

Explaining the Antiwar Movement, 1939–1941: The Next Assignment

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Few years in the history of the world have been as significant as the years 1939–1941. Not only did a cataclysmic conflict break out, far more worthy of being called a genuine world war than its predecessor, but large areas of the globe changed hands. By the end of 1941, a new German Empire dominated Western Europe and much of Eastern Europe as well. The Japanese Empire had penetrated extensively into China, held northern Indochina, and was threatening the Philippines, Singapore, and the Dutch East Indies. Moreover, France was under occupation, while much of her empire was divided between Vichy and Free French forces. If most of the British Empire was intact, the home isles were under siege, and such lifelines as the Suez Canal were severely threatened.

Yet, during all this time, major segments of the American public hoped that the United States would not enter this new world war. While most sympathized with the Allied cause, they did not deem the survival of either Britain or China worth the risk of American involvement. In fact, they argued conversely—that full-scale participation in the war would help destroy whatever global balance remained and would ruin the internal fabric of American society. A minority of these Americans were pacifists, people who opposed participation in any given conflict. The majority, however, were isolationists, or—as they preferred to be called—“anti-interventionists” or “nationalists.” In the words of historian Manfred Jonas, these people sought “the avoidance of political and military commitments to or alliances with foreign powers, particularly those in Europe.”¹ (Of course, pacifists—like isolationists—often offered pragmatic reasons for their stance, reasons that must be covered in any account of the antiwar movement.) Like their interventionist counterparts, these isolationists realized that at stake was nothing less than the course the United States would follow for years to come.

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During the past thirty years, there has been intensive research on anti-interventionism, and a thorough bibliographical essay would comprise well over a hundred pages.² Works on prominent personalities, organizations, and legislation are indeed abundant, and Wayne S. Cole's *Roosevelt and the Isolationists, 1932-45* (1983) offers an able, comprehensive account.

Given this plethora of research, we are now ready for the next step, one that goes beyond historical narrative to what is far more intangible, the matter of anti-interventionist *perception*. Here one builds upon Manfred Jonas's pioneering work, *Isolationism in America* (1966). Many historians have undoubtedly concurred with the recent claim of Professor Cole. To Cole, Roosevelt was "less than frank with Congress and the public, but he slowly educated them on the dangers of the Axis menace and on the wisdom of aid short-of-war to the victims of Nazi aggression."³ Hence it is all the more imperative to treat systematically *why* the anti-interventionists believed the way they did, not simply to trace their reactions to various administrative proposals. For the anti-interventionists, too, saw themselves involved in educating the public, educating it on what they perceived as the dangers of entering the war and on the wisdom of defense and economic policies based upon a hemispheric perspective. To them also the question was one of survival.

Obviously such a study must be grounded in part in the traditional sources: congressional debates and testimony concerning legislation; the papers of various foreign-policy makers and their critics; and the manuscript collections of various anti-interventionist groups.⁴ But a study focusing on perception must be more than usually conversant with different kinds of sources as well, and here the press is crucial.

Much attention has centered on the *Chicago Tribune*, and not just because of its wide circulation. Rather, Colonel Robert R. McCormick was so eccentric that he always made good copy. Relatively little has been done with its sister journal, Captain Joseph Patterson's *New York Daily News*. Yet the *News* had the largest circulation of any newspaper in the United States. Furthermore, for all its focus on sex and scandal, it was surprisingly respected. The isolationism of its chief editorial writer, Reuben Maury, no more prevented him from receiving a Pulitzer Prize than had an antiwar motif interfered with the *News*'s cartoonist C. D. Batchelor winning a Pulitzer in 1937.

Any systematic study of isolationist perception should pay much attention to the Scripps-Howard press, owned by the dapper, cautious Roy Howard. Scripps-Howard gave a national forum to a host of anti-interventionist columnists, including General Hugh Johnson, Major Al Williams, John T. Flynn, and—in the *New York World-Telegram*—Harry Elmer Barnes. (Hugh Johnson summarized much of his position in *Hell-bent for War* [1941].) Despite Roy Howard's own reluctant endorsement of lend-lease in February 1941, the chain remained highly suspicious of Roosevelt's interventionism.

Needing far more attention is the Hearst chain, in its decline but still influential. Beginning in February 1940, William Randolph Hearst wrote a long daily column, "In the News," in which he spoke frequently on foreign policy. (Among other things, he told the British that to win the war they must dismiss Churchill, give Beaverbrook more power, and bring back Hore-Belisha.) The Hearst press also featured a daily column by the one isolationist radio commentator with a national audience, Boake Carter. (Broadcaster Fulton Lewis, Jr., who also had ties to the Hearst press, occasionally criticized Roosevelt's foreign policy.) Hearst's senior correspondent, Karl H. von Wiegand, had some of the most remarkable contacts of any American journalist; these included access to Hitler and Goebbels.

Monthlies can be an even more significant source, for the contributors often take the long view, that is to say, their opinions transcend immediate response to specific legislative proposals. The preponderance of articles in the conservative *Atlantic Monthly* was strongly interventionist, though it did give an occasional forum to isolationist correspondent William Henry Chamberlin. Charles A. Lindbergh and his wife Anne Morrow Lindbergh each appeared once in its pages. *Harpers* was both more involved with foreign affairs and less one-sided. It gave much play to the *New York Times*'s military expert, Hanson W. Baldwin, a man critical of extended commitments, and it occasionally featured articles by Chamberlin, Frank C. Hanighen, and C. Hartley Grattan. The *Reader's Digest* was more than generous in opening its pages to a host of isolationists, including Herbert Hoover, the Lindberghs, Hugh Johnson, John T. Flynn, and Freda Utley. (It did balance its fare with a number of interventionists, including Walter Millis, Walter Lippmann, Robert E. Sherwood, Dorothy Thompson, Douglas Miller, and Wendell Willkie.) *Scribner's Commentator* was a virtual anthology of anti-interventionism, particularly of a rightist variety.

The political weeklies, by and large, were interventionist. Surprisingly enough, when World War II first broke out, the Luce publications were benevolently neutral toward the Allies. In the spring of 1940, publisher Henry R. Luce and his wife Clare Boothe Luce visited Europe, getting caught in the German invasion of the Low Countries. Ever after *Time* and *Life* (and the monthly business magazine *Fortune*) were strongly interventionist. *Newsweek*, backed by no single owner or policy, did not preach intervention quite so fervently as *Time*. Former brain-truster Raymond Moley often spoke against intervention in his weekly back-page column. David Lawrence's *United States News* was strongly interventionist, arguing that the United States could not retain a capitalist economy if surrounded by totalitarian commercial systems. However, Lawrence permitted anti-interventionists to utter brief statements on controversial issues. When war first broke out, *Look* magazine opened its pages to such isolationists as Senator Gerald P. Nye and General Hugh Johnson, but by the end of 1940 only interventionists could be found in its pages. The *Saturday Evening Post* was strongly anti-

interventionist, both in the editorials written by Garet Garrett and in the play it gave to such pacifists as Milton Mayer. Though its supposed conversion to interventionism was heralded in May 1941, it quickly denied changing its position. Its foreign correspondent Demaree Bess had isolationist leanings.

Of the major liberal opinion magazines, *Common Sense* remained isolationist the longest. While, by late 1940, editor Alfred M. Bingham edged further to an interventionist position, co-editor Sheldon Rodman remained chary of the war. Washington correspondent Frank Hanighen was firmly anti-interventionist. The *New Republic* turned to interventionism in mid-June 1940, and it fired its isolationist columnist John T. Flynn that November. The son of the *New Republic's* owner, Michael Straight, notes in his recent autobiography (*After Long Silence*, 1983) that he became Washington editor of the journal with the expressed purpose of "driving the magazine into a position of all-out support for Britain."⁵ The *Nation* had always been interventionist, though it was only in late June 1940 that its pacifist former publisher, Oswald Garrison Villard, parted company. The *Progressive*, owned by the La Follette family and edited by Morris Rubin, had a good many anti-interventionists contribute to its pages.

Weekly newsletters are extremely valuable sources. Highly respected among anti-interventionists was the newsletter *Uncensored*, originally edited by Sidney Hertzberg, a Socialist who had worked on the *New York Times* and *Time*. Frank Hanighen collected its war news, and its editorial sponsors included Harry Elmer Barnes, John Chamberlain, Stuart Chase, C. Hartley Grattan, Quincy Howe, George R. Leighton, Ferdinand Lundberg, Hubert Herring, and Oswald Garrison Villard. The sporadic bulletins of Porter Sargent, editor of a handbook of private schools, focused on British activities. They are conveniently collected in his book *Getting US into War* (1941). *Propaganda Analysis*, published by the Institute for Propaganda Analysis, attempted to demolish myths created by all the belligerents.

Of all such efforts, Lawrence Dennis's *Weekly Foreign Letter* was the most rigidly isolationist. Within its pages, Dennis predicted Axis victory and the decline of an Anglo-American capitalist order, but he said that the United States could only weaken itself further by entering the war. Dennis's views deserve extensive treatment not because he was typical of the isolationist position, but because he was not. He offers a crucial reference point from which to measure the positions of his more moderate brethren.

The left offered a particularly fertile field for isolationist sentiment. There were a number of Socialist journals, most of which opposed intervention strongly. The weekly *Socialist Call* had spirited columns by party leaders Norman Thomas ("Your World and Mine") and Lillian Symes ("Hold That Line"). (Similar Thomas views could be found in the volume he wrote with Bertram D. Wolfe in 1939, *Keep America Out of War*.) Until the summer of 1940, the party also published the bimonthly *Socialist Review*, but the defection of interventionist party

members helped kill the journal. V. F. Calverton's *Modern Quarterly* could not survive the editor's death in 1940. However, while it lasted, its antiwar contributors included Norman Thomas, Scott Nearing, and Harry Elmer Barnes. Oscar Ameringer's independent Socialist weekly, *American Guardian*, frequently reprinted columns from such anti-interventionist sources as Ernest L. Meyer, Porter Sargent, Oswald Garrison Villard, H. L. Mencken, and McAlister Coleman. Further to the left than the Socialist Party but still not Communist, it was sympathetic to the Russian war effort after the German invasion but still remained isolationist.

The Communists, isolationist from the time of the Hitler-Stalin pact to the time of Germany's invasion of Russia, had several publications. The *Daily Worker*, edited by Clarence A. Hathaway, hammered at the British Empire and promoted the American Peace Mobilization. The weekly *New Masses* did the same; various isolationist and anti-British articles were written by Joseph Starobin, Theodore Draper, J. B. S. Haldane, Ruth McKenney, and for a brief time Richard H. Rovere. Included in the offerings of the *Communist* was a major critique of Lawrence Dennis's *The Dynamics of War and Revolution*. *Friday*, a weekly imitating *Life* magazine, could feature historian Charles A. Beard's attack on the movie *The Ramparts We Watch* one week, a denunciation of the historical novels of Kenneth Roberts the next. (Ironically, though Roberts's novel of the American revolution, *Oliver Wiswell* [1940], was attacked for being too pro-British, Roberts himself was a strong isolationist.) While *Friday*'s editor, Dan Gillmor, the son of a rear admiral, denied that he was ever a Communist, the journal hewed closely to the party line. The same holds true for George Seldes, editor of the weekly exposé newsletter *In Fact*. *US Week* was another weekly that followed the party line. Closely resembling *Pathfinder* in format, it contained contributions from Leo Huberman and William E. Dodd, Jr.

Various leftist factions each had their own press. The weekly Trotskyist *Socialist Appeal* (which in February 1941 became the *Militant*) had anti-interventionist columns by James Burnham and Dwight Macdonald, though infighting within the Socialist Workers Party led to their exile. Macdonald retained a forum through the independent Trotskyist *Partisan Review*, in which he and fellow isolationist Clement Greenberg debated Philip Rahv. A minority faction of the Trotskyists published *New International*, which also featured Macdonald.

Of all the religious journals opposed to intervention, the *Christian Century* was undoubtedly the most significant. Its editor, Charles Clayton Morrison, was neither a pacifist nor an isolationist, but he strongly opposed Roosevelt's foreign policy. Adherents of the brand of "Christian realism" espoused by Reinhold Niebuhr were quite unfair in accusing Morrison of unmitigated naiveté, for his editorials on world order, published in February and March of 1941, had some most perceptive features. And after Villard left the *Nation*, he wrote frequently for the *Christian Century*.

The monthly *Catholic World* was the most outstanding Roman Catholic journal of opinion. Published by the Paulist fathers and edited by James M. Gillis, it claimed that the conflict was far from being a holy war. Rather the struggle centered on reallocating the earth's surface. The Jesuit weekly *America* offered analyses of the current news, always from the anti-interventionist perspective. In March 1940, Ezra Pound contributed an attack on the gold standard. *Commonweal*, a lay-edited weekly, was more moderate in its isolationism, but the view was nonetheless there. Father Charles E. Coughlin's vitriolic *Social Justice* included isolationist contributions from architect Philip Johnson, theologian John A. O'Brien, and "British correspondent" J. S. Barnes. Although Coughlin himself contributed only an occasional piece, and one E. Perrin Schwartz was editor, a mere glance at any issue shows the radio priest in firm control.

Pacifists had two major journals. *Fellowship*, the monthly of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, was edited by FOR executives John Nevin Sayre and A. J. Muste. Contributions ranged from a fifteen-page critique of Reinhold Niebuhr by Scottish theologian G. H. C. MacGregor, published in June of 1941, to favorable coverage of books by Anne Morrow Lindbergh and Porter Sargent. *Peace Action* was a monthly of the National Council for the Prevention of War. While most of the journal presented the views of Frederick J. Libby, the NCPW executive secretary, *Peace Action* would also feature articles by such isolationists as historian Charles Callan Tansill, Major General William C. Rivers, and Oswald Garrison Villard.

Because any study that concentrates on the perception of the anti-interventionists must focus on ideological factors, and therefore upon intellectuals, the collegiate press is an indispensable source. A reading of the *Daily Maroon* of the University of Chicago gives the isolationist views of sociologist William F. Ogburn, physiologist A. J. Carlson, and economist Maynard Krueger, who was Norman Thomas's running mate in 1940. Another *Maroon*, this one of Colgate University, featured the views of economist Kenneth Boulding, who advocated conscientious objection. Columnist Kurt Vonnegut of the *Cornell Daily Sun* found sense in Lindbergh's isolationism. The *Yale Daily News* featured the anti-interventionist articles of its young chairman Kingman Brewster. The *Harvard Crimson* gave vent to the antiwar position of sociologists Pitirim A. Sorokin and Nicholas S. Timasheff, political scientist Arthur N. Holcombe, and philosopher William Ernest Hocking. There are other ways, too, in which a survey of college journals is valuable. Outside speakers, student organizations, polls of student opinion—all can often be found only in this source.⁶

Once such sources are mastered, the researcher is ready to tackle the main problem, that of anti-interventionist perceptions. One begins this study with some brief background. There is, first of all, the matter of definition, and more succinctly why "isolationists" denied the appropriateness of this label. Second, one must reveal how what was essentially a highly disparate group perceived the

American mission and American tradition. How could the American past have been interpreted in such staunchly isolationist terms, particularly when the United States has its own imperialist tradition and was not above seeking expedient alliances? Here two works by Charles A. Beard are of crucial importance, for they show how the most influential historian of the 1930s retained a "Continentalism" amid the outbreak of World War II: *Giddy Minds and Foreign Policy: An Estimate of American Foreign Policy* (1939) and *A Foreign Policy for Americans* (1940). Examination of the reception these books received is important, particularly as they came at a time when many of Beard's fellow liberals were beginning to abandon the noninterventionist position. So too is the frequent juxtaposition of Beard's *Foreign Policy* and Raymond Leslie Buell's internationalist *Isolated America* (1940).

Next the researcher moves to United States entry into World War I and the subsequent peace. There is, of course, no need to repeat the comprehensive findings of Warren I. Cohen, *The American Revisionists: The Lessons of Intervention in World War I* (1967), or John Edward Wiltz's able study of the Nye committee, *In Search of Peace: The Senate Munitions Inquiry, 1934-1936* (1963). However, it is essential to show the degree to which anti-interventionists saw the recent tragic history of the Great War repeating itself. Journalist C. Hartley Grattan, in *The Deadly Parallel* (1939), noted that this "parallel" went far beyond supplying belligerents with loans and munitions; it extended to such matters as Sumner Welles's diplomatic mission conducted early in 1940 and the arming of American merchant ships.

After touching on the Versailles treaty, the historian must capture—although with brevity—how the isolationists in retrospect accounted for the rise of Hitler, Japan's success in Manchuria, and the fascist victories in Ethiopia and Spain. To what degree, the investigator must ask, did anti-interventionists see the goals of the totalitarian powers as legitimate? Conversely, to what degree were Britain and France blamed for not resisting, at least at Munich? Here one must note the isolationist reception of *The German White Paper: Full Text of the Polish Documents Issued by the German Foreign Office* (1940), foreword by C. Hartley Grattan. In what was supposedly a series of Polish diplomatic documents just captured by the Germans, it was "revealed" that the Roosevelt administration had promised to back the British and French if they resisted German demands upon Poland. Equally if not more important to the historian is the perception anti-interventionists had of the Danzig incident and of the general nature of the Polish regime.

One now moves to one of the crucial questions: To what degree did fear of domestic ruin lie at the basis of anti-interventionism? Business spokesmen made no secret of their belief that war would bring socialism, while Socialists and trade unionists in turn were apprehensive that war would create a form of fascism, one in which bankers and large corporations would seize control. For all con-

cerned, there was the prediction that war led to government controls, though one must ask why it was invariably assumed that these controls would be operated by hostile forces. Unlike those progressives who in 1917 saw the advent of war as creating the needed rationalization of American society, anti-interventionists of many political stripes feared that—even in the best of hands—the mere existence of wartime powers meant the loss of vital civil and economic liberties.

Several works revealed this apprehension. Rose M. Stein, in her *M-Day: The First Day of War* (1936), wrote of a secret Industrial Mobilization Plan to use a war emergency in order to militarize the nation and scrap recently passed social legislation. The volume edited by Larry Nixon, *What Will Happen and What to Do When War Comes* (1939), gave a picture only somewhat less frightening. And even if the government did not impose corporate fascism, economic consequences of war were stark indeed. Memories of the 1919 recession remained vivid, that of 1929 even more so. Labor would invariably face subsistence wages, the outlawing of strikes, and—most important of all—state dictation of the activity of every worker. One would expect Socialists and liberals to be particularly fearful of M-Day, for they were the ones who most suffered from the hysteria of World War I and the Red Scare.

However, the anxieties of such isolationists as Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg, Congressman Paul Shafer, and General Hugh Johnson revealed that some conservatives were fearful as well. Did the rural and small-town isolationist, often an Old Guard Republican, believe that war would invariably lead to the greater urbanization and corporatization of American society? If so, how much evidence can be brought behind this claim? How much fear was there that small individually owned units would fall by the wayside, unable to compete with massive government-sponsored corporate entities? Or did anxieties remain more on the surface, centering on the belief that inflation and taxation necessary to fight a successful war would destroy the economy? And to what degree can the historian argue that this provincial sentiment lay at the very core of much of the isolationist movement, as reflected both in the House of Representatives and in the general population? Conversely, can one talk in terms of an urban isolationism? After all, such cities as New York, Chicago, and St. Louis possessed strong isolationist groups, and it is doubtful that one could explain all of this urban activity in terms of Irish-American, German-American, and Italian-American enclaves.

Other anxieties were manifest, political as well as economic ones. Particularly after the fall of France, anti-interventionists claimed that the Roosevelt administration was deliberately creating a climate of hysteria. To them, talk of a fifth column was intended to stifle democratic dissent; stress upon enemy air attack was aimed at militarizing the nation. Fears even centered on the Federal Bureau of Investigation, an institution later held sacrosanct by many who once stood in isolationist ranks. Such figures as John T. Flynn, Gerald P. Nye, and Charles Clayton Morrison all voiced concern over the FBI's power, and we now know that Lin-

bergh was subject to FBI surveillance. To what degree did anti-interventionists genuinely fear the elimination of American democracy, and how far did such fears reach beyond liberals acutely aware of infringements of civil liberties?

Secret diplomacy was an area of anti-interventionist concern. The publication of *American White Paper* (1940), written by Washington columnists Joseph Alsop and Robert Kintner, revealed—to the satisfaction of the isolationists—that early in the spring of 1940, Roosevelt had toyed with the idea of sending American naval and air forces to France. To what degree did anti-interventionists see Roosevelt making secret commitments and how could these commitments supposedly bind the nation? Presidential power, many anti-interventionists felt, was subject to such abuse that a public referendum should be conducted before the United States entered any war. But why was there such faith that mass opinion would keep the nation out of war?

At this point, the researcher turns to anti-interventionist perceptions concerning the general nature of the conflict. Comprehensive and highly debated treatments include Anne Morrow Lindbergh's *The Wave of the Future* (1940) and Lawrence Dennis's *The Dynamics of War and Revolution* (1940). Although John Foster Dulles was by no means an isolationist, his *War, Peace and Change* must be considered. Not only did many isolationists endorse his arguments against collective security, in 1940 Dulles himself personally praised Charles A. Lindbergh for speaking out against Roosevelt's foreign policy. In the same year, Dulles told Anne Morrow Lindbergh, whose book he praised, that the United States should stop giving false hope to the Allies and seek an end to the European war. How was each of these books received, and to what degree did they engender serious debate?

Many isolationists, particularly as the war went on, prefaced their remarks with condemnation of Nazism and hopes for an Allied victory. Yet they often claimed that the European war was an imperialist one, a fight over spoils between two rival power blocs. It must be noted that the accusation of imperialist war was by no means limited to Communists. It extended to a wide variety of non-interventionists, including Charles A. Lindbergh, Chester Bowles, Congressman Clare Hoffman, Arthur H. Vandenberg, William E. Borah, Charles Clayton Morrison, and William Randolph Hearst. The investigator is forced to ask if, in some sense, a crypto-Leninist picture of the "Second Imperialist War" was not permeating some highly unlikely places.

One must also treat, with far more thoroughness than has been done, the whole anti-interventionist response to "Christian realism," that form of power politics advocated by Reinhold Niebuhr and the intellectual orbit of New York's Union Theological Seminary. By no means did all "isolationists" and "pacifists" speak out of naive utopianism. Many offered concrete suggestions and analysis. Furthermore, while Charles Clayton Morrison, editor of the *Christian Century*, conceded error on certain points, he claimed quite correctly that the Niebuhrians were deliberately misrepresenting much of his antiwar position.

The points made in 1971 by the prominent church historian Robert Moats Miller need repeating: There are far fewer writings devoted to Christian pacifists and war opponents than to pacifism's severest critic, Reinhold Niebuhr; scholars still assume that Niebuhr demolished the case for pacifism; the righteous indignation of the pro-Niebuhr historians ignores or rationalizes Allied mass atrocities committed upon the peoples of the Axis powers.⁷ Obviously the entire topic needs renewed examination.

Anti-interventionists continually hammered at the matter of Allied war aims. Britain was suspected of seeking many things—bringing Hapsburg rule to Austria and Bavaria; destruction and dismemberment of Germany; a new Versailles diktat; negotiations with a Nazi “moderate” like Goering. With none of these alternatives were the anti-interventionists in sympathy. France, making no secret of desiring the partition of Germany, was not deemed worthy of discussion. All along, isolationists kept pressing for an official declaration of war aims, undoubtedly doing so not so much in expectation of receiving any statement so much as to embarrass the Allied cause. Certainly, in the summer of 1941, when the Atlantic Charter was released, most anti-interventionists found it either too vague or utopian or inferred that sinister commitments were made during the Roosevelt-Churchill meeting in Argentia, Newfoundland. Only a few anti-interventionists, such as Frederick J. Libby and General Robert E. Wood, welcomed the terms. One must ask what war aims the anti-interventionists would have found acceptable, for they saw even the most idealistic goals as smokescreens for gross and sordid deals.

Not that “idealist” war aims made things easier. Noninterventionists were extremely suspicious of any plans of world organization, and Clarence Streit's scheme of Federal Union, popularly called “Union Now,” particularly aroused their ire. Streit advocated a federal union of fifteen Western democratic powers. Within this union, all citizens would enjoy a common defense, economy, and monetary system; however, their old nation-states would retain complete home rule on all else. One would expect such ardent nationalists as Senator Rush Dew Holt, Boake Carter, and the *Saturday Evening Post* to be hostile. One should note, however, that such pacifists as A. J. Muste and Frederick J. Libby were far from enthusiastic.

Were the anti-interventionists genuinely fearful of a supranational body deciding America's fate and plunging her into interminable war? In other words, was Federal Union perceived as a serious threat to American sovereignty? Occasionally, an anti-interventionist had written seriously on problems of world order, and here one should note Felix Morley's *The Society of Nations* (1932) and Alfred M. Bingham's *The United States of Europe* (1940). Yet one must ask if many of the more ardent isolationists consciously exaggerated threats, doing so in an effort to frighten Americans concerning the consequences of entering into binding alliances.

The perception of German war aims also needs investigation. Germany, many anti-interventionists believed, did not seek a sphere of influence in the Western Hemisphere, much less conquest of the entire world. Rather it sought domination over central and eastern Europe, which—to some isolationists—was quite inevitable. As Congressman Usher Burdick commented, “If Germany wants a United States of Europe and can put it over, that is the business of Europe and not ours.”⁸ But even if German goals were so limited, why were anti-interventionists so confident that a radical shift of the balance of power in Europe would little affect the power balance in the Western Hemisphere? In short, what is the wider rationale at work here?

This takes the researcher to a related question. Why did so many anti-interventionists stress the supposed weakness of Germany, especially after she had appeared to win spectacular victories? The tone was originally set by Oswald Garrison Villard’s book *Within Germany* (1940), based upon his recent trip to Europe. Lothrop Stoddard’s *Into the Darkness: Nazi Germany Today* (1940) made similar observations: The German people hated the war, though they would fight to retain hegemony over central Europe. John Cudahy’s *The Armies March: A Personal Report* (1941) stressed the indifference of the average German citizen toward his government. Even as Germany made one conquest after another, anti-interventionists claimed that in some ways Germany’s expansion only made her weaker. Economist John T. Flynn, for example, foresaw the inevitable crackup of the German Empire; so did Trotskyist Dwight Macdonald.

Attacks on Britain were by no means limited to Communists, Coughlinites, and various Irish-American nationalists. Late in 1939, Senator Robert M. La Follette, Jr., opposed British trade in strategic resources with the Soviet Union.⁹ In May 1941, Senator Charles W. Tobey claimed that Britain had contributed \$3 billion to Hitler’s rearmament at a time she was repudiating her debt to America.¹⁰ It was the liberal editor and radio commentator Quincy Howe who wrote books bearing the titles *England Expects Every American to Do His Duty* (1937) and *Blood Is Thicker Than Water: The Prudent American’s Guide to Peace and War* (1939), both containing attacks on the British Empire.

Preliminary research, however, leads the investigator to ask one question here: whether there are inordinately more attacks on Britain from the old progressive wing of isolationism—as represented by the likes of Senators Burton K. Wheeler and Gerald P. Nye—than from the more orthodox Old Guard Republican segment. To hear some of the former, it was Britain, not Germany, that was at the brink of war with the United States. Commented interventionist Congressman Charles A. Eaton, “According to that view, Hitler is the great uncrowned saint of the modern world. And Britain is the menace we must meet.”¹¹ Though Eaton was undoubtedly engaged in a bit of demagogy, the cry was often heard that Britain was competing with the United States for crucial markets, refusing to pay her

war debts, seizing American mail, and submitting American vessels to an illegal blockade. Moreover, so extreme critics claimed, the emergency war powers adopted by Britain were so drastic that she had ceased to be a democracy.

If few books were as vitriolic against Britain as Theodore Dreiser's *America Is Worth Saving* (1941), hardly a British leader escaped isolationist scorn. Lords Lothian and Halifax, ambassadors in turn to the United States, were attacked as being too trusting of the Germans, Prime Minister Churchill as being too imperialist. Both the *Daily Worker* and the Hearst press enjoyed citing George Bernard Shaw's cynical attacks on the British war effort. However, such conservative isolationists as Amos Pinchot feared the growing influence of the British Labour Party, and in particular its supposedly sinister "theoretician," Harold J. Laski.

Isolationists of all varieties frequently attacked the British Empire. They invariably sympathized with India's nationalist movement and saw Britain's hedging on Indian independence as evidence of hypocrisy. Student isolationists in particular enjoyed having young Congress Party leaders speak at antiwar rallies. There was not the same broad basis of support for Ireland, though those who addressed themselves to the issue usually portrayed Britain as an oppressive power and backed Irish resistance to the placing of British bases on Irish soil.

Given this kind of all-out attack on British leaders and on the empire, one must ask if the more ardent anti-British spokesmen would find any British leadership or policies acceptable. Would anything short of a truce, engineered—let us say—by a new government headed by Lloyd George, have been found tolerable? And would anything short of total and immediate dissolution of the empire be proof that Britain was really a democracy? After all, efforts of such British liberals as Sir Norman Angell to defend the "commonwealth" system met with a deaf ear, as did Laski's claim that wartime restrictions did not destroy democratic practice on the British Isles.

To the anti-interventionists, the Roosevelt administration was misrepresenting the entire nature of the war. So, too, was an Eastern-dominated mass media. Hence there were few topics to which they gave as much attention as propaganda. Most historians, when covering propaganda, focus on the abortive investigations of the movie industry in the fall of 1941. But concern lasted much longer and went much deeper. Radio commentators, foreign lecturers, relief organizations—all could convey the virus. Anti-interventionist liberals were as concerned as conservatives, as witness the frequent comments made by the *Christian Century*, *Uncensored*, and Oswald Garrison Villard. Harold Levine and James Wechsler's *War Propaganda and the United States* (1940) met with a particularly warm welcome. Yet if anti-interventionists saw the media so one-sided, did they consider counterstrategies? There were hints of several efforts along this line, including the founding of an isolationist-leaning monthly to compete with the *Nation* and the *New Republic*.

Only after such examination of the underlying domestic focus of the anti-interventionists, and after looking at the general way in which they perceived the issues at stake in the conflict, can the narrative make the best sense. But even here one begins with general observations. For example, isolationists argued that to supply the Allies, even on a cash-and-carry basis, could only prolong a brutal war. They correctly saw that Germany was too strong for France and Britain to invade. But why, from the time war broke out in September 1939 to the end of the "Phony War," did they deny that Hitler could break through the Western front? Would isolationist sentiments have been eroded had the Allies been able to launch a quick blitzkrieg upon Germany and had rapidly occupied that country?

Thanks to the efforts of many historians, we now have detailed histories of legislative battles. Hence the historian now has only to delve into those aspects of legislative history that illuminate broader anti-interventionist perceptions. Turning first to the debates over cash-and-carry, adopted in November 1939, certain things should be noted. First, in no other debate before Pearl Harbor was the matter of international law so systematically explored. Edwin M. Borchard and William Potter Lage's *Neutrality for the United States* had just been published two years earlier, and an updated edition was due in 1940. The argument concerning international law did not simply come from such rigid traditionalists as Borchard and his strong ally John Bassett Moore, but from the far more moderate Philip C. Jessup. Moreover, the argument that it was both unwise and wrong even to appear to be taking sides in the new European war was seen as quite a legitimate one to advance. To what degree did anti-interventionists use international law arguments down to Pearl Harbor? Given the flagrant violations by all powers, how did they ever think that such law could be enforced or that, once the war was over, this law could be restored and claims appropriately adjusted?

Second, in no other debate was the precedent of World War I raised so much. Nye in particular drew upon the findings of his famous committee to investigate the munitions industry to stress one factor: the Wilson administration once stood at the very crossroads at which the Roosevelt administration stood in 1939.

Third, by no means did all anti-interventionists oppose cash-and-carry. In fact, such isolationists as Senator Robert A. Taft and General Robert E. Wood, soon to be chairman of the America First Committee, favored the measure. What caused such a split among the anti-interventionists? Just as crucial, when did a consensus emerge that further interventionist moves were dangerous?

Then there is the issue of Finland, invaded by the Soviet Union on November 30, 1939. Here again the isolationists were divided. Some, such as Vandenberg, not only favored loans to Finland, but sought withdrawing diplomatic recognition from the Soviet Union. Herbert Hoover personally directed one relief effort, the Finnish Relief Fund. Yet other isolationists backed Senator Alexander Wiley, concurring with his comment, "Do not open this door."¹² The fear was obvious:

If loans were extended to Finland, they would be extended to the Allies as well.

A further problem: Why was so much attention—and this was true of the nation as a whole—focused on Finland rather than on Poland, the first victim of the European war? True, one could claim that Poland was a lost cause, but even when it appeared briefly that Poland might hold out, that nation drew comparatively little sympathy. Moreover, why were any anti-interventionists, who were so fearful of possible Rooseveltian machinations, willing to aid the Finnish cause? Could the Finland case show that the views of some isolationists were determined more by an effort to check the power of the Soviet Union than by strict anti-interventionist canons? Had France and Britain sent troops to aid the Finns, would the isolationists have been more responsive to their general war effort?

When one approaches those crucial events of the spring of 1940, several questions come to the fore. To what degree did the fall of Norway lead isolationists to blame Britain, advancing the argument later stressed by such historians as B. H. Liddell Hart: Britain's mining of Norwegian waters was a provocative act that invariably triggered the German invasion.

Turning to the capitulation of France, how did most anti-interventionists react? More important, just where did they see internal French responsibility? Preliminary investigation shows that anti-interventionists of the right, such as *Scribner's Commentator*, strongly indicated Leon Blum's Popular Front, which ruled France from 1936 to 1938. By the same token, rightist isolationists promoted such books as Stanton B. Leeds, *These Rule France: The Story of Edouard Daladier and Men around Daladier* (1940) and René de Chambrun, *I Saw France Fall* (1940), both attacks on the Popular Front. Such liberals as Frank C. Hanighen, however, strongly defended the Blum regime. Few anti-interventionists claimed that General Pétain had any option in collaborating with the Germans. At one point Herbert Hoover speculated that a defeated France might lead a Latin bloc of Spain, Italy, and the Balkan states, but did other anti-interventionists share his views?

To other anti-interventionists, France raised additional issues as well. Both left and right placed much blame on American Ambassador William E. Bullitt for allegedly and irresponsibly promising France American support before war broke out. Similarly, anti-interventionists of all political persuasions deplored the French presence abroad, particularly the repression of Syria and Indochina. Also opposed was the general loss of civil liberties within wartime France and the surreptitious trade with Germany in strategic materials.

Given the unlikelihood of a possible Allied victory, much less imposing a quick defeat on Germany, from the very outset of the war most anti-interventionists sought a negotiated peace. Suggested mediators included the European neutrals, Pope Pius XII, and—despite deep suspicions—President Roosevelt. Much interest was taken in the mission of diplomat Sumner Welles, who visited the major belligerent capitals in February and March 1940, though there was some suspi-

cion that a new House-Grey agreement might be in the offing. Similarly the Hess flight of May 1941 brought hopes of truce talks.¹³

But mere descriptions of peace expectations and specific proposals beg the question. What would likely be the international power alignment resulting from any negotiation? How could anything resembling a Wilsonian peace be adopted, much less enforced? How did negotiation proponents meet the argument that Hitler would use truce time to make himself invincible, while America and Britain would do comparatively little? If it was assumed that Hitler would remain at least in economic control of the European continent, to what degree would the political autonomy of the various European states be affected?

Also important and undoubtedly related is the Hoover food plan. In a statement released on August 11, 1940, Hoover established the Committee on Food for the Small Democracies. Through the Committee, Hoover planned to feed some 27 million Europeans, mostly women and children. Hoover claimed that unless food were made immediately available, much of Europe would starve. By the middle of February 1941, the Committee had over 1,500 chapters and was endorsed by 600 prominent Americans. The plan, however, never had a chance, in large part because the Roosevelt administration insisted upon cooperating with the British blockade.

The project had strong political overtones. It was endorsed by several prominent interventionists, including General John J. Pershing and Admiral William V. Pratt, and was treated favorably in *Time* magazine. Yet much of Hoover's support came from isolationists and pacifists, and the America First Committee endorsed the effort. The extensive pacifist support is hardly surprising, for the pacifists were always quick to endorse any project that had strong humanitarian overtones. But what accounts for so much strong isolationist backing? Obviously, here, too, there was much focus on the relief of suffering. Yet undoubtedly there was the realization that a man of international stature, who had strong isolationist proclivities, could well be catapulted into major diplomatic decision-making. After all, the former president had directed the food section of the Supreme Economic Council at Versailles as well as food relief in the Soviet Union in 1921.

But whether or not a negotiated peace or the Hoover food plan was in the offing, anti-interventionists stressed that the United States could well defend herself. When interventionists warned that the nation could well go the way of Poland, Finland, France, and China, their critics challenged them point by point. Often cited was the report of the Senate Committee on Naval Affairs, released in June 1940. Chaired by the isolationist David I. Walsh, the committee claimed that the United States could be defended by guarding vital air and sea approaches. Furthermore, argued many anti-interventionists, Hitler's continual conquests only weakened him. By spreading his occupation forces so thin, it would be difficult enough for him to keep control of the European continent.

In book form, the anti-interventionist military perspective was found in such works as Al Williams, *Air Power* (1940), Fleming MacLiesh and Cushman Reynolds, *Strategy of the Americas* (1941), and Hanson W. Baldwin, *United We Stand! Defense of the Western Hemisphere* (1941). All three were less pacifist in perspective than Oswald Garrison Villard's *Our Military Chaos: The Truth About Defense* (1939). All such authors claimed that a continental defense was not only possible; it was the most desirable of all strategies. By proper allocation of the nation's resources, all of North America and much of South America could be defended. Moreover, within the hemisphere lay practically every raw material needed to fight a modern war, including rubber and tin. But one must ask how the hemisphere's undeveloped resources could meet immediate military demands, and how long it would take to become independent of crucial resources in Southeast Asia.

Most isolationists stressed air power heavily. Indeed Senator Ernest Lundeen and Major Al Williams were not alone in asking that the Army and Navy departments be matched by a new, autonomous, and powerful department of the Air Force. In one sense the isolationist argument was simple: While no foreign power was able to conduct continuous bombardment of the United States, the United States in contrast could easily pick off any attacking aircraft. Yet a careful study of how air power had been used in the first two years of the European war, and had come to be used as the war continued, would show that air power was effective only when supported by infantry and tanks. Hence the logical question arises: Did the isolationists really perceive the limitations of air power as well as its strengths?

Turning to the Navy, preliminary research shows that a naval strategy did not draw the unanimity that air strategy did. One leading isolationist, Senator Walsh, saw salvation lying through the battleship. Those of like mind denied that the United States could be outproduced in any naval race, even if the Germans captured the British fleet. Yet to what degree did the navalists represent the bulk of isolationist sentiment? Congressman Hamilton Fish, for example, strongly opposed major naval increases, finding such forces obsolete.

Almost all isolationists doubted the wisdom of a large army. In their eyes, the war of maneuver, used so successfully by Germany had made huge numbers of ground forces obsolete. Many echoed sentiments articulated in Hoffman Nickerson, *The Armed Horde, 1793-1939* (1940). While the German blitzkrieg obviously influenced such thinking, one wonders if most minds were made up by memories of the Somme and the Meuse-Argonne.

Given this general stance, the debate over the Burke-Wadsworth conscription bill, signed in September 1940, takes on meaning. To many anti-interventionists, the issue involved more than the "Prussianization" of American life. The move, they thought, actually weakened the nation, wasting American manpower in futile exercises and fighting with weapons that—even if available—modern warfare had

long made obsolete. Moreover, the attention of the nation could only be diverted from the more pressing business of rebuilding America's productive capacity and manufacturing armaments.

Yet one must look at the occasional isolationist voice, such as the *New York Daily News*, that endorsed the draft. What was the logic of those who did not adopt the general isolationist position? Why did not more isolationists endorse the Swiss citizen-soldier system advocated by Hearst? Did the fact that some isolationists sought to meet War Department requirements by volunteer recruitment—in lieu of a draft—mean that they tacitly went along with the Department's suddenly high projections?

In the debate over draft renewal, conducted in the summer of 1941, isolationists accused the administration of retaining a standing army in order to create a new American Expeditionary Force. Furthermore, so they claimed, keeping the troops in training camps was not needed. Britain was making gains in Africa, the Near East, and on sea, while Germany was facing heavy losses in Russia. Given the fact that the draft extension proposal passed the House by one vote, could a concerted isolationist campaign—spearheaded by America First—have defeated the bill? Or would such a crusade have backfired, bringing blame upon the bill's foes for cutting the ground under an army just being formed? Is there any evidence for the suspicion that at least some isolationists tacitly saw the need for a mass army as the nation moved closer to war?

Isolationists were almost unanimous in perceiving the Monroe Doctrine as involving as much of a "hands off" warning to European activity in the Western Hemisphere as a pledge to abstain from "meddling" abroad. Certainly, isolationists saw North and Central America, and the Caribbean, as in the U.S. sphere of influence. Obviously there was a bit of demagoguery behind the push of senators Ernest Lundeen and Robert Rice Reynolds to grab the European-owned islands of the West Indies, supposedly in lieu of debts still owed from World War I. Equally obviously, however, the demand struck a ready chord among isolationists—and some others as well. There was more at work than mere vengeance upon an "ungrateful" Europe. There was a legitimate fear, shared by the Roosevelt administration, that Hitler's conquest of European nations would cause him to claim their possessions in the New World.

In September 1940, the destroyer-bases deal ensured that the United States had ninety-nine-year leases for bases in Newfoundland and the Caribbean. Several isolationist voices, including the *Chicago Tribune* and the *New York Daily News*, welcomed the deal. By far the greater number, however, thought the price in battleships too high and claimed that Roosevelt was acting unconstitutionally. But would the critics of the arrangement have been satisfied with anything other than an outright ceding of the bases involved and perhaps the islands proper? And if so, would they have been willing to see the United States assume responsibility, particularly in depression times, for raising living standards in impoverished Caribbean islands?

Though isolationists talked much about the hemispheric defense, they differed among themselves as to how much of South America the United States could defend against overseas attack. Why did some question the wisdom of attempting to defend the entire hemisphere, particularly as interventionists continually articulated fears of the two continents isolated in an Axis world? And how many noninterventionists shared the concerns of Carlton Beals, whose *Pan America* (1940) combined pleas for hemispheric unity with an end to U.S. and European domination of Latin America?

When one examines hemispheric defense in detail, one finds isolationists frequently commenting on other areas, ranging from Alaska to the Azores. To what degree did they endorse defending Canada, given their apprehension that Canada, a belligerent, could drag the Western Hemisphere into the European conflict? The fact that Canada was experiencing various wartime controls, including the sacrifice of some civil liberties, made her even less appealing as an ally. On the other hand, in any serious strategy of hemispheric defense, Canada would have to play a major role.

In 1940, such isolationists as Lundeen and Fish called for the purchase of Greenland. Yet, in April 1941, when the United States received Denmark's permission to operate defense installations there, other isolationists—including Lindbergh—downplayed its value and opposed military occupation. Similar objections came from Lindbergh and America First when, in July 1941, the United States landed forces in Iceland, also an area that has been sought by Fish and Lundeen. To what degree did such objections center on the matter of presidential powers? Did the fear center on their use as convoy stations? Were Greenland and Iceland seen as natural appendages to Europe, not North America? To what degree did any strategic rationale coincide, or conflict, with the desire to avoid warlike provocation.

At the same time that they preached hemispheric defense, anti-interventionists denied that a new American Expeditionary Force could invade Europe. Such an effort would be too costly, taking perhaps five years and involving several million casualties. World War I, if anything, was a negative precedent, for in 1917 and 1918 the United States was able to land troops safely on the French coast, and the Central Powers were forced to fight on several fronts. However, to what degree was their argument stymied by the fact that many interventionists, including President Roosevelt, usually envisioned air and sea commitments, with ground forces kept to a minimum?

The interventionists, from Roosevelt on down, argued strongly that an Axis victory would isolate the United States commercially, so much so that the nation could survive as a capitalist power only with difficulty. Anti-interventionists proposed a number of ways to meet this challenge. Vital raw materials, usually imported from Asia, could be replaced by substitutes or new sources of supply, though one must raise questions concerning the time contemplated for such

substitutes to be developed on a large scale. Some Latin American markets could be expanded to compensate for the loss of European ones, yet here one must ask if the Latin American states would ever have the purchasing power to compensate for the loss of German-occupied Europe. One should note that such isolationists as General Wood conceded that beef, cotton, wool, and copper of Brazil, Chile, and Argentina found natural markets in Europe; with the exception of copper, they could only compete with U.S. production. How many isolationists agreed with Nye, who was so fearful of Britain's commercial strength that he welcomed her destruction as a trading power?

The isolationists spoke of other alternatives. Several, including the research division of the America First Committee, argued that a Nazi-occupied Europe would be dependent upon outside sources of supply, including American raw materials. How could German occupation of Russia affect such a prediction, particularly given the abundance of grain in the Ukraine and oil in the Caucasus? Economic autarchy, that is the development of total national self-sufficiency, was a favorite solution of Herbert Hoover. But would such a solution necessitate the very kind of economic controls that Hoover abhorred? Occasionally the whole concept of an economic open door was challenged. See, for example, Jerome Frank, *Save America First: How to Make Our Democracy Work* (1938) and John Chamberlain, *The American Stakes* (1940). But how many anti-interventionists thought in such comprehensive terms?¹⁴

Only after such examination of the general strategic and economic doctrines of the anti-interventionists should the historian return to a study of the narrative. Here again, many excellent monographs have covered debates and events fully. Hence, one can now ask what the specific events reveal about general anti-interventionist perceptions. Obviously, the period from the fall of France to Pearl Harbor contains many important events to which anti-interventionists reacted: the air battle over Britain and the possible threat of a German invasion of the British Isles; the appointment in June 1940 of ardent interventionists Henry L. Stimson and Frank Knox, respectively, to the Army and Navy cabinet positions; the presidential election of 1940, in which debate over intervention played a significant role; the debate over lend-lease; the formation of the America First and No Foreign War committees; the extension of the war to Greece and Yugoslavia; Hitler's invasion of Russia; the sinking of various American ships; and the debate over total repeal of the neutrality acts.

Anti-interventionist reaction to all these issues must be placed in a wider context, one that deals with the broader prognosis concerning the war. Of course, all reaction is of necessity sporadic and the possibility of finding broader patterns difficult. Yet some preliminary observations may be in order. Throughout much of 1940, most noninterventionists saw only stalemate or British defeat ahead. Germany could not be easily dislodged from the European continent, while Britain herself might well be invaded. Yet even stalemate would be ruinous for Europe, as communism would eventually dominate everywhere.

By the spring of 1941, isolationists were increasingly talking in terms of British defeat, though relatively few saw the British Isles invaded. Germany, many believed, was bound to occupy the Balkans, and isolationists argued that American encouragement of Yugoslavian and Greek resistance would simply make the situation worse. Indeed, General William J. ("Wild Bill") Donovan received heavy blame for misleading the Yugoslavs concerning imminent American aid. What made the isolationists so pessimistic concerning Britain's chances, particularly since Britain had often held her own in East Africa and the Near East?

We now have major treatments of the lend-lease controversy, including Warren F. Kimball's *The Most Unsordid Act: Lend-Lease, 1939-1941* (1969). Hence any work on anti-interventionist reaction can best center on issues that have wider manifestations—international law, presidential power, and such alternatives as a major loan to Britain.

Moving to the Soviet Union, one must note that extensive anti-interventionist attention to Russia began well before June 22, 1941, the date of Hitler's invasion. Ever since the European war had broken out, anti-interventionists constantly stressed that the conflict could result only in the spread of communism throughout all Europe. A few liberal isolationists, such as Harry Elmer Barnes, claimed that the Hitler-Stalin pact gave the Western Allies their just deserts, for their conduct at Munich revealed that they were never serious about forming an anti-German alliance. However, most isolationists not only condemned the pact; they equally strongly condemned Russia's conquests in Poland, the Baltic states, and Finland. When Finland invaded Russia in 1941, acting in coordination with Germany, many isolationists supported the Finnish action. A good many anti-interventionists claimed that the Soviet Union, by withholding support from either side, was driving a hard bargain with Hitler. Indeed, Stalin—not Hitler—could well be the more clever leader.

Few isolationists went as far as Freda Utley. The British-born journalist argued in *The Dream We Lost: Soviet Russia Then and Now* (1940) that under conditions of peace and economic opportunity, Germany could well turn toward democracy, while Russia never could. However, a good many isolationists saw the Soviet Union as the more oppressive world power. In short, while the difference between the Nazi and Communist regimes was one of degree, not kind. Germany fared better—if only slightly—in the moral equation. When Roosevelt—in calling for lend-lease to Russia—said that the Soviet constitution of 1936 guaranteed religious liberty, isolationists gleefully pounced on the statement. Such perspectives need extensive research, particularly since much of the American public was learning far more of Germany's crimes than those of Russia.

In August 1941, various isolationists—Hiram Johnson and Hamilton Fish among them—hoped that both powers would destroy each other, something they believed more likely to happen if the United States remained aloof. By October and even November, isolationists predicted Stalin's defeat. The German advance had been

so swift, and her army so powerful, that victory was almost inevitable. Only a few isolationists—Senator Burton K. Wheeler for one—endorsed any aid to Russia. But what, in isolationist eyes, would German domination of Russia mean for a general European balance of power? Why were some hopeful that a quick German conquest would be a prelude to a European peace?

Turning to the issue of neutrality repeal, one finds several themes needing investigation. In November 1941, Congress voted to arm American merchant vessels and permit them to carry cargoes to belligerent ports. Why, in arguing against the bill, did isolationists keep stressing matters of international law, both in relation to various American ships already sunk (the *Lehigh*, *Robin Moor*, *Greer*, *Kearny*) as well as in relation to the proposed legislation? After all, it must have been obvious to all concerned that international law could at best play a minor role in the conflict. Another question: How valid was the isolationist claim that the armament to be provided for the American ships was ineffective, particularly against submarines and aircraft? Still another point: How viable was one option posed by the isolationists, to place under British registry whatever ships carried supplies to the Allies?

When it comes to Japan, there is enough material concerning the anti-interventionist response to make a small book. Events that must be examined for isolationist response include the following: Secretary of State Cordell Hull's announcement on July 26, 1939, that the United States intended to abrogate the 1911 commercial treaty within six months; the termination of the 1911 treaty in January 1940; Hull's warning the Japanese on April 17, 1940, to keep their hands off the Dutch East Indies; the formation of the Tripartite Pact on September 27, 1940; Japan's occupation of French Indochina on July 24, 1941; Roosevelt's freezing of Japanese credits in the United States on July 26, 1941, thus bringing all Japanese-American trade to a halt; the Hull-Nomura talks beginning on November 20; and the Pearl Harbor attack on December 7. Particularly important would be any critique of the American negotiating position, particularly concerning Japanese withdrawal from China.

Many anti-interventionists, particularly in Congress, opposed the continual supplying of aviation gasoline and scrap iron to Japan, both on the grounds that such activity violated the spirit of the neutrality acts and that Japan's conduct in China had been barbarous. Without American supplies, Japan's war effort could not continue. Freda Utley spoke for this element of noninterventionism when she wrote *Japan's Feet of Clay* (1937) and kept repeating her argument until the Pearl Harbor attack.

However, to stress anti-Japanese sentiment only oversimplifies far more diffuse reactions. Preliminary investigation indicates that, outside the Congress, most anti-interventionists did not want to confront Japan, though the extent of this sentiment still must be measured. America Firstism by no means embodied Asia Firstism. Furthermore, the researcher must note various degrees of vacillation

toward Japan. For example, in July 1941, Wheeler defended the freezing of Japanese assets, but a month later he grew apprehensive.

Those anti-interventionists who sought to avoid confrontation gave varied reasons, and the historian must weigh their importance. An occasional isolationist, such as John Bassett Moore, denied that China was a nation-state; it was, said the prominent jurist, simply "a geographic name." And an occasional author, like Ralph Townsend, would denounce the Chinese people as epitomizing *Ways That Are Dark* (1933). (One should also note Townsend's *Asia Answers* [1936]). But only a small minority spoke this way. A good many stressed America's relatively lucrative trade with Japan as compared with China. Former American diplomat William R. Castle saw Japan's domination of the Asian mainland as inevitable; in fact he predicted that it might well result in demands for American goods. The economic case was most ably made by investment counselor William J. Baxter in *Japan and America Must Work Together* (1940). Many anti-interventionists denied that there was any material American interest in the Far East worth a war. To some isolationists, entanglement with Japan was seen as the "backdoor to war," particularly after the formal formation of the Tripartite alliance. Not only could war with Japan lead to war in Europe; the administration—they believed—was using the pretense of a Japanese threat to buttress an alien Western presence in Hong Kong, Singapore, French Indochina, and the Dutch East Indies. Even some pacifists stressed that Japan had legitimate economic problems, as she lacked the food, natural resources, and living space to support her burgeoning population.

Most anti-interventionists claimed that Japan posed no military threat. She would be unable to attack a well-fortified Hawaii, much less the United States. On the other hand, all isolationist scenarios of war with Japan showed that conquest of Japan would be quite difficult, perhaps impossible. The overwhelming majority of military experts, isolationists argued, had found the Philippines and Guam undefensible, and the United States should make no commitment there. Frequently quoted were the views of the retired Major General William C. Rivers, who had once been stationed in the Philippines. William Randolph Hearst was in a decided minority among anti-interventionists in calling for the retention of the Philippines, though he did not think Japan belligerent and looked forward to an accommodation with her.

After such comprehensive examination of the anti-interventionist's general perspective, one may start to determine if we are dealing with more than a mere ad hoc response. To what degree might there be, at least in embryo, a sustained geopolitical position, one as rooted in analyses of the balance of power overseas as in domestic anxieties? Or is the position fundamentally a "reactive" one, that is, one that would never have been formulated had it not been for Roosevelt's international initiatives? Are the anti-interventionists "antis" in the truest sense, in that there was little to bind them together beyond opposition to administration

measures? An initial investigation shows that some of the leadership of the America First Committee, for example, feared that the organization was too negative and that it lacked the kind of positive ideology that would have given it staying power. A responsible answer to these questions takes the researcher well into the decade preceding those tumultuous years, 1939-1941. But, by starting here, one can at least begin to understand this complicated and diffuse phenomenon.

NOTES

1. Manfred Jonas, "Isolationism," in Alexander DeConde, ed., *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy: Studies of the Principal Movements and Ideas*, vol. 2 (New York: Scribner's, 1978), p. 496.
2. The author of this article has contributed various bibliographical essays, including *The Literature of Isolationism: A Guide to Non-Interventionist Scholarship, 1930-1972* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Ralph Myles, 1972); "Beyond Polemics: An Historiographical Re-Appraisal of American Entry into World War II," *History Teacher* 11 (February 1979): 217-51; and "The Anti-Interventionist Tradition: Leadership and Perceptions," *Literature of Liberty* 4 (Summer 1981): 7-67.
3. Wayne S. Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists, 1932-45* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), p. 320.
4. Among the manuscripts examined by the author and their repositories are *Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library*: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Emil Hurja; *Library of Congress*: Robert A. Taft, Robert M. La Follette, Jr., Amos Pinchot; *Bancroft Library of the University of California at Berkeley*: Hiram Johnson; *Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace*: Freda Utey, America First Committee, Raymond Moley; *Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa*: Herbert Hoover, Verne Marshall, William R. Castle, Gerald P. Nye; *Princeton University*: John Foster Dulles; *Yale University*: Edwin M. Borchard, Alfred M. Bingham, Jerome Frank; *Ohio Historical Society*: John Vorvys, Frederick C. Smith; *University of Oregon*: John T. Flynn, Merwin K. Hart; *State Historical Society of Wisconsin*: Philip F. La Follette; *University of Wyoming*: Harry Elmer Barnes; *Swarthmore College Peace Collection*: Keep America Out of War Congress, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Fellowship of Reconciliation, National Council for the Prevention of War, Youth Committee Against War, A. J. Muste.
5. Michael Straight, *After Long Silence* (New York: Norton, 1983), p. 159.
6. Among the collegiate newspapers examined by the author are the *Amherst Student*, *Antioch Record*, *Barnard Bulletin*, *Brooklyn College Vanguard*, *Brown Daily Herald*, *Bryn Mawr College News*, *Daily Californian* (University of California, Berkeley), *The Campus* (City College of New York), *Main Events* (City College of New York evening session), *Clark News* (renamed *The Scarlet*), *Daily Maroon* (University of Chicago), *Colgate Maroon*, *Cornell Daily Sun*, *Columbia Spectator*, *The Dartmouth*, *Fordham Ram*, *Hatchet* (George Washington University), *The Hoya* (Georgetown University), *Harvard Crimson*, *Haverford News*, *Johns Hopkins Newsletter*, *Diamondback* (University of Maryland), *Michigan Daily* (University of Michigan), *Mount Holyoke News*, *The New Hampshire* (University of New Hampshire), *Daily Tar Heel* (University of North Carolina), *Heights Daily News* (University Heights campus, New York University), *Washington Square College Bulletin* (New York University), *Daily Northwestern*, *Daily Princetonian*, *Tower Times* (women's college, University of Rochester), *Smith College Weekly* (retitled *Smith College Associated News*), *Stanford Daily*, *Swarthmore Phoenix*, *Union Review* (Union Theological Seminary, New York), *California Daily Bruin* (University of California at Los Angeles), *Vanderbilt Hustler*, *Vassar Miscellany News*, *Wesleyan Argus*, *Wellesley College News*, *Williams Record*, *Daily Cardinal* (University of Wisconsin), *Yale Daily News*.
7. Robert Moats Miller, *How Shall They Hear Without a Preacher? The Life of Ernest Fremont Title* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971), pp. 453-56.
8. Burdick, *Congressional Record*, 12 August 1941, p. 7002.
9. La Follette, *Congressional Record*, 12 October 1939, p. 331.
10. Tobey, *Congressional Record*, 11 May 1941, p. A2267.

11. Eaton, *Congressional Record*, 12 November 1941, p. 8778.
12. Wiley, *American Forum of the Air*, January 28, 1940, as in *Congressional Record*, A617.
13. For a preliminary survey that focuses on such questions, see the author's "Germany in Isolationist Ideology, 1939-1941: The Issue of a Negotiated Peace," in Hans L. Trefousse, *Germany and America: Essays on Problems of International Relations and Immigration* (New York: Brooklyn College Press, 1980), pp. 215-26.
14. For the author's preliminary findings on this matter, see "Power, Markets, and Ideology: The Isolationist Response to Roosevelt Policy, 1940-1941," in Leonard P. Liggio and James J. Martin, eds., *Watershed of Empire: Essays on New Deal Foreign Policy* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Ralph Myles, 1976), pp. 132-61.