

Richard Hanks, PhD.

Hamilton Fish and American Isolationism 1920-1941

Chapter Notes

This dissertation merits reading in its entirety. The following are pointers to areas of special interest. Hanks focuses more on the political debates of the time than Troncone.

<p>“In March of 1933, Fish was so upset by German treatment of Jewish-American nationals that he threatened to introduce a resolution condemning the German government.” Dissuaded by the State Dept, instead he introduced a resolution requesting President Roosevelt to have the German government “respect the civil, economic, and political rights of German citizens of Jewish origin.” “Fish charged the German government with a ‘relentless and ruthless policy of economic persecution and repression of Jews.’”</p>	<p>Pp. 38-40</p>
<p>Fish's introduction in 1938 of legislation to prevent the formation of paramilitary groups; supported by the ACLU. “Fish wanted curbs placed on the actions of the American Nazis.”</p>	<p>Pp. 39-42</p>
<p>“One of the strongest and most unifying threads of Fish’s political career was his powerful commitment to civil rights. It was a concern he inherited with his name and a concern which was given personal reality by his experience as a commander of black troops in the Great War.” p. 46 Fish proposed black Americans be admitted to West Point. P. 47</p>	<p>Pp. 42-48</p>
<p>In 1922, introduced legislation in support of Jewish homeland in Palestine. “Fish was outspoken about the treatment of Jewish minorities in other nations. Pogroms were denounced when they occurred in Russia; when they followed in Germany, and in the late 1930s when they began in Rumania.”</p>	<p>Pp. 48-50</p>
<p>Differences between FDR and Fish on the New Deal. Fish voted for many New Deal measures, especially those offering relief, but attacked the New Deal in general as moving too much power to the executive branch and away from congress. After FDR accused Republicans of using tax loopholes, Fish attacked Roosevelt’s family and suggested they should be</p>	<p>Pp. 63</p>

investigated. FDR hated him from then on and he was barred from the White House.	
Fish began a crusade against American involvement in any future war from the day he started in Congress. Was against the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations for that reason. "In 1924, Fish introduced a resolution calling for an international disarmament conference."	P. 71 P. 73
Fish was consistently in favor of antiwar legislation - Kellogg-Briand Pact, arms embargo, World Court. "In the 1920s, Fish saw Europeans as engaging in endless warring and bickering."	P. 80-86 P. 83
Fish supported an arms embargo 1932. "If we must have war in the future, let it be in defense of our country, but not in defense of our munitions makers."	P. 89
Neutrality Acts of 1935 & 1936. Fish condemned Italy for invasion of Ethiopia but wanted no US involvement.	P. 103ff
Neutrality Act of 1937. Cash and carry and more powers to the president. Idea of a war referendum. Fish was concerned that FDR - or any one man - could take the country to war and Congress would be unable to stop him. Analysis of Fish's antiwar stance. He favored "millions for defense but not one cent for aggression."	Pp. 112, 119, Pp. 128-134
Fish joins FDR in condemning Kristallnacht atrocities carried out by Hitler; says Hitler has gone "stark raving mad."	P. 141
Fish forms National Committee to Keep America Out of Foreign War in April 1939 - 50 Congressmen and former congressmen sign up. "Fish expressed the committee's opposition to 'communism, nazism, and fascism'."	P. 147
European trip and Ribbentrop plane in August 1939. "Fish had determined to utilize the visit to promote a plan to aid Jewish refugees for he had made a plan with Bernard Baruch and other Americans to promote a colonization scheme." "Fish presented his peace plan to the IPU in Oslo speaking only for himself." "The Nazi government called Fish's plan 'either utopian or a trap'."	Pp. 163-188 P. 164 P. 177
October 1940 Drew Pearson column accusing Fish of renting apt. to Germans and profiting. Doctored photo with Fritz Kuhn. "Given Fish's	P. 261

feelings about the Bund and its activities, it is very difficult to believe that Fish had any dealings with Kuhn. Coming so soon before the actual day of voting, it was undoubtedly an attempt of the part of some of his more unscrupulous opponents to discredit him before the voters.”	
Fish expresses agreement with Roosevelt’s fireside chat about aiding Britain and France.	P. 268
Lend Lease bill debate; Fish supported bill and FDR at the end of the debate.	Pp. 273-290
Chapter VI “Fish and the Nazis” Worth reading this chapter in its entirety. Coverage of the Viereck incident. Accusation by Drew Pearson that Fish was charging high rent to Nazis renting a family apt. Fish denial. Fish reported he was partial owner, apt. Had been rented by brother-in-law; rent had been lowered in the depression. “At no time in his long career did Fish express any admiration for Adolf Hitler...Furthermore, he carried on a consistent and sustained attack on the Nazis’ anti-Semitic practices.” His opposition to organized Fascist and Nazi groups in the United States, while not of the intensity of his crusade against communism, was likewise consistent and sustained.”	Pp. 318 - 359 P. 322 P. 321
Fight for Freedom Committee and accusations of anti-Semitism denied by Fish. “The FFF issued a press release claiming Fish had, in a phone conversation, used the phrase ‘There’s too much Judaism going around anyway’.” Fish vehemently denied this as well as the accusation that he had mailed out Pelley propaganda.	Pp.327-329
Franking scandal. Hanks questions how the Washington Post knew many aspects of the case before any other news outlet.	Pp. 333-354
Assessing John Rogge’s book, The Official German Report , Hanks says “Rogge offered little evidence to support his position [that Fish had worked with Viereck]. What evidence he did provide only showed the basic shoddiness and carelessness of his work.” “The book made accusations it offered no evidence to support.”	Pp. 354-355
Chapter VII “Fish and World War II”	Pp. 361-384

<p>Also worth reading in its entirety. Challenges to Fish in 1942 election from Wilkie and Dewey, which continued in 1944. Fish efforts to reconcile with Roosevelt. Dillard Stokes and Fish's connection to Trujillo. Fish lost in 1944 in part because Dewey gerrymandered Fish's district.</p>	<p>P. 371</p>
<p>Chapter VIII "Conclusion" Thoughtful analysis of Fish's political career worth reading in its entirety. "By refusing to recognize the full consequence of Hitler's control of Eastern Europe, he undermined and compromised one of the most commendable aspects of his career - his crusade against religious and ethnic bigotry."</p>	<p>Pp. 406-417 P. 412</p>