

Political Neutrality in Europe during World War II

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## Annotated Bibliography

Beaulac, Willard L. Franco: Silent Ally in World War II. Southern University Press, 1986

This book covers the relationship between General Franco of Spain and Germany's Adolph Hitler during Spain's Civil War and throughout World War II. Brings incredible in-sight between the two leaders, and the push-pull effect of how Spain- at one time- was ready to support the Nazi's by joining the Axis powers, and then decided to remain neutral.

Chevallaz, Georges-Andre. The Challenge of Neutrality. Oxford, England. Lexington Books, 2001

Chevallaz, former president of Switzerland brings in-depth accounts of what the Swiss government and the Swiss people did to help alleviate the country's refugee problem during the war, and its humanitarian efforts made by the International Committee of the Red Cross, which was founded in Switzerland.

Hagglof, GunnarM. "A Test of Neutrality: Sweden in the Second World War." Source: International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-) Vol.36 No. 2 (Apr. 1960),

This book considers Sweden's place as a neutral during the war, its collaboration with the Nazi's by their use of Swedish transit routes for the purpose of troop movements throughout the country; trade agreements between the two countries for Sweden's natural resources, and the situation with refugees fleeing from Nazi occupied countries into Sweden.

Halbrook, Stephen P. Target Switzerland. New York. Sarpedon, 1998

Switzerland's armed neutrality policy is examined in the perspective of a defensive mode in case it was ever attacked by the German's during the war. Also, Switzerland's financial dealings with the Nazi's is looked into closely with regards to international law.

Jesse, Neal G. "Choosing to Go it Alone: Irish Neutrality in Theoretical and Comparative Perspective." Source: International Political Review (Jan. 2006)

Jesse explains two ideas: realist and liberalist that were part of Ireland's decision to remain neutral during the war, and how Ireland had little to no involvement throughout the war with Nazi Germany.

Logue, John. Europe's Neutral and Nonaligned States. Wilmington, Delaware, Scholarly Resources Inc., 1989

Logue discusses Sweden's early involvement (appeasement) with Germany during the war, its transition away from the Nazi's as the war progressed, and their rendering assistance and aid to thousands of refugees looking for a safe haven.

Petropoulos, Jonathan. "Co-opting Nazi Germany: Neutrality in Europe During World War II." Source: [Anti-Defamation League's Holocaust Institute](#)

This article covers Portugal's ties to Spain- specifically between Portugal's Prime Minister Salazar, and Spain's Franco- politically and economically during World War II.

Preston, Paul "Franco and Hitler: the myths of Hendaye 1940." Source: [Cambridge University Press](#) (1992)

This article also explores the relationships between Franco and Hitler prior to World War II when Spain was embroiled in a bloody Civil War, and Franco's early desires to join the Nazi cause, but-eventually-deciding to remain neutral. Like the title of the article mentions, covers Franco and Hitler's one and only meeting in Hendaye, France in 1940 when they both sized each other up, and the positive-negative aspects of Spain becoming a belligerent on the side of the Nazi's.

Reginbogin, Herbert R. [Faces of Neutrality](#). Berlin, Transaction Publishing, 2009

This book was invaluable in assessing each neutral country's role during World War II. It chronologically discusses how and why the neutral countries of the War decided to opt for neutrality, and the ways and means of how they achieved that objective. With special emphasis put on Switzerland.

Ross, John F.L. [Neutrality and International Sanctions](#). New York. Prager Publishers, 1989

Ross explains Switzerland's historical stance on neutrality and its implications.

Schindler, Dietrich. [Retrospectives on Switzerland in World War Two](#). Rockport, Me. Picton Press, 2001

In this retrospective and collection of authors, Schindler offers his views on the role that Switzerland played as a neutral during the war with Germany.

Senn, Hans. [Retrospectives on Switzerland in World War Two](#). Rockport, Me. Picton Press, 2001

Senn describes Switzerland's belief in armed neutrality- strictly for defensive purposes. The country's build up of arms prior to the war, and defensive measures taken by the Swiss.

Vagts, Detlef F. [Retrospectives on Switzerland in World War Two](#). Rockport, Me. Picton Press, 2001

This chapter discusses Switzerland's trade and business dealings with the Nazi's during the course of the war. Aspects of the 1907 Hague Convention and its implications for international trade.

Wheeler, Douglas L. "The Price of Neutrality: Portugal, the Wolfram Question, and World War II." Source: Luso-Brazilian Review, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Summer, 1986)

Wheeler details Portugal's natural resource of wolfram ore, and how it was used as leverage for the country's benefit, between both the Allies and the Axis powers.

## Outline

### I. Proposal/Introduction

1. Explain and explore reasons for neutrality
2. Combatants- Allied/Axis
3. Neutral countries

### II. Ireland

1. Reason behind opting for neutrality
  - a. Political, social, economic, geographical

### III. Portugal

1. Reasons behind opting for neutrality
  - a. Political, social, economic, geographical
  - b. Involvement and dealings with Allied/Axis powers

### IV. Spain

1. Reasons behind opting for neutrality
  - a. Political, social, economic, geographical
  - b. Involvement and dealings with Allied/Axis powers

### V. Sweden

1. Reasons behind opting for neutrality
  - a. Political, social, economic, geographical
  - b. Involvement and dealings with Allied/Axis powers

### VI. Switzerland

1. Reasons behind opting for neutrality
  - a. Political, social, economic, geographical
  - b. Involvement and dealings with Allied/Axis powers

### VII. Turkey

1. Reasons behind opting for neutrality
  - a. Political, social, economic, geographical
  - b. Involvement and dealings with Allied/Axis powers

### VIII. Conclusion

## “Political Neutrality in Europe during World War II”

Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, two days later Great Britain and France declared war on Germany for doing so. Europe would now become a battle ground, with many European states/countries being overrun and occupied by Nazi Germany, and their soon to be Axis partner- Italy. The countries that Germany invaded and occupied were many, namely: Poland, Denmark, Norway, Luxembourg, Belgium, Holland, France, Monaco, Yugoslavia, Greece (with the help of Italy), Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and the Soviet Union (partial). But, there were countries that opted to remain neutral during World War II. They were Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey. Three other countries were neutral too, Liechtenstein, San Marino and Andorra and the Vatican City, but they will not be included in this paper importance as neutral states played were insignificant compared to the aforementioned countries I have listed

Each of the six countries that I will be focusing on: Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey all vied for some form of neutrality, or non-belligerency during World War II. This paper will explore, examine and explain through the use of an extended literature review and secondary analysis why self-determination and sovereignty are motivations for these countries to control their own foreign policies, but with the world at war, and the war- literally- adjacent to them, it became next to impossible not to have some sort of interaction- in one way or another with either the Allied or Axis powers, or both at any given time.

Trade-offs with the warring powers were a key element in maintaining neutrality, whether it be in banking and art, use of trade routes and air space, border policies, sales of natural resources, human trafficking of refugees, aiding and abetting service personnel, usage of ports, or espionage that occurred every neutral country. Both the Allied and Axis powers made use of all of these aspects, and the *neutrals* appeased them to maintain their neutrality. As Herbert R. Reginbogin states, “ A status of neutrality – formally declared – naturally had repercussions on a country’s foreign relations. But the Allied and the Axis powers attached different importance to neutral states according to wartime assessments of their importance to the war resulting in different standards of respect for the neutrality of different states”(Reginbogin, 109).

This paper will take a chronological view of each country to (once again) explore, examine and explain the how’s and the why’s that they were able to remain neutral.



## Ireland

Very little is written about Ireland's role as a neutral during the war, as compared to Portugal, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland, and this is to Ireland's credit. The Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 set in motion Ireland's neutrality as a "political value" because it gave Ireland its independence from Great Britain. Prime Minister Eamonn De Valera made this a prime moving force in establishing an Irish state, and full sovereignty from Britain also (Jesse, 9- 10). These are two important points, because after Ireland got its independence from Great Britain, it was then able to pursue its own form of foreign policy. There are two types of views that have been presented as to which *platform* Ireland chose in establishing its foreign policy-with regards to approach to neutrality- realist or liberal theory. Neal G. Jesse states that "realism explains a neutral stance as the rational calculation of a small state's interest in the state-centered, unfriendly, self-help environment. Liberalism argues that international norms and internal dynamics lead nations to seek and maintain neutrality" (Jesse, 8-9). What this generally means is that a realist point of view is more of a generic view on the matter, such as Ireland's (somewhat shielded) geographic location from mainland Europe, and its overall lack of ability to involve itself in external conflicts. Liberalism is based on a more nationalistic foundation stemming from a growing desire for self-determination, and distancing itself from the past hegemony that Great Britain had had over Ireland prior to its independence. De Valera also viewed Irish neutrality in three ways: as a way to avoid a European war, as a way to avoid civil war between the new republic and Northern Ireland, and as a "litmus test of sovereignty" (Jesse, 10). This is not to say that Ireland was entirely anti-Great Britain, because Ireland knew that- for its own security and well being- it needed to keep Britain, and the United States (after

it entered the war) close at hand for Ireland's protection. In addition, according to the Anglo-Irish Treaty, Great Britain had access to certain naval facilities throughout Ireland (Jesse, 11). It should be noted that many Irish citizens enlisted and served England during the war.

Ireland took a neutral stand during the war, as did the other five countries, but Ireland's stance of neutrality differs to some degree from the other's mainly because of it did not directly collaborate with Nazi Germany.

We can only be a friendly neutral... Our circumstances, our history, the incompleteness of our national freedom through the partition of our country, made any other policy impracticable. Any other policy would have divided our people, and for a divided nation to fling itself into this war would be to commit suicide.

Eamon de Valera 14 December 1941

## Portugal

Portugal-much like Ireland- shared a distinct history with Great Britain, except on opposite ends of the spectrum. While Ireland's history with Great Britain was tenuous- at best, Portugal had close political and historical links with Great Britain dating back to the Anglo-Portuguese Alliance of the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Reginbogin, 127). However, Portugal also had close political and economic ties with fascist Franco's Spain. Prime minister Antonio de Oliveria Salazar of Portugal had supported Franco during Spain's civil war, and he had incorporated many facets of fascism into his government- including corporatist social and economic policies, the debasement of democracy and parliament, an extensive secret police, and a ban on strikes. As a result, he and Portugal was viewed favorably by Hitler and Mussolini, as well as by General Franco of Spain (Petropoulos, 6).

Salazar proclaimed Portuguese neutrality the same day Nazi Germany invaded Poland, September 1, 1939. His decision to do so was based primarily on ideological and economic considerations (Reginbogin, 126). That is, he did not want Portugal to take sides with either Britain or Germany. Moreover, he wanted to protect Portugal's economic interest, at home and its colonial outposts. Salazar was concerned of a potential invasion from Germany, following the fall of France in June 1940. German troops were stationed less than 260 miles from the Portuguese borders. Salazar was also concerned by the prospects of an alliance between Franco and Hitler, which would put German soldiers directly on the Portuguese border. Portugal-with some reservations- did not see itself as high on Germany's invasion list, and continued to maintain its traditional relationship with the United Kingdom. Before the fall

of France, the U.K. had addressed a possible German attack on Portugal, and requested to secure bases in the Cape Verde Islands and in the Azores (Reginbogin, 127).

By the time the war started in 1939, through 1943, Portugal's neutrality-and its open trade with both Britain and Germany saw the Portugal economy boom. Portugal went from a trade deficit of \$90 million in 1939, to a surplus of \$68 million by 1943, and assets in private banks had nearly doubled, with the Bank of Portugal's holdings almost tripling (Reginbogin, 126-27). This was almost all attributed to the fact that Portugal (along with Spain) had vast resources of wolfram ore that were more readily available to Germany than sources further east (Wheeler, 108).

Wolfram is a major source of tungsten, which is a metal used in steel hardening processes. The importance of this mineral-especially during wartime- is that it is used to produce machine tools, armor-piercing shells, parts in tanks and airplanes, and parts for internal combustion engines (Wheeler, 108). While war was being waged outside of Portugal, a trade war was ensuing inside of Portugal's borders. The Allies did not want Germany to have access to such a valuable resource, but the Salazar regime interpreted it as a matter of "national sovereignty." He therefore saw fit to use Portugal's resources within the confines of international and national law, and to maintain its neutrality by attempting to satisfy both the Allies and Axis powers and to alienate neither. The United Kingdom enjoyed a distinct advantage over Nazi Germany when it came to purchasing wolfram ore from Portugal, Germany had to pay in cash, as where Britain-due to its long standing alliance with Portugal- could pay with credit (Wheeler, 110).

As the tide of the war started turning in the Allies favor, with victories in North Africa, the surrender of Italy, the invasion of mainland Europe on June 6, 1944, plus German defeats in the Soviet Union. In addition, Portugal's dependence on crude oil and other important products from the United States put pressure on the Salazar regime to stop deliveries of wolfram ore to Germany (Reginbogin, 130).

In summary, Portugal used its influence in a natural resource of its own to bargain its way as a neutral throughout the war.

Every major conflict between a major continental power and a major extra-continental maritime power has found Portugal a bone of contention between the two, if not a battle ground. ...Its security, in consequence, has always depended on its ability to maneuver, to play one force off against the other, to "sell" itself to both belligerents in the capacity of a neutral. But the success of this policy has depended in turn on the firmness and astuteness of the regime in power in Lisbon. And this—in view of the lack of a dependable and permanent ruling class—has depended for the most part on chance.

(George F. Kennan, Feb. 4, 1943, to Department of State, Washington, D.C.)

## Spain

Generalissimo Francisco Franco y Bahamonde was the military, fascist leader of Spain who had just survived a brutal civil war between his National forces and the republican Popular Front government that lasted from 1936 to 1939. The Popular Front, which favored a Marxist/Pro-Russian political system, heavily relied on Russia for military and financial support. Franco sought German and Italian military and economic assistance to stave off the republican forces (Reginbogin, 110). Spain's civil war was barely over before World War II broke out, and the country was in shambles. Spain's infrastructure, financial institutions and people who were divided politically and spiritually drained by a costly civil war was in no mood for involvement in another war (Beaulac, 4). Franco knew this, but Spain was deeply in debt to Hitler and Mussolini. When war broke out in September, 1939 he declared Spain a neutral country, even though in March of 1939 he had signed a secret friendship and cooperation agreement. It offered Spanish assistance to Germany for the transport of goods from South America through Spanish ports (Reginbogin, 112).

By June of 1940, Franco had taken a foreign policy stance of non-belligerency, and encouraged by German successes led him to believe that an Axis victory was close at hand. So much so, that on June 19, 1940 Franco dispatched a letter to Berlin, stating that Spain was prepared to enter the war on the Axis side (Reginbogin, 113). Hitler was not immediately impressed by Franco's offer since it would have involved "massive deliveries of food and military equipment and extravagant promises of imperial spoils at the expense of France." Furthermore, there was..., "overwhelming evidence that Spain would be an economic and

military liability (that) convinced Hitler that it was simply not worth the risk of alienating Vichy to gain Spanish belligerency” (Preston, 5).

On October 23, 1940 Hitler and Franco met for their first and only time in the town of Hendaye, which was just over the border in occupied France. Much was discussed, about when and how Spain would enter the war on the side of Germany and Italy. Franco wanted more relief materials sent to Spain to overcome the ravages of its civil war. He also requested that if, and when the time came for Spain to enter the war on the side of the Axis powers, that Gibraltar, Morocco, and Oran would be awarded to Spain. Hitler balked, because he planned to give these to France (Beaulac, 12-13). Shortly after their meeting in Hendaye, on October 28 1940, Mussolini-without giving prior notice to Hitler- invaded Greece. The results turned out to be a disaster for the Italians, as they were repelled by Greek forces. This prompted Hitler to issue Directive 18 (dubbed Operation Felix) which would involve the capture of Gibraltar, and the closing of the Straits of Gibraltar. Hitler summoned Spain’s foreign minister, Ramon Serrano Suner, to meet with Hitler at his mountain retreat at Berchtesgaden. Hitler now wanted Spain to come on-board in executing Operation Felix, but Serrano reminded Hitler-of the Hendaye Protocol- that established that Spain would enter the war when Spain decided, and that closing the Mediterranean at Gibraltar meant that the British would close the Atlantic to Spain. This act would cut off vital supplies that Spain depended on from overseas, and that the Spanish people were just not ready for another war. Franco vacillated to the point, that Hitler shelved his plans for Operation Felix, and moved towards his next objective-Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of the Soviet Union (Beaulac, 12-16).

This was Franco's political brinksmanship at his best- playing both ends between the middle. However, he still allowed the refueling and supplying of U-boats, providing radar, air reconnaissance and espionage throughout Spain, and the export of valuable raw materials (such as wolfram ore) to Nazi Germany (Preston, 2).

General Franco's policy throughout the war was entirely selfish and cold-blooded. He thought only of Spain and Spanish interests. Gratitude to Hitler and Mussolini for their help never entered his head. Nor, on the other hand, did he bear any grudge to England for the hostility of our Left-Wing parties. This narrow-minded tyrant only thought about keeping his blood-drained people out of another war.

Winston Churchill- *Their finest hour*



## Sweden

Unlike Spain, Sweden was a social democracy with roots of neutrality dating back to 1815 (Logue, 73). Located on the northern periphery of continental Europe, it shares its border with Norway to its west on the Scandinavian peninsula. Across the Baltic Sea and Gulf of Bothnia to the east lies Finland, and to the south lies Denmark and Germany. When Finland was invaded in late November, 1940 by the Soviet Union, Sweden declared itself a non-belligerent. Throughout the course of what would be known as the Winter War, Sweden helped resupply Finland with military equipment, and allowed Swedish volunteers to join Finland's cause. By doing so, Sweden's stance of neutrality was strained to the limit. It was relieved when Finland surrendered in March of 1940, but a more challenging situation presented itself when on April 9 Germany invaded Denmark and Norway. Denmark fell quickly, but Norway fought on for two months in its northern regions with British help. The threat of a German invasion of Sweden seemed imminent (Logue, 84).

The reason Hitler invaded Norway was to deny Great Britain a foothold in the region, and to keep the Baltic and North Sea open thereby securing a trade route for Sweden's iron ore to Nazi Germany. Attacking Sweden would have interrupted these deliveries, plus it would have taken a large contingency of German forces to accomplish this task. It was a large country and the Swedish defense forces had been bolstered since 1939. It could not indefinitely hold off a German invasion, but it was better prepared than both Norway and Denmark. Lastly, with the attack on France looming, Hitler did not want to spread his forces too thin (Hagglof, 159-60).

Needless to say, Sweden was still in a precarious situation with regards to Nazi Germany, and on July 8, 1940 Sweden signed a transit agreement with Germany allowing the shipments of German goods and personnel through Sweden to Norway, and Swedish goods and resources to the Third Reich. Sweden's claim of neutrality was not only questioned on land, but in the air and on the sea. Sweden allowed unarmed German military planes to fly over restricted air space, and allowed German and Finnish vessels to transit Swedish territorial waters (Reginbogin, 139-40). It should be noted that Sweden also traded with the Allies, but to a lesser degree as it was hamstrung by having to appease German interests first, and to keep its economy afloat.

By 1943 the tide was turning in favor of the Allies, and pressure was being exerted on Sweden to curtail- if not halt- its trade with Germany. Sweden was still dependent on trade with Germany, but on September 23, 1943 an agreement between the Allies and Sweden was reached it would allow shipments of crude oil, rubber and other necessities to Sweden if it agreed to a number of things. These included that Sweden would prohibit troop movements and German war materials, reduce iron ore exports, to stop the Swedish navy from escorting German merchant vessels in the Baltic, and decrease its shipments of ball bearings to Germany (Reginbogin, 145-46).

It should be noted that prior and throughout the war, the people of Sweden were anti-Nazi, and pro-Allied- even though their actions- from a neutral stand point might seem contradictory. The acceptance of refugees into Sweden from neighboring Norway numbered about 44,000 and over 7,000 Jews were saved from Denmark. Efforts by the likes of Swedish

diplomat Raoul Wallenberg saved tens of thousands of people in Hungary, as did Count Folke Bernadotte who rescued from Himmler's death camps approximately 30,000 Jewish men, women and children. In addition, with Swedish assistance between 15,000 and 25,000 Jewish lives were saved (Reginbogin, 149).

There is certainly nothing in the history of the second World War to support the belief, if this belief still exists, that neutrality is a magic prescription, or, if you prefer it, a juridical formula, banning the danger of war. On the contrary, the history of the second World War proves, if anything, the precariousness of neutrality.

M. Gunnar Hagglof

## Switzerland

Switzerland, like Sweden, dates its neutrality back to 1815 with the Treaties of Vienna and Paris (Ross, 25). Both countries were social democracies, and believed in neutrality fighting for defensive purposes only. So, with the advent of war looming, Switzerland felt the need to bolster its military capabilities. Almost four billion francs were spent for weapons, ammunition and the construction of redoubts (defensive barriers) along Swiss borders, and throughout the Alps. With the fall of France in June 1940 the threat of invasion intensified as the country was now completely surrounded by the Axis powers. Hitler and his military staff drew up several plans for the invasion of Switzerland between the months of August and October 1940. Most notable of these plans was Operation Tannenbaum and Operation Switzerland which differed in the amount of force necessary to carry out Germany's invasion plans and how long the campaign would last. The German's knew that the Swiss would put up strong resistance, especially in the Alps and surrounding forested areas. Also weighing heavily on Hitler's intentions was the thought of the Swiss destroying two valuable rail lines that ran through the Simplon and Gotthard passes which transverse through the Alps. After contemplating what desired effect invading Switzerland would bring, Hitler decided to forego any military action because it would have tied up too much of Germany's war machinery and man power. Greater attention was being focused towards the invasion of Great Britain, and soon the Soviet Union. In any case, Hitler believed that after Germany's eventual victory, Switzerland would just fall "into the lap of the Third Reich"(Halbrook, 135; Reginbogin, 53; Senn, 63,67).

Much as been mentioned about Switzerland's trade with Germany during the war despite its neutral status. The 1907 Hague Conventions 5 and 13 spelled out the rights and duties of neutral nations when it came to the sales of weapons to belligerent countries. Only private firms were allowed to enter into these transaction(s) according to international law, and Switzerland abided by these rules (Halbrook, 155). The Swiss did sell arms to Britain and France also, but when France fell in 1940, Switzerland was completely surrounded by the Axis powers, and its business dealings- with regards to weapons- dramatically increased with the Nazis. In return, Switzerland received needed supplies of coal, petroleum products and raw materials to keep its factories open and unemployment down. Germany was also able to obtain weapons on credit, which was a reversal of policy of its cash only prior to the fall of France. This bent the rules of neutrality (Vagts, 105,95).

As trade with Nazi Germany was a focal point during and after the war, so was the Swiss financial dealings with the Third Reich. The Nazi's enormous conquest early in the war also resulted in enormous seizures of the conquered country's central assets, e.g., gold. The regulations associated with the 1907 Hague Convention- specifically Article 53- spell out that "an army of occupation can only take possession of cash, funds, and realizable securities which are strictly property of the State." In other words, "to the victor belong the spoils." But, Article 46 states that "private property cannot be confiscated." Then Article 55 relates that "limits occupying states in their utilization of the wealth of defeated countries to that of a usufructuary, that is, a life tenant. Taking the wealth of an occupied country in such a way as to deprive it permanently of these resources might violate that provision"(Vagts, 111-112). This raises speculation as to what role- exactly- did Switzerland play with its financial dealings with

Germany during the war. It's hard to say who may have profited in these matters, but the Washington Accord of 1946 involved the Swiss in the settlement of gold claims in the amount of 250 million Swiss francs that went "to the pacification and reconstruction of Europe"(Vagts, 112).

Switzerland is the birthplace of humanitarian organizations such as, the International Committee of the Red Cross (est. 1863), and the Geneva Convention (est. 1864), and it is through these forms of neutrality that shined a positive light on the Swiss during World War II. The ICRC with its 3,700 members rendered services/aid to approximately 7,000,000 prisoners of war and 175,000 civilian internees. They would "bring provisions and medical supplies, establishing contacts, seeking out identities, informing and reassuring family members if possible, and promoting the application of the Geneva Convention. They made 600,000 investigations, filled out 50 million forms, and delivered 100 million letters and 33 million packages weighing 400,000 tons and worth 3 billion Swiss francs. Added to this figure were 750,000 packages distributed to persons deported to concentration camps" (Chevallaz, 177-178). It should be noted that the Swiss are a multi-cultural society composed mainly of German, French, and Italian speaking cantons. The combination of having adverse culture, and being neutral, and the humanitarian efforts of the ICRC, one would think that the Swiss would have been more accommodating to Jewish refugees seeking safe haven from Nazi war atrocities as these were common knowledge in Switzerland. The Swiss government even went so far as to persuade the Germans to stamp a "J" on the passports of German Jews. Switzerland's policy for asylum centered around political persecution, and not race or religion. As a result, in 1942 some 20,000 Jewish refugees were refused asylum in Switzerland, and

turned back. The general attitude held in Switzerland- is illustrated by, Federal Councilor Edouard von Steiger in 1942 when he said, “When one is in command of a rescue boat that is already fully loaded with no extra space and is provided with a limited quantity of food, and when thousands of victims of a maritime catastrophe are calling for help, one can appear heartless if one does not take everyone on board. However, one would be even more humane by warning people in time against deceptive hopes and by trying to save the ones already taken aboard” (Chevallaz, 182). Ironically, it has also been reported that Switzerland- through the course of the war, took in as many as 400,000 refugees and internees. (Reginbogin, 93; Schindler, 157-158; Vagts, 109).

What saved Switzerland from occupation and war with the Germans were these factors: the spiritual and political will to resist, integral neutrality, defensive armed preparedness, economic exchange with both warring parties, negotiating skills, and luck.

Hugo Butler

## Turkey

Turkey's role as a neutral country during World War II was similar and different from that of the other neutrals. Turkey had signed a Treaty of Mutual Assistance (also referred to as the Tripartite Alliance) with Great Britain and France on October 19, 1939. This was out of concern "to protect the trade routes in the eastern Mediterranean and into the Black Sea" and to quell Germany's influence on the Turkish economy. Germany's keen interest in trading with Turkey, was its chrome ore which was of high value in the production of armaments. Great Britain and France pressured Turkey to forego its neutrality and side up with the Allies, as Turkey controlled access to the Black Sea, and was bordered by three continents. Germany and the Soviet Union- on the other hand-wanted Turkey to remain neutral (Reginbogin, 156-157).

President Roosevelt implemented the Lend-Lease Act on March 31, 1941 that lent assistance militarily to Britain, Greece and Turkey. Turkey's allotment of military supplies would be administered by Great Britain, which sought to sway with Turkey in a positive manner. This did nothing to nullify Turkey's on-going trade with Germany, and "... as with the Swiss case- (it) was not a question of loyalty but a question of the country's right to secure essential goods needed by its population regardless of where they came from" (Reginbogin, 158). If the Allies knew how important chrome ore was to the making of Germany's war machinery, World War II might have ended as much as ten months earlier according to a memo sent to Hitler on November 10, 1943 from Albert Speer, Minister for Armament and Ammunition. Hitler also planned to invade Turkey after the defeat of the Soviet Union for the very purpose of securing chromite ore. But the Soviet Union was not defeated, and in the



spring of 1944 Turkey announced that it would terminate chrome ore trade with Germany altogether (Reginbogin, 159).

The banking industry in Turkey, specifically the transactions of gold from Germany into the German banks in Turkey was a lucrative business. Transfers of gold from Zurich into the Deutsche Bank in Istanbul were then converted to Reichsmark checks issued to diplomats. After Turkey balked at the issuance of these checks into their banking institutions, the Deutsche Bank would send them to Zurich where they were exchanged for Swiss francs subsequently, they would be used to buy gold that was eventually shipped to Istanbul and sold on the open market. The total estimates of these transactions during World War II are hard to pinpoint because most occurred between Turkish private banks and individual buyers. However, it was assessed that between 10 to 15 million dollars worth of gold flowed through Turkey. After the war ended, the Allies tried to recoup some of the gold that had been looted by the Nazi's from the conquered and occupied countries of, but their attempts fell on deaf ears from the Turkish government, and nothing was ever recovered (Reginbogin, 163-164).

After much prodding by the Allies for Turkey to enter into the war on their side, the Turks eventually did so on February 23, 1945 by declaring war on Germany.

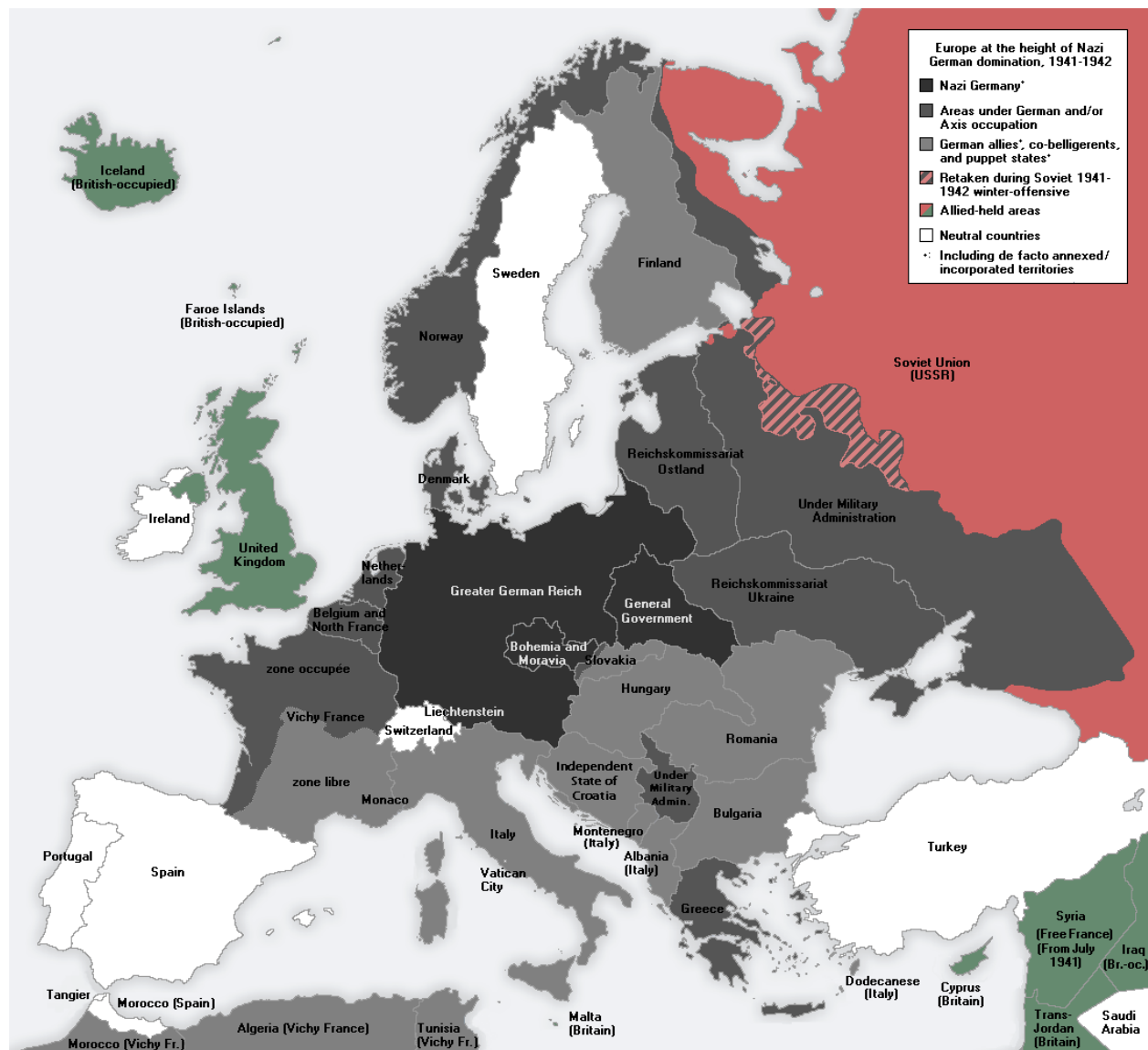
The main intent of Turkey's 'neutrality' policy during the Second World War was to preserve the human and natural resources of Turkey.

Selim Deringil

## Conclusion

It has been estimated that over 60 million people lost their lives throughout the course of World War II, along with untold destruction of every participants country (with the exception of the United States). So, we can pretty much ascertain “why” a country would want to be left out of direct conflict in this, or any war for that matter. Some of the neutrals- Sweden and Switzerland for example, had longstanding and historical ties to neutrality, so it only stood to reason that this would be their course of action when war broke out. But, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Turkey did not and they also maintained a stance of neutrality also. Numerous countries in Europe proclaimed neutrality prior to World War II, but they were overtaken and occupied by Nazi Germany regardless. How were these six countries able to remain neutral, out of direct conflict, and virtually unscathed throughout the war? You could point to treaties and conventions that stipulated one’s neutrality, but in my estimation-for all intents and purposes, these are just pieces of paper. Similar to a restraining order of today, “You are hereby ordered by this court to stay 200 feet away from this person.” If a person has a beef with you, no piece of paper is going to stop him or her from getting to you- if they want to. So, treaties and such are nice on the surface, but in reality carry little weight.

Throughout my research on this topic I’ve come to a simple conclusion about a complicated matter. These six countries were able to stay neutral by persevering to appease (especially) the Nazi’s in the form of one trade-off or another; their geographical location and importance; timing and/or circumstances, and a helluva lot of luck.



## Neutral Countries in Europe during World War II

Source: Wikipedia

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