

Why Everything You Know About World War II Is Wrong. Ron Unz

By [Ron Unz](#) and [Mike Whitney](#)

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[The Unz Review](#)

Theme: [History](#)

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[This interview of Ron Unz by Mike Whitney was originally published in June this year.]

"Much of the current political legitimacy of today's American government and its various European vassal-states is founded upon a particular narrative history of World War II, and challenging that account might have dire political consequences."—Ron Unz

<https://www.unz.com/CONTENTS/AUDIO/runz/Unz-WW2MikeWhitney.mp3>

[Question 1: Hitler](#)

Mike Whitney: *Let's start with Hitler. In the West it is universally accepted that:*

1. *Hitler started WW2*
2. *Hitler's invasion of Poland was the first step in a broader campaign aimed at world domination*

Is this interpretation of WW2 true or false? And, if it is false, then—in your opinion—what was Hitler trying to achieve in Poland and could WW2 have been avoided?

Ron Unz: Until the last dozen years or so, my views on historical events had always been fairly conventional, formed from the classes I'd taken in college and the uniform media narrative I'd absorbed over the decades. This included my understanding of World War II, the greatest military conflict in human history, whose outcome had shaped our modern world.

But in the years after the 9/11 Attacks and the Iraq War, I'd grown more and more suspicious of the honesty of our mainstream media, and begun to recognize that history books often merely represent a congealed version of such past media distortions. The

growth of the Internet has unleashed a vast quantity of unorthodox ideas of all possible flavors and since 2000 I'd been working on a project to digitize the archives of our leading publications of the last 150 years, which gave me convenient access to information not easily available to anyone else. So as [I later wrote](#):

Aside from the evidence of our own senses, almost everything we know about the past or the news of today comes from bits of ink on paper or colored pixels on a screen, and fortunately over the last decade or two the growth of the Internet has vastly widened the range of information available to us in that latter category. Even if the overwhelming majority of the unorthodox claims provided by such non-traditional web-based sources is incorrect, at least there now exists the possibility of extracting vital nuggets of truth from vast mountains of falsehood. Certainly the events of the past dozen years have forced me to completely recalibrate my own reality-detection apparatus.

As a consequence of all these developments, I published my original American Pravda article a decade ago, which contained that passage. In that article I emphasized that what our history books and media told us about the world and its past might often be just as dishonest and distorted as the notorious *Pravda* of the vanished USSR.

[Our American Pravda](#)

By Ron Unz, The American Conservative, April 29, 2013, 4,500 Words

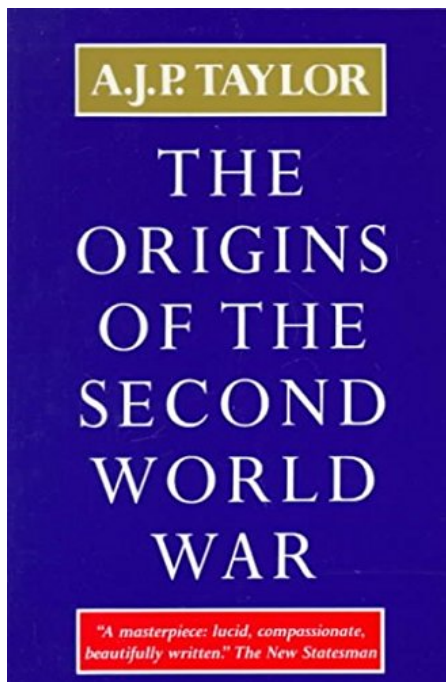
At first, my focus had been on more recent historical events, but I soon began doing a great deal of reading and investigation into the history of World War II as well, gradually realizing that a large fraction of everything I'd always accepted about that war was completely incorrect.

Perhaps I shouldn't have been too surprised to discover this. After all, if our media could lie so blatantly about events in the here and now, why should we trust it on matters that had happened long ago and far away?

I eventually concluded that the true history of World War II was not only quite different from what most of us had always believed, but was largely inverted. Our mainstream history books had been telling the story upside-down and backwards.

With regard to Hitler and the outbreak of the war, I think an excellent starting point would be [Origins of the Second World War](#), a classic work published in 1961 by renowned Oxford historian A.J.P. Taylor. As [I described his conclusions](#) in 2019:

Hitler's final demand, that 95% German Danzig be returned to Germany just as its inhabitants desired, was an absolutely reasonable one, and only a dreadful diplomatic blunder by the British had led the Poles to refuse the request, thereby provoking the war. The widespread later claim that Hitler sought to conquer the world was totally absurd, and the German leader had actually made every effort to avoid war with Britain or France. Indeed, he was generally quite friendly towards the Poles and had been hoping to enlist Poland as a German ally against the menace of Stalin's Soviet Union.



The recent 70th anniversary of the outbreak of the conflict that consumed so many tens of millions of lives naturally provoked numerous historical articles, and the resulting discussion led me to dig out my old copy of Taylor's short volume, which I reread for the first time in nearly forty years. I found it just as masterful and persuasive as I had back in my college dorm room days, and the glowing cover-blurbs suggested some of the immediate acclaim the work had received. *The Washington Post* lauded the author as "Britain's most prominent living historian," *World Politics* called it "Powerfully argued, brilliantly written, and always persuasive," *The New Statesman*, Britain leading leftist magazine, described it as "A masterpiece: lucid, compassionate, beautifully written," and the august *Times Literary Supplement* characterized it as "simple, devastating, superlatively readable, and deeply disturbing." As an international best-seller, it surely ranks as Taylor's most famous work, and I can easily understand why it was still on my college required reading list nearly two decades after its original publication.

Yet in revisiting Taylor's ground-breaking study, I made a remarkable discovery. Despite all the international sales and critical acclaim, the book's findings soon aroused tremendous hostility in certain quarters. Taylor's lectures at Oxford had been enormously popular for a quarter century, but as a direct result of the controversy "Britain's most prominent living historian" [was summarily purged](#) from the faculty not long afterwards. At the beginning of his first chapter, Taylor had noted how strange he found it that more than twenty years after the start of the world's most cataclysmic war no serious history had been produced carefully analyzing the outbreak. Perhaps the retaliation that he encountered led him to better understand part of that puzzle.

Numerous other leading scholars and journalists, both contemporaneous and more recent, have come to very similar conclusions, but they too often suffered severe retaliation for their honest historical assessments. For decades William Henry Chamberlin had been one of America's most highly-regarded foreign policy journalists, but after he published [America's Second Crusade](#) in 1950, he vanished from most mainstream publications. David Irving quite possibly ranks as the most internationally successful British historian of the last 100 years, with his seminal books on World War II receiving enormous critical praise and selling in the millions; but he was driven into personal bankruptcy and narrowly avoided spending the rest of his life in an Austrian prison.



Hitler Returning in Triumph to Berlin After Reunification with Austria

By the late 1930s Hitler had resurrected Germany, which had become newly prosperous under his rule, and he had also managed to reunite it with several separated German populations. As a result, he was widely recognized as [one of the most successful and popular leaders in the world](#), and he hoped to finally settle the Polish border dispute, offering concessions far more generous than any of his democratically-elected Weimar predecessors had ever considered. But Poland's dictatorship instead spent months rejecting his attempts at negotiations and also began brutal mistreatment of its German minority, finally forcing Hitler into declaring war. And as [I discussed in 2019](#), provoking that war may have been the deliberate goal of certain powerful figures.

Perhaps the most obvious of these is the question of the true origins of the war, which laid waste to much of Europe, killed perhaps fifty or sixty million, and gave rise to the subsequent Cold War era in which Communist regimes controlled half of the entire Eurasian world-continent. Taylor, Irving, and numerous others have thoroughly debunked the ridiculous mythology that the cause lay in Hitler's mad desire for world conquest, but if the German dictator clearly bore only minor responsibility, was there indeed any true culprit? Or did this massively-destructive world war come about in somewhat similar fashion to its predecessor, which our conventional histories treat as mostly due to a collection of blunders, misunderstandings, and thoughtless escalations?

During the 1930s, John T. Flynn was one of America's most influential progressive journalists, and although he had begun as a strong supporter of Roosevelt and his New Deal, he gradually became a sharp critic, concluding that FDR's various governmental schemes had failed to revive the American economy. Then in 1937 a new economic collapse spiked unemployment back to the same levels as when the president had first entered office, confirming Flynn in his harsh verdict. And as [I wrote](#) last year:

Indeed, Flynn alleges that by late 1937, FDR had turned towards an aggressive foreign

policy aimed at involving the country in a major foreign war, primarily because he believed that this was the only route out of his desperate economic and political box, a stratagem not unknown among national leaders throughout history. In [his January 5, 1938 New Republic column](#), he alerted his disbelieving readers to the looming prospect of a large naval military build-up and warfare on the horizon after a top Roosevelt adviser had privately boasted to him that a large bout of “military Keynesianism” and a major war would cure the country’s seemingly insurmountable economic problems. At that time, war with Japan, possibly over Latin American interests, seemed the intended goal, but developing events in Europe soon persuaded FDR that fomenting a general war against Germany was the best course of action. Memoirs and other historical documents obtained by later researchers seem to generally support Flynn’s accusations by indicating that Roosevelt ordered his diplomats to exert enormous pressure upon both the British and Polish governments to avoid any negotiated settlement with Germany, thereby leading to the outbreak of World War II in 1939.

The last point is an important one since the confidential opinions of those closest to important historical events should be accorded considerable evidentiary weight. In [a recent article](#) John Wear mustered the numerous contemporaneous assessments that implicated FDR as a pivotal figure in orchestrating the world war by his constant pressure upon the British political leadership, a policy that he privately even admitted could mean his impeachment if revealed. Among other testimony, we have the statements of the Polish and British ambassadors to Washington and the American ambassador to London, who also passed along the concurring opinion of Prime Minister Chamberlain himself. Indeed, the German capture and publication of secret Polish diplomatic documents in 1939 had already revealed much of this information, and William Henry Chamberlin confirmed their authenticity in his 1950 book. But since the mainstream media never reported any of this information, these facts remain little known even today.

I discussed these historical events at great length in my 2019 article.

[American Pravda: Understanding World War II](#)

By Ron Unz, *The Unz Review*, September 23, 2019, 20,500 Words

[Question 2: The London “Blitz”](#)

Mike Whitney: *Germany launched the “Blitz” on England in order to terrorize the British people into submission. Do you agree with this or were there other factors involved which have been omitted in western history textbooks? (Like Churchill’s bombing of Berlin?)*

Ron Unz: Once again, this standard account of World War II is largely the opposite of the truth. In that era, the aerial bombardment of urban centers far behind military lines was illegal and considered a war crime, with *Hitler having absolutely no intention of attacking Britain’s cities in that way.*

Indeed, the German leader had always favorable views toward Britain and also believed that the preservation of the British Empire was in Germany’s strategic interest since its collapse would create a geopolitical vacuum that might be filled by a rival power.

After Germany attacked Poland, Britain and France declared war. The Polish army was defeated in just a few weeks, and Hitler then offered to withdraw his forces from the Polish territories they had occupied and make peace, but the two Western powers vowed to continue the war until Germany was crushed. Little fighting occurred until spring of 1940 when the Germans finally attacked and defeated the huge French army, seizing Paris and knocking France out of the war.

The British forces were evacuated at Dunkirk and there's quite a lot of evidence that Hitler deliberately allowed them to escape as a face-saving gesture rather than ordering them captured. He followed his victory in France by offering extremely generous terms to the British government, making no demands against them and instead proposing a German alliance, including military support for protecting the security of their worldwide empire. Hitler naturally believed that they would accept such an attractive offer and end the war, which he assumed was essentially over.

Several of the top British leaders seemed eager to make peace on Hitler's generous terms, and according to the evidence found by renowned British historian David Irving, Prime Minister Winston Churchill himself seemed willing to do so before changing his mind and pulling back. Churchill had spent decades seeking to become Prime Minister, and Irving plausibly argues he realized that losing a disastrous war within weeks of finally achieving that position would have rendered him a laughingstock in the history books.

But given Britain's military defeat on the Continent and the very generous terms Hitler was offering, Churchill faced a huge problem in persuading his country to continue a war that was widely regarded as lost. Therefore, he began ordering a series of bombing raids against the German capital, an illegal war crime, hoping to provoke a German response. This led Hitler to repeatedly warn that if they continued bombing his cities, he would be forced to retaliate in kind, and he finally did so. Since the British public was unaware that their own government had initiated the campaign of urban bombing, they regarded those retaliatory German aerial attacks as monstrous, unprovoked war crimes, and just as Churchill had hoped, they became fully committed to continuing the war against Germany.

Irving and others explain all these important facts in their books, and a riveting Irving lecture summarizing his information is still available on Bitchute after having been purged from Youtube.

Irving is a crucial source for much important information on the war and in 2018 [I explained](#) why the results of a high-profile lawsuit against Deborah Lipstadt had demonstrated that his historical research was extremely reliable:

These zealous ethnic-activists began a coordinated campaign to pressure Irving's prestigious publishers into dropping his books, while also disrupting his frequent international speaking tours and even lobbying countries to bar him from entry. They maintained a drumbeat of media vilification, continually blackening his name and his research skills, even going so far as to denounce him as a "Nazi" and a "Hitler-lover," just as had similarly been done in the case of Prof. Wilson.

That legal battle was certainly a David-and-Goliath affair, with wealthy Jewish movie producers and corporate executives providing a huge war-chest of \$13 million to Lipstadt's side, allowing her to fund a veritable army of 40 researchers and legal

experts, captained by one of Britain's most successful Jewish divorce lawyers. By contrast, Irving, being an impecunious historian, was forced to defend himself without benefit of legal counsel.

In real life unlike in fable, the Goliaths of this world are almost invariably triumphant, and this case was no exception, with Irving being driven into personal bankruptcy, resulting in the loss of his fine central London home. But seen from the longer perspective of history, I think the victory of his tormentors was a remarkably Pyrrhic one.

Although the target of their unleashed hatred was Irving's alleged "Holocaust denial," as near as I can tell, that particular topic was almost entirely absent from all of Irving's dozens of books, and exactly that very silence was what had provoked their spittle-flecked outrage. Therefore, lacking such a clear target, their lavishly-funded corps of researchers and fact-checkers instead spent a year or more apparently performing a line-by-line and footnote-by-footnote review of everything Irving had ever published, seeking to locate every single historical error that could possibly cast him in a bad professional light. With almost limitless money and manpower, they even utilized the process of legal discovery to subpoena and read the thousands of pages in his bound personal diaries and correspondence, thereby hoping to find some evidence of his "wicked thoughts." [Denial](#), a 2016 Hollywood film co-written by Lipstadt, may provide a reasonable outline of the sequence of events as seen from her perspective.

Yet despite such massive financial and human resources, they apparently came up almost entirely empty, at least if Lipstadt's triumphalist 2005 book [History on Trial](#) may be credited. Across four decades of research and writing, which had produced numerous controversial historical claims of the most astonishing nature, they only managed to find a couple of dozen rather minor alleged errors of fact or interpretation, most of these ambiguous or disputed. And the worst they discovered after reading every page of the many linear meters of Irving's personal diaries was that he had once composed a short "racially insensitive" ditty for his infant daughter, a trivial item which they naturally then trumpeted as proof that he was a "racist." Thus, they seemingly admitted that Irving's enormous corpus of historical texts was perhaps 99.9% accurate.

I think this silence of "the dog that didn't bark" echoes with thunderclap volume. I'm not aware of any other academic scholar in the entire history of the world who has had all his decades of lifetime work subjected to such painstakingly exhaustive hostile scrutiny. And since Irving apparently passed that test with such flying colors, I think we can regard almost every astonishing claim in all of his books—as recapitulated in his videos—as absolutely accurate.

[The Remarkable Historiography of David Irving](#)

By Ron Unz, *The Unz Review*, June 4, 2018, 1,700 Words

[Question 3: The Purge of Antiwar Intellectuals](#)

Mike Whitney: *In the 1940s, there was a purge of antiwar intellectuals and pundits similar to the purge of critics of US policy in social media today. Can you briefly explain what*

happened, who was targeted, and whether the first amendment should apply in times of national crisis?

Ron Unz: Around 2000, I began a project to digitize the archives of many of our leading publications of the last 150 years and I was astonished to discover that some of our most influential figures from the years prior to World War II had been “disappeared” so completely that I’d never heard of them. This played a major role in my growing suspicions that the standard narrative I’d always accepted was false, and I later described the situation using the analogy of the notorious historical lies of the old Soviet Union:

I sometimes imagined myself a little like an earnest young Soviet researcher of the 1970s who began digging into the musty files of long-forgotten Kremlin archives and made some stunning discoveries. Trotsky was apparently not the notorious Nazi spy and traitor portrayed in all the textbooks, but instead had been the right-hand man of the sainted Lenin himself during the glorious days of the great Bolshevik Revolution, and for some years afterward had remained in the topmost ranks of the Party elite. And who were these other figures—Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, Rykov—who also spent those early years at the very top of the Communist hierarchy? In history courses, they had barely rated a few mentions, as minor Capitalist agents who were quickly unmasked and paid for their treachery with their lives. How could the great Lenin, father of the Revolution, have been such an idiot to have surrounded himself almost exclusively with traitors and spies?

But unlike their Stalinist analogs from a couple of years earlier, the American victims who disappeared around 1940 were neither shot nor Gulaged, but merely excluded from the mainstream media that defines our reality, thereby being blotted out from our memory so that future generations gradually forgot that they had ever lived.

A leading example of such a “disappeared” American was journalist [John T. Flynn](#), probably almost unknown today but whose stature had once been enormous. As [I wrote](#) last year:

So imagine my surprise at discovering that throughout the 1930s he had been one of the single most influential *liberal* voices in American society, a writer on economics and politics whose status may have roughly approximated that of Paul Krugman, though with a strong muck-raking tinge. His weekly column in *The New Republic* allowed him to serve as a lodestar for America’s progressive elites, while his regular appearances in *Colliers*, an illustrated mass circulation weekly reaching many millions of Americans, provided him a platform comparable to that of a major television personality in the later heyday of network TV.

To some extent, Flynn’s prominence may be objectively quantified. A few years ago, I happened to mention his name to a well-read and committed liberal born in the 1930s, and she unsurprisingly drew a complete blank, but wondered if he might have been a little like [Walter Lippmann](#), the very famous columnist of that era. When I checked, I saw that across the hundreds of periodicals in my archiving system, there were just 23 articles by Lippmann from the 1930s but fully 489 by Flynn.

An even stronger American parallel to Taylor was that of historian Harry Elmer Barnes, a figure almost unknown to me, but in his day an academic of great influence and stature:

Imagine my shock at later discovering that [Barnes](#) had actually been one of the most frequent early contributors to *Foreign Affairs*, serving as a primary book reviewer for that venerable publication from its 1922 founding onward, while his stature as one of America's premier liberal academics was indicated by his scores of appearances in *The Nation* and *The New Republic* throughout that decade. Indeed, he is credited with having played a central role in "revising" the history of the First World War so as to remove the cartoonish picture of unspeakable German wickedness left behind as a legacy of the dishonest wartime propaganda produced by the opposing British and American governments. And his professional stature was demonstrated by his thirty-five or more books, many of them influential academic volumes, along with his numerous articles in *The American Historical Review*, *Political Science Quarterly*, and other leading journals.

A few years ago I happened to mention Barnes to an eminent American academic scholar whose general focus in political science and foreign policy was quite similar, and yet the name meant nothing. By the end of the 1930s, Barnes had become a leading critic of America's proposed involvement in World War II, and was permanently "disappeared" as a consequence, barred from all mainstream media outlets, while a major newspaper chain was heavily pressured into abruptly terminating his long-running syndicated national column in May 1940.

Many of Barnes' friends and allies fell in the same ideological purge, which he described in his own writings and which continued after the end of the war:

Over a dozen years after his disappearance from our national media, Barnes managed to publish [Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace](#), a lengthy collection of essays by scholars and other experts discussing the circumstances surrounding America's entrance into World War II, and have it produced and distributed by a small printer in Idaho. His own contribution was a 30,000 word essay entitled ["Revisionism and the Historical Blackout"](#) and discussed the tremendous obstacles faced by the dissident thinkers of that period.

The book itself was dedicated to the memory of his friend, historian [Charles A. Beard](#). Since the early years of the 20th century, Beard had ranked as an intellectual figure of the greatest stature and influence, co-founder of The New School in New York and serving terms as president of both The American Historical Association and The American Political Science Association. As a leading supporter of the New Deal economic policies, he was overwhelmingly lauded for his views.

Yet once he turned against Roosevelt's bellicose foreign policy, publishers shut their doors to him, and only his personal friendship with the head of the Yale University Press allowed his critical 1948 volume *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War, 1941* to even appear in print. Beard's stellar reputation seems to have begun a rapid decline from that point onward, so that by 1968 historian Richard Hofstadter [could write](#): "Today Beard's reputation stands like an imposing ruin in the landscape of American historiography. What was once the grandest house in the province is now a ravaged survival". Indeed, Beard's once-dominant "economic interpretation of history" might these days almost be dismissed as promoting "dangerous conspiracy theories," and I suspect few non-historians have even heard of him.

Another major contributor to the Barnes volume was [William Henry Chamberlin](#), who for decades had been ranked among America's leading foreign policy journalists, with more

than 15 books to his credit, most of them widely and favorably reviewed. Yet [America's Second Crusade](#), his critical 1950 analysis of America's entry into World War II, failed to find a mainstream publisher, and when it did appear was widely ignored by reviewers. Prior to its publication, his byline had regularly run in our most influential national magazines such as *The Atlantic Monthly* and *Harpers*. But afterward, his writing was almost entirely confined to small circulation newsletters and periodicals, appealing to narrow conservative or libertarian audiences.

In these days of the Internet, anyone can easily establish a website to publish his views, thus making them immediately available to everyone in the world. Social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter can bring interesting or controversial material to the attention of millions with just a couple of mouse-clicks, completely bypassing the need for the support of establishmentarian intermediaries. It is easy for us to forget just how extremely challenging the dissemination of dissenting ideas remained back in the days of print, paper, and ink, and recognize that an individual purged from his regular outlet might require many years to regain any significant foothold for the distribution of his work.

I'd written those last words in June 2018 and ironically enough, sweeping social media purges and shadow-banning soon engulfed many present-day dissenters, greatly reducing their ability to distribute their ideas.

[American Pravda: Our Great Purge of the 1940s](#)

By Ron Unz, *The Unz Review*, June 11, 2018, 5,500 Words

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A theoretical physicist by training, Mr. Unz serves as founder and chairman of UNZ.org, a content-archiving website providing free access to many hundreds of thousands of articles from prominent periodicals of the last hundred and fifty years. From 2007 to 2013, he also served as publisher of The American Conservative, a small opinion magazine, and had previously served as chairman of Wall Street Analytics, Inc., a financial services software company which he founded in New York City in 1987. He holds undergraduate and graduate degrees from Harvard University, Cambridge University, and Stanford University, and is a past first-place winner in the Intel/Westinghouse Science Talent Search. He was born in Los Angeles in 1961.

Michael Whitney is a renowned geopolitical and social analyst based in Washington State. He initiated his career as an independent citizen-journalist in 2002 with a commitment to honest journalism, social justice and World peace. He is a Research Associate of the Centre

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