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# Will the New Illustrious Dunderheads Lead us Into WWIII?



by **thomhartmann**

**Community** (This content is not subject to review by Daily Kos staff prior to publication.)

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"Our enemies, the Administration keeps telling the people, are Germany, Italy, and Japan, naming them. Not one off them has made a gesture toward us. For all we think and feel about Hitler, he

has not attacked us. But the American government has attacked Hitler first by words, then by measures short of war, then by giving pledge to his enemies to assist them by all physical means to the utmost.”

— Tennessee Republican Representative John Jennings, July 14, 1940

“I know of no Member of this House, Mr. Speaker, who possess the remotest idea that any of Hitler’s panzer divisions are to strike in the desert of Arizona or in the sand stretches of the Mojave. How long are the American people to be fed this stuff?”

Michigan Republican Representative Paul Shafer, May 16, 1941

In the two years leading up to Pearl Harbor, roughly a hundred Republican members of Congress stood up to publicly defend Hitler and condemn Democratic President Franklin Delano Roosevelt for “war mongering” and “promoting socialism.”

**Last week Marjorie Taylor Greene echoed their comments — almost to the word — in condemning President Biden’s efforts to aid Ukraine against this generation’s fascist menace, Vladimir Putin.**

She told reporters and then **posted** to Facebook, X, and Instagram:

“I wish the CIA cared about our own border security like they care about Ukraine’s. I will not vote to fund the CIA’s war with Russia and

the rest of my Republican colleagues should do the same. The U.S. Congress needs to focus and fix our own nation's problems!"

***Déjà vu, much? Back in 1940, Pennsylvania Republican Congressman Robert Rich told Congress:***

"Who is afraid of Hitler? He is not coming 3,000 miles across the Atlantic Ocean. He is not going to attack this country. Any man who is in the White House should not be able to say that Mussolini stuck us in the back.

"We ought to have somebody in the White House who is friendly to the people all over the world if we want to be a good neighbor. Mr. Roosevelt has lost the confidence of most European nations.  
(Congressional Record, September 23, 1940, p. 18863)

**Three weeks ago, Putin-loving Senator JD Vance *said*, at the Munich Security Conference (where, in a *shocking display of cowardice*, he refused to meet with President Zelenskyy):**

"[T]he problem in Ukraine ... is that there's no clear end point." He added, "Can we send the level of weaponry we've sent for the last 18 months? We simply cannot. No matter how many checks the

U.S. Congress writes, we are limited there. ... I think what's reasonable to accomplish is some negotiated peace."

**Just like in 1940, when Minnesota Republican Congressman Joseph O'Hara called for a "negotiated peace" with Hitler to stop Germany's indiscriminate bombing of England and surrender that nation to the Nazis:**

"Anyone in this country will admit that the best chance of saving both England and some democracy in the world is for the United States to back England at the proper moment in a negotiated peace...

"There are times when there is only a choice of evils, and today the evil of accepting the fact of Nazi domination of continental Europe is less than the evil which is likely to result from encouraging England to continue indefinitely a hopeless fight until English liberties are destroyed — either from without or from within." (Congressional Record, October 23, 1941, pp. a5115-6-7)

**Vance, of course, is not the only Republican treason-weasel in Congress.**

Republican Senator Ron Johnson: "I don't think we should be sending more lethal aid to Ukraine."

**Republican Senator Ted Cruz: “I think it’s a mistake to be sending billions of dollars in weapons to Ukraine.”**

Republican Senator Josh Hawley: “I’m not sure that sending more weapons is the answer.”

**Republican Senator Marsha Blackburn: “We need to have a clear understanding of what the endgame is.”**

Republican Representative Matt Gaetz: “I don’t think that we should be sending more weapons into Ukraine.”

**Republican Senator Rick Scott: “We need to have a plan, and I haven’t seen a plan yet.”**

Republican Senator Mike Lee: “I’m not sure that sending more weapons is the answer.”

**Republican Senator Cynthia Lummis: “I think we need to be very careful about what we’re doing in Ukraine.”**

Republican Representative Lauren Boebert: “I don’t think that sending more weapons is the answer.”

**Republican Senator John Kennedy: “We need to have a plan, and I haven’t seen a plan yet.”**

Republican Senator Roger Marshall: “We need to have a clear understanding of what the endgame is.”

And there are dozens more. Ever since Donald Trump started advocating for Vladimir Putin, Republican after Republican has fallen

into line.

In 1942, as US and Allied troops were engaged in fierce battles against both Hitler in Germany and Tojo in Japan, America's #1 best-selling author, Rex Stout (the *Nero Wolfe* series, which had sold over 70 million copies at that time), published a collection of Republican speeches on the floor of Congress from 1939 to 1941.

Every one of those Republican politicians took the side of Hitler or called for appeasement, a "negotiated peace," the surrender of England, or condemned any and all US military aid for Europe.

My dad, who collected over 20,000 books and had started college with the goal of becoming a history professor (he dropped out and went to work in a steel mill when I was unexpectedly born), gave me a copy of Stout's book *The Illustrious Dunderheads* for my 30th birthday. In it, the author laid out exactly how the German propaganda machine worked to manipulate my father's generation's GOP, quoting hundreds of Republican speeches on the floor of Congress and in the media.

"It is a depressing chronicle, a somber anthology of some of the wrongest wrong guesses that ever jeopardized the safety of a nation," starts the book's introduction.

"There are gems in this collection which by their very fatuousness will bring a wry smile to an American reader, but it seems unlikely that that reader will be amused by the revelation that American politicians can be as asinine as in this book they prove they can be. A Nazi, a Fascist, or any enemy of our form of government chancing on the book would, however, find it amusing from cover to cover.

Shicklgruber [Hitler's birth name] would love it. ... He could almost sue them for plagiarism.

"During those years before Pearl Harbor elemental decent truths that a ten-year-old boy would perceive and accept instinctively were denied by these blind men who led the isolationist movement. Some of them were sincere. Well, so is Hitler sincere."

**It turns out that Putin, Trump, and today's MAGA Republicans are using an old playbook, pioneered by Hitler himself. And it appears to be working, because we've forgotten — or Republicans are simply ignoring — the lessons of our parents' and grandparents' generation.**

In the chapter titled "*The Aims of Nazi Propaganda*" Stout writes:

"NOTHING WILL BE EASIER to produce than a bloody revolution in North America. No other country has so many social and racial tensions. We shall be able to play on many strings there.' In these words, recorded by Hermann Rauschning in *The Voice of Destruction*, Nazi Propaganda Minister Dr. Paul Joseph Goebbels described the program by which Nazi leaders hoped to immobilize the United States while Nazi Germany carried out the conquest of Europe and with its Axis partners the conquest of Asia and the British Empire. The Nazi plan for America had, like all Nazi plans, a maximum and a minimum objective.

The maximum objective was to bring the United States to a state of civil war, a state in which the colliding interests of social and racial groups could be so sharpened that a minority sympathetic to the Nazi way of life, or desiring a fascist organization of society to advance its own fortunes, could wrest control from the majority and come to terms with Hitler's Germany. The minimum objective was to so confuse and divide the American people that the great resources and strength of this country could never be mustered in time for effective use against either Nazi Germany or its Axis partners."

**Sound familiar? This is pretty much exactly what Putin's apologists — from Trump to Mike Johnson to Rand Paul and Marjorie Taylor Greene — are up to. Stout continues:**

"When war began in 1939, the Nazis enormously accelerated their propaganda war against the United States and its immediate twofold objective became clear: to prevent the United States from rendering effective aid to Germany's enemies and to keep us militarily and psychologically unprepared until such time as the Axis powers chose to strike. After Pearl Harbor the same objectives remained: to prevent effective U. S. aid to the Allies and to keep the United States unprepared to fight effectively.

"In America, as in France, the Nazis used means and agents of every kind to circulate their propaganda lines. ... The coincidence between Nazi aims toward America and the aims of native American fascist

groups like the Christian Front, the Silver Shirts, the Ku Klux Klan, was fully exploited.”

**Stout then noted that the Nazi propagandists and their Republican allies in Congress had goals that went beyond simply keeping the US out of the war: they wanted to fundamentally change the nature of the US government, making us a more hateful, rightwing, authoritarian nation in the mold of Hitler’s Germany.**

Their first goal, he wrote, was, “To destroy faith in the elected government.”

“President Roosevelt was naturally the chief object of attack. Every epithet and every argument whose monotonous repetition would serve to make the American people distrustful of the President’s motives and ability and to convince them that he was anything but their representative, constitutionally elected, and serving their welfare, was employed by the Nazi-Fascist propagandists.

“Here are just a few of those most frequently repeated by the Axis radios and American fascist sheets like Social Justice, Publicity, the Galilean: He [Roosevelt] is a ‘power-mad dictator,’ intentionally betraying the welfare of the American people in order to perpetuate or increase his own power or diabolically scheming to saddle the American people with communism; ‘a tyrant’ who has borrowed the methods of those whom he has attacked; ‘a hopeless incompetent’ who has inefficiently muddled the business of government in contrast with the efficiency and competence of Nazi leaders.

“Roosevelt is the servant of the Jews... The agent of Wall Street, the communists, the labor unions, choruses the fascist press. A ‘vicious inciter of class warfare,’ ‘a despot’ who has stocked the government with bureaucrats, incompetents, Jews, aliens, communists; ‘a man without leadership,’ immoral and untrustworthy — the chant goes on endlessly.”

**One of the main points Stout quotes that Republicans made in speeches, radio appearances, and newspaper articles was that the Roosevelt administration had intentionally “bankrupted the American people in order to either line its own pockets or to foster socialism and communism.”**

“Sweeping charges of inefficiency, subservience to special interests, are made against the administration, or any one of its departments or officials, as opportunism may demand.”

And even the Japanese attack on America at Pearl Harbor didn’t stop many of that generation’s treasonous Republicans:

“A favorite charge heard with growing frequency since Pearl Harbor is that the administration ignored national defense in order to make ‘communist’ reforms.”

**One radio commentator quoted a leading Republican, saying we were wasting our time defending Europe and England. Instead, they said, we should take care of America first:**

"Fellow Americans, let us re-declare our independence and get our country back."

**Mark Twain noted that history doesn't repeat itself but often rhymes, as Stout quoted. It's rhyming today so loudly it's impossible to ignore as civilians in Ukraine suffer brutal attacks, rapes, and the kidnapping and trafficking of their children into Russia.**

But MAGA Republicans don't want to hear about that. Instead, they're focused on electing a "dictator for one day" who promises "camps" to roundup "millions of people" here in the United States, including journalists and Democratic politicians who dared criticize Trump.

They relentlessly attack Joe Biden and his family, and have even impeached the DHS Secretary with absolutely no justification or evidence, but just to tear down Americans' confidence in our government. Again, from Rex Stout in 1942:

"THE AMERICAN SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT itself is thus, according to the Nazi plan, made suspect in the eyes of its people. To underline the implications of the attacks on Roosevelt and the administration Nazi-Fascist propagandists suggest that the system

of government itself is wasteful, inchoate, incapable of decisive action in the world today.

“The United States is pictured as bankrupt, torn apart by financial chaos, its people pauperized, its activities paralyzed. The United States is a vast concentration camp, ground under the heel of Roosevelt tyranny, maintain the Axis radios. The conclusion the Nazi-Fascists want the American people to reach is that the U.S. government and business system have broken down and must be replaced by a more efficient system. It is the groundwork for the appeal to the American people to ‘take their government back’ from those who have ‘betrayed’ them.”

**To that end, Stout noted that the goal of Republicans and their Nazi allies was to tear apart American society by pitting Americans against each other. First, he said, they wanted, “To destroy the faith of the American people in themselves.”**

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**nonbelievers, and to incite racial hatred between Blacks and whites.**

“THAT THE REAL ENEMY IS WITHIN OUR OWN BORDERS is the logical conclusion of the Nazi effort to convince Americans that the nation is torn apart by class warfare as well as being itself a further weapon to incite class warfare. The danger is not from without but from within, Axis propagandists have warned for years.

“The only people who want to crush your democracy are your own plutocrats and Bolsheviks,’ says the commentator Knight of the Round Table [a 1940s rightwing radio show]. ‘In his own cynical heart Roosevelt knows just as well as Europe knows that he and his teammates are the only threats to America,’ says Berlin's commentator Paul Revere.

“The communists, the Jews, and the plutocrats are the enemies of American society and government; they must be eliminated before the United States can become strong. Turn the government over to those who will run it efficiently, the people who wanted to keep America out of war, who recognize the internal danger, propaganda advises. By constant emphasis on the ‘enemy within the gates’ Nazi propaganda strives to direct the eyes of America away from the real enemy: Nazi Germany and the Axis.”

**And, just like today, Republican politicians of that era were giddy about the prospect of “reforming” America in the mold of Europe’s fascist governments.**

**New York Republican Congressman Hamilton Fish stepped into the well of the House of Representatives to declare in 1940:**

“Col. Lindbergh was right when he said in one of his recent speeches: ‘Let us stop this hysterical chatter about calamity and invasion that has been running rife these last few days.’ It is not fitting to the people who built this Nation. The only reason that we

are in danger of becoming involved in this war is because there are powerful elements in America who desire to take part.

“Whom do we fear? Do we fear Hitler, who seems afraid to attack England over 20 miles of sea, when he would have 3000 miles to cross over here? This is preposterous. ... Let us stop this fear hysteria.” (Congressional Record, June 22, 1940, p. 13489)

**Fish added, in a speech carried by CBS radio on January 11, 1941 (almost a year before Pearl Harbor) that eerily echoes today's statements by Vance, Johnson, Trump, and Taylor Greene:**

“The lend-lease bill was conceived and written in the White House as a final consummation of the President's unceasing quest and passion for power. It is in its very essence setting up Hitlerism, fascism and dictatorship in America in the name of democracy. We have much more to fear from the warmakers from within than from our enemies without.

“The last thing Hitler or Mussolini would want to do is to declare war on us.

“We don't want any alien philosophies in this country. This is a Christian American nation, and we want to keep it both Christian and American. America for the Americans — that should be the cry of the America First Committee.”

**This week Donald Trump is inviting Hungary's fascist leader Victor Orbán to Florida after Orbán's multiple speeches to GOP and conservative groups both in the United States and in Hungary. It's another example of Republicans embracing fascist leaders, in this case Putin's closest ally in Europe, just like they embraced Hitler in the 1930s and early 1940s.**

Both Nazi propaganda and Republican politicians, Stout documented, "told the American people that their constitutional right to decide the issue of peace or war had been taken away from them."

**In Congress over 100 members of that movement, almost all Republicans (there was a handful of Dixiecrats who hated Roosevelt), gave speeches praising Adolf Hitler or offering legislation or resolutions to prevent "socialist" President Franklin D. Roosevelt from challenging Germany.**

In the 1940s, the Republicans appeasing a fascist dictator feared — and were led in the media by — a guy called Charles Lindbergh; today's GOP follows — and fears — a guy called Tucker Carlson and his demihero, Donald Trump.

In the 1940s, two fascist nations — Imperial Japan and Nazi Germany — aligned themselves to conquer and seize the land and assets of nation after nation.

Had the world stopped them when Japan invaded China and Hitler marched into Poland, millions could have been spared the horrors of World War II and the Holocaust.

**Having learned that lesson, the nations of Europe and other democracies across the planet have united to help Ukraine resist Putin's Hitler-invades-Poland-like campaign of terror and territorial seizure.**

**If they're successful, we may avert World War III.**

**But what if we fail to learn the lesson of World War II about appeasing land-grabbing dictators and following demagogues like Lindbergh, Carlson, Trump, and these outspoken members of Congress?**

If a handful of Putin-loving Republicans can kill our support for democracy and Putin succeeds in taking Ukraine, his senior officers and former President Medvedev (now deputy chairman of Russia's Security Council) and former Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov have **already told us** that Poland **and the Baltic states** are next. Just last week, they threatened to invade Moldova.

Immediately thereafter, China will **almost certainly** cement its alliance with Russia, Iran, and Saudi Arabia and then try to take Taiwan.

At that point, we'll be right back where America was in 1942 when Rex Stout wrote *The Illustrious Dunderheads*: in the midst of another brutal and bloody world war that we'll no longer be able to ignore.

All because Republicans are so enthusiastic about embracing hard-right fascism, and have been for over 80 years.

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