemoration of Pearl Harbor offers readers a sense of our nation as it encountered one of the greatest challenges in American history. The articles and editorials taken from the pages of the *Post*, America's most popular magazine in those years, reflect the country's divided, angry, and anxious mood prior to the attack. Then, when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the country drew together in a spirit of united effort rarely seen before or since.

This special issue reveals how America came together and applied its power and creativity to **the defense of nothing less than the world's freedom.**





Pearl Harbor  
naval base  
and USS *Shaw*  
ablaze after  
the Japanese  
attack

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### SECTION I AMERICA'S UNEASY PEACE PAGE 8

Before the attack on Pearl Harbor, America's distance from the hostilities kept most citizens feeling that the war in Europe, declared in September 1939, was "not our war." This section of the publication includes reportage, editorials, cover illustrations, political cartoons, and period advertising reflecting our nation's slow but inexorable shift away from isolationism.

### SECTION II THE ATTACK PAGE 10

Presenting the devastating events of December 7 and the follow-up attack on Wake Island and the surrounding region.

#### FEATURED "I Fly for Vengeance"

The thrilling first-person account of a pilot who inadvertently flew straight into bombardment at Pearl Harbor. *(Excerpt on page 11)*

#### "Last Man Off Wake Island"

A soldier sent to Wake to build up the communications system witnesses the brutal Japanese carpet bombing of the island that began on December 8.

#### "Lessons of Pearl Harbor"

Twenty years after the attack, a distinguished historian examines the events of that infamous day in minute detail, dispels common myths about the attack, and finds lessons for the nation's future safety.



Europe aflame, Herbert Johnson, April 19, 1941

### SECTION III A WORLD AT WAR PAGE 14

Overnight, America went from two-thirds of its citizens opposing U.S. engagement in the war to two-thirds supporting it. This section captures the new atmosphere of war-readiness, including the formation of civil defense operations, the internment of Japanese, the surge of enlistment, rationing, and more.



# COVER GALLERIES

Cover illustrations for the *Post* reflect the many different aspects of the life of a nation at war, from the novelty of female factory workers (below) to the deployment of a youth corps of scrap collectors (top right). Image galleries run four to six pages each.

## Women at Work



*Rosie the Riveter*, Norman Rockwell, May 29, 1943

## Soldiers on Leave



*Tattoo Artist*, Norman Rockwell, March 4, 1944

## Youth Corps



*Commando Kid*, Howard Scott, October 14, 1944

## Willie Gillis, a New Kind of Soldier



*Willie Gillis at the U.S.O.*, Norman Rockwell, February 7, 1942

## The Battle in the Pacific



*Corps of Engineers*, Mead Schaeffer, October 28, 1944



**SECTION I**  
**AMERICA'S UNEASY PEACE**  
 SEPTEMBER 1939–DECEMBER 1941

Before Pearl Harbor, America's distance from the hostilities kept most citizens feeling that this was "not our war."

**The Case for Isolationism**

As soon as war was declared in Europe, many argued that America should stay out of it

BY MILTON S. MAYER

I believe that this war, if we enter it, will destroy the democracy we have as a nation. When a nation goes to war — not just sends an expeditionary force, but really goes — everything physical and spiritual in that nation must necessarily be placed at the service of the state. And however eloquent and elegant the slogans, that is Fascism. For as democracy, in its simplest statement, is an order in which the state exists for men, so Fascism is an order in which men exist for the state. And in no condition to which men submit do they exist for the state so completely as in war.

War destroys the democracy in nations; but what seems to me infinitely worse, it destroys the democracy in men. More terrible than Hitler is the Hitler, the Fascist, the animal, in all of us. I oppose war because it debases the man in men and exalts the animal. And that is what I mean when I say that I think this will degrade humanity.

I don't want to go to war, because I don't want to be trained to hate men. The evidence is abundant that the human spirit cannot survive war whole. And the spirit of men who are brutalized hard enough and long enough — I offer you Nazi Germany — is maimed beyond the hope of anything more than partial and temporary recovery. There are

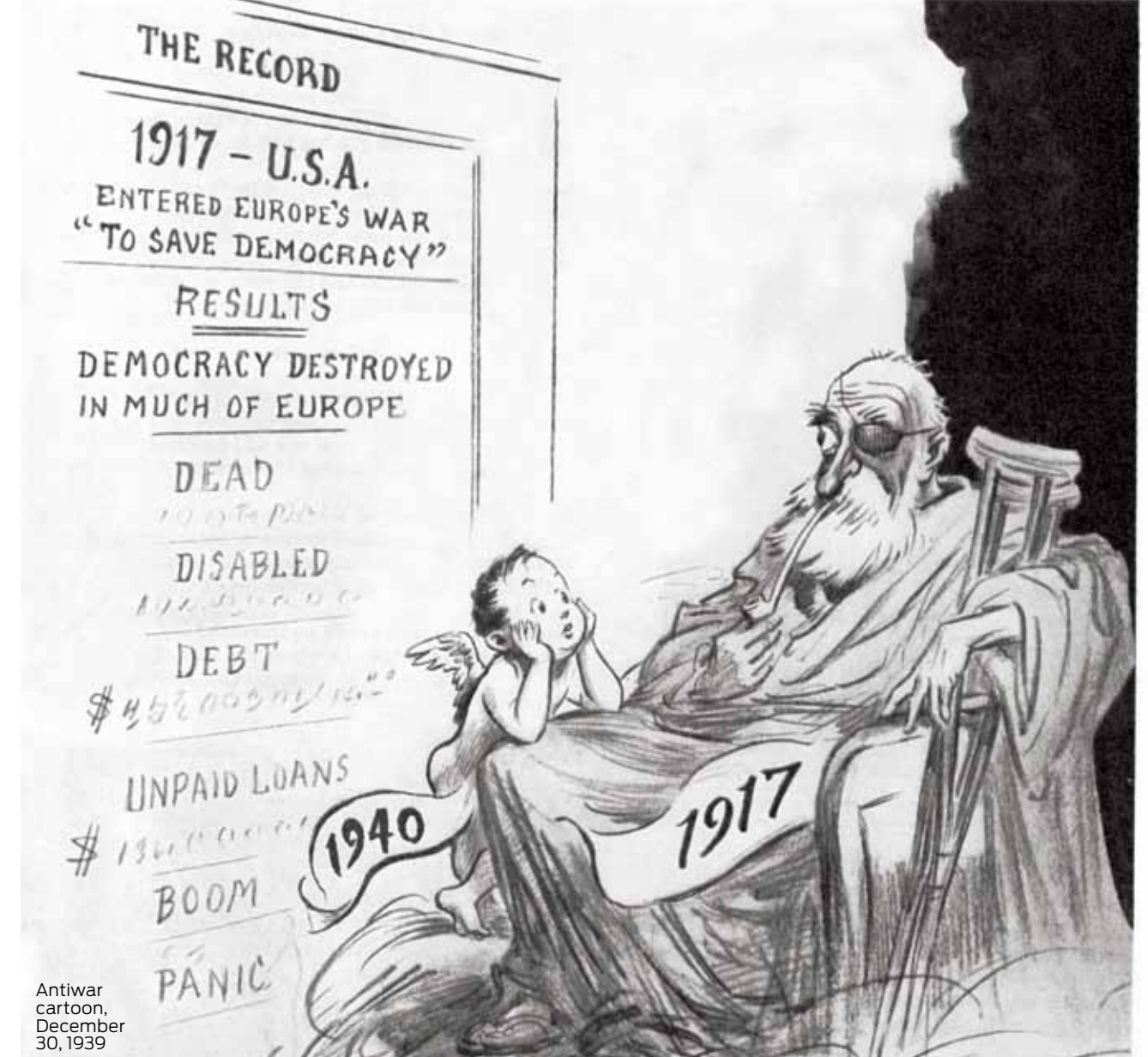


*No Trespassing*, J.C. Leyendecker, *The Saturday Evening Post*

exceptions, but I am not sure I am one of them. I take myself to be an ordinary man, and I wonder what will happen to my humanity when I am hired to kill in cold blood as

many of my own species, who have never offended me, as I possibly can.

—*"I Think I'll Sit This One Out,"*  
 October 7, 1939



Antiwar cartoon, December 30, 1939

"GRANDPA, WHAT DID YOU DO IN THE GREAT WAR?"

**America Pivots to Interventionism**

Seven months prior to Pearl Harbor, the *Post* editorial board explains to remaining doubters that war is inevitable

We have received a great many letters asking us why we gave up the fight to keep the country out of the war.

Our answer is to say to them that a time comes when every American must somehow resolve one simple question: If for anything you could do about it, your country nevertheless becomes involved in war, where are you going to stand?

Many keep saying that time has not come. The clock has not struck. The fatal words have not been uttered in the form of a resolution by Congress. But do they see what the world reads on the American banner? The American Government has proclaimed that Hitler must be destroyed. It has solemnly pledged itself before the world to employ its total resources to bring that result to pass. It has proclaimed that there can be and shall be no peace with Hitler. It has announced that a negotiated peace would be a defeat for democracy and freedom and the American way of life. It has proclaimed that the American

way of life cannot exist in the same planet with the German thing. One or the other must die.

For all of these reasons the American Government is giving warships, merchant ships, planes, guns and ammunition to Hitler's enemies and has commanded American industry to prepare an unlimited arsenal, to be called the arsenal of democracy. To speak of this as national defense is absurd. It is the American crusade. Trying, therefore, to maintain the fiction that this country is not in the war against Hitler is like running from an earthquake or hiding in the nursery.

—*"The Peril,"* Editorial, May 24, 1941



## SECTION II THE ATTACK DECEMBER 7, 1941

In this section, we bring to life the devastating events of December 7 through original reporting and firsthand accounts from the *Post*

Wreckage of the  
USS *Arizona*, Pearl Harbor,  
Hawaii, December 7, 1941



# I FLY FOR VENGEANCE

The thrilling first-person account by one of the few airmen to engage the enemy above Pearl Harbor on December 7

BY LT. CLARENCE E. DICKINSON, USN,  
WITH BOYDEN SPARKES

You would damn well remember Pearl Harbor if you had seen the great naval base ablaze as we of Scouting Squadron 6 saw it from the air, skimming in ahead of our homeward-bound carrier. The shock was especially heavy for us because this was our first knowledge that the Japs had attacked on that morning of December seventh.

We came upon it stone cold, each of us looking forward to a long leave that was due him.

It wasn't that we pilots didn't sense the tension that gripped the Pacific. You could feel it everywhere, all the time. Certainly the mission from which we were returning had the flavor of impending action. We had been delivering a batch of twelve Grumman Wildcats of Marine Fighting Squadron 211 to Wake Island, where they were badly needed. We were to shoot down anything we saw in the sky and bomb anything we saw on the sea. In that way, there could be no leak to the Japs.

Bad weather delayed us and we were getting home on Sunday instead of on Saturday, as planned. While the engines were being warmed up on the flight deck early on Sunday morning, my rear-seat gunner and radioman, W.C. Miller, a lad of twenty-one or twenty-two, had a word for me as he stood on the wing and helped adjust my radio cord. He said that his four-year tour of duty was to end in a few days and that there was "something funny" about it.

"Mr. Dickinson," he went on, "out of twenty-one of us fellows that went through radio school together, I'm the only one that hasn't crashed in the water. Hope you won't get me wet today, sir."

"Miller," I replied, "next Saturday we all go home for five months, so probably this will be our last flight together.



Just stick with me and the first thing you know we'll be on the Ford Island runway. That's all we've got to get by – this morning's flight.”

Miller and I were both North Carolinians, and had been flying together since I joined the squadron in April, 1941. He was dependable and cool, the kind of man I like to have at my back when I'm in the air.

He climbed into the rear cockpit, faced the tail in his regular position, and the squadron was off; eighteen planes flying in nine two-plane sections; seventy-two eyes to scrutinize a 100-mile-wide corridor of ocean through which our carrier and its accompanying destroyers could follow safely. It was 6:30 a.m. When the squadron reached 1000 feet, the prows of the vessels seemed to be making chalk-white Y's on slate. As we took off, the task force was 210 miles off Barber's Point, which is at the southwest tip of the island of Oahu. Barber's Point is about ten miles west of Pearl Harbor.

### FLYING STRAIGHT INTO HISTORY

Several times on the way in I had Miller take a bearing with his direction finder on a Honolulu radio station, to be sure we were on the prescribed course. The last time he did it, it was about five minutes past eight and we were twenty-five miles or so off Barber's Point. It seems amazing now, but they were still broadcasting Hawaiian music from Honolulu.

I noticed a big smoke cloud near my goal, then saw that it was two distinct columns of smoke swelling into enormous cloud shapes. But I paid little attention. Smoke clouds are familiar parts of the Hawaiian landscape around that season, when they burn over vast fields after harvest.

Four ships lay at the entrance to Pearl Harbor, one cruiser and three destroyers. I could tell they were ours by their silhouettes. Ahead, well off to my right, I saw something unusual – a rain of big shell splashes in the water, recklessly close to shore. It couldn't be target practice. This was Sunday, and anyway the design they made was a ragged one. I guessed some coast-artillery batteries had gone stark mad and were shooting wildly.

I remarked to Miller, through my microphone, “Just wait! Tomorrow the Army will certainly catch hell for that.”

When we were scarcely three minutes from land I noticed something that gave a significant and terrible pattern to everything I had been seeing. The base of the biggest smoke cloud was in Pearl Harbor itself. I looked up higher and saw black balls of smoke, thousands and thousands of them, changing into ragged fleecy shapes. This was the explanation of the splashing in the water. Those smoke balls were antiaircraft bursts. Now there could be no mistake. Pearl Harbor was under air attack.

I told Miller and gave him the order “Stand by.” Ensign McCarthy's plane was three or four hundred yards to my right. As Mac closed in, I was charging my fixed guns. I gestured and he charged his. Mac signified, by pointing above and below, that he understood the situation.

When we were probably three miles from land, we saw a four-engined patrol bomber that we knew was not an



American type. It was a good ten or twelve miles away. Mac and I started for him as fast as we could go, climbing. We were at 1500 feet, he was at about 6000 feet. He ducked into the smoke cloud which loomed like a greasy battlement.

We darted in after him and found ourselves in such blackness we couldn't see a thing. Not even then were we aware that the source of the smoke in which we hunted was the battleship Arizona.

Mac and I came out and headed back for Barber's Point for another look. In a few minutes we were over it at 4000 feet, flying wing to wing. A glance to the right at McCarthy's plane was almost like seeing Miller and myself in a mirror – there they were, in yellow rubber life jackets and parachute harnesses, and almost faceless behind black goggles and radio gear fixed on white helmets. Mac's gunner, like mine, was on his seat in his cockpit, alert to swing his twin machine guns on the ring of steel track that encircled him.

Things began happening in split-second sequences. Two fighters popped out of the smoke cloud in a dive and made a run on us. Mac dipped his plane under me to get on my left side, so as to give his gunner an easier shot. But the bullets they were shooting at me were passing beneath my plane. Unlucky Mac ran right into them. I put my plane into a left-hand turn to give my gunner a better shot, and saw Mac's plane below, smoking and losing altitude. Then it burst into yellow flame. The fighter who had got Mac zipped past me to the left and I rolled to get a shot at him with my fixed guns. As he pulled up in front of me and to the left, I saw painted on his fuselage a telltale insignie, a disk suggesting, with its white background, a big fried egg with a red yolk. For the first time I confirmed what my common sense had told me; these were Jap fighters, Zeros. I missed him, I'm afraid.

### A CASUALTY OF THE ZEROS

Those Zeros had so much more speed than I did that they could afford to go rapidly out of range before turning to swoop back after McCarthy. Four or five more Zeros dived out of the smoke cloud and sat on my tail. Miller was firing away and was giving me a running report on what was happening behind me.

It was possibly half a minute after I had seen the Jap insignie for the first time that Miller, in a calm voice, said, “Mr. Dickinson, I have been hit once, but I think I have got one of them.”

He had, all right. I looked back and saw with immense satisfaction that one of the Zeros was falling in flames. In that interval, watching the Jap go down, I saw McCarthy's flaming plane again, making a slow turn to the right. Then I saw a parachute open just above the ground. I found out later it was Mac's. As he jumped he was thrown against the tail surface of his plane and his leg was broken. But he landed safely.

Jap fighters were behind us again. There were five, I should say, the nearest less than 100 feet away. They were putting bullets into the tail of my plane, but I was causing them to miss a lot by making hard turns. They were having a field day – no formation whatever, all of them in a scramble to get me, each one wildly eager for the credit.

One or more of them got on the target with cannon. They were using explosive and incendiary bullets that clattered on my metal wing like hail on a tin roof. I was fascinated by a line of big holes creeping across my wing, closer and closer. A tongue of yellow flame spurted from the gasoline tank in my left wing and began spreading.

“Are you all right, Miller?” I yelled.

“Mr. Dickinson, I've expended all six cans of ammunition,” he replied.

Then he screamed. It was as if he opened his lungs wide and just let go. I have never heard any comparable human sound. It was a shriek of agony. When I called again, there was no reply. I'm sure poor Miller was already dead. I was alone and in a sweet fix. I had to go from a left-hand into a right-hand turn because the fast Japanese fighters had pulled up ahead of me on the left. I was still surprised at the amazing maneuverability of those Zeros. I kicked my right rudder and tried to put my right wing down, but the plane did not respond. The controls had been shot away. With the left wing down and the right rudder on and only eight or nine hundred feet

altitude, I went into a spin.

I yelled again for Miller on the long chance that he was still alive. Still no reply. Then I started to get out. It was my first jump, but I found myself behaving as if I were using a check-off list. I was automatically responding to training. I remember that I started to unbutton my radio cord with my right hand and unbuckle my belt with my left. But I couldn't unfasten my radio cord with one hand. So, using both hands, I broke it. Then I unbuckled my belt, pulled my feet underneath me, put my hands on the sides of the cockpit, leaned out on the right-hand side and shoved clear. The rush of wind was peeling my goggles off.

I had shoved out on the right side, because that was the inside of the spin. Then I was tumbling over in the air, grabbing and feeling for the rip cord's handle. Pulling it, I flung my arm wide.

There was a savage jerk. From where I dangled, my eyes followed the shroud lines up to what I felt was the most beautiful sight I had ever seen – the stiff-bellied shape of my white silk parachute. I heard a tremendous thud. My plane had struck the ground nose first, exploding. Then I struck the ground; feet first, seat next, head last. My feet were in the air and the wind had been jarred out of me. Fortunately, I had jumped so low that neither the Japs overhead nor the Marines defending Ewa Field had time to get a shot at me.

*Footnote: Lt. Dickinson engaged in numerous air battles, sank at least two Japanese ships, ditched a plane in the ocean after running out of fuel, and must be regarded, by any account, as one of the great heroes of the war.*

I saw black balls of smoke, thousands and thousands of them, changing into ragged fleecy shapes. Now there could be no mistake. Pearl Harbor was under air attack.



## SECTION III A WORLD AT WAR

Overnight, America went from two-thirds of its citizens opposing U.S. engagement in the war to two-thirds supporting it. In this section, we capture both the new atmosphere of war-readiness and the specific changes that the country underwent as it geared up for war, including beefing up civil defense, internment of Japanese, the draft, female factory workers, youth brigades, rationing, and more.

### Give me liberty or ...

*The Post's editorial page took on a muscular tone following the surprise attack.*

The time has come that was to come.

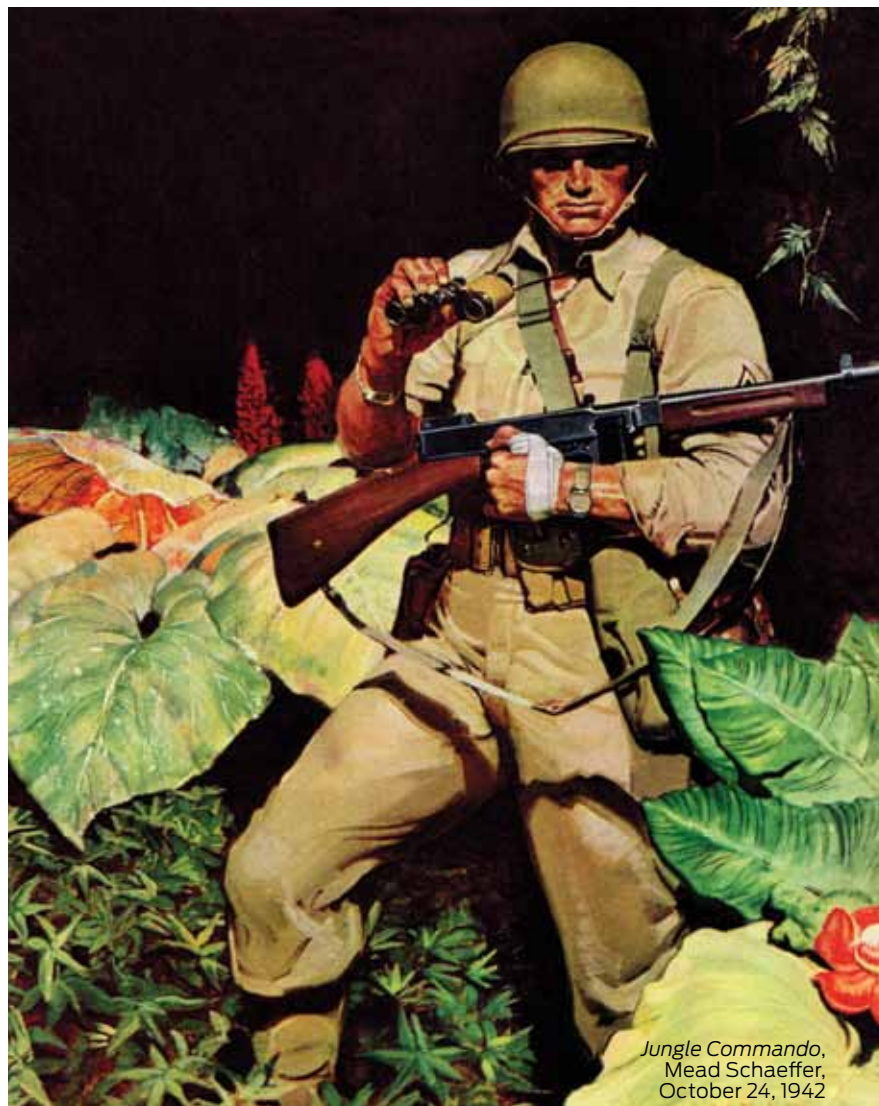
The world is torn in agony between good and evil. And how does it stand divided?

On this side, three-quarters of the human race and roughly three-quarters of the Earth's essential resources — against what? Against eighty million Germans and seventy million Japanese, with one-quarter of the Earth's resources between them.

What does Hitler fear?

That is answered. It is the arsenal. The American power of production. The enemy cannot destroy the arsenal itself. He cannot, in fact, do it a great deal of harm, because it is beyond the reach of direct attack. Yet power in the arsenal, power of production to any magnitude, alone, will not overcome that enemy advantage, that enemy resource. The ultimate power of overcoming lies not in the weapons but in the spirit. The Germans know that, too, and fear it as well.

—“Liberty or —,” Editorial, January 10, 1942



*New Year's Baby, J.C. Leyendecker, The Saturday Evening Post*

### That Was Then, This Is Now

*There were still American isolationists following Pearl Harbor*

Milton S. Mayer had an article, “I Think I’ll Sit This One Out,” in the October 7, 1939, *Post* [page 8], an issue on its way to press as Armageddon began.

“This One” was the war, of course. It had not yet started as he wrote, but it was inevitably near and Mr. Mayer foresaw that the United States, almost as inevitably, would be dragged into it. He was having no part of it.

That was then and this is now. Three months after Pearl Harbor, is there any American so deluded as to suppose that he can sit this one out?

There are many, we gather, and we pity them. If you do not like the way this war is being prosecuted, it is your privilege and your duty to use all lawful pressure on your representatives to correct it. But if it is merely that you do not like this war, then you can lump it.

Every last one of the 130 million [population of U.S. in 1942] of us is in this up to his neck. Your way of life, your life itself, all you own or hope to own, your job, your freedom,

your self-respect are at stake. No one is sitting this one out ...

Once we were at war, the question of whether we could or should have stayed out was referred to history. It is swim or sink. It is improbable that such a war as this can end in a stalemate; in defeat, if you escape with your life, you will escape with little else, depend upon it.

The British, the Germans, the Russians, the Japanese have no illusions. They know they are fighting for self-existence, and the devil take the hindmost. So are you.

—“Then and Now,” Editorial, March 7, 1942





## Every Effort for Defense

In an effort to give all-out aid to Uncle Sam, Timken's already vast resources for producing Timken Bearings and Timken Alloy Steels have been greatly expanded. Timken's already competent personnel in laboratory, engineering and production departments has been further enlarged and strengthened. In short, every effort for defense, is the sole policy of this organization. Millions of wheels and shafts in guns, tanks, trucks, armored cars, ships, aircraft and all kindred war units are turning on modern Timken Bearings because Timken Bearings are dependable, efficient and economical. The Timken Roller Bearing Company, Canton, Ohio.

**TIMKEN**  
Trade-mark Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.  
**TAPERED ROLLER BEARINGS**

**NOTICE**—Look for the trade-mark Timken on every bearing, whether buying new equipment, or replacing a Timken Bearing in your automobile or truck, industrial or farm machinery. That trade-mark is your assurance of quality.



**TIMKEN BEARING  
EQUIPPED**

United we stand! Once the U.S. declared war, many advertisers in the *Post* featured patriotic messages like the one above.