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Isolationism, the Devil, and the Advent of the Second World War: Variations on a Theme

IN 1957 WAYNE S. COLE observed that analysts of American intervention in the Second World War had neglected the impact of emotional and psychological forces on the decision which brought the United States closer to the conflict.[1] Assessments of the leading participants in the Great Debate that raged from 1939 to 1941, Cole suggested, assumed that interventionists and isolationists alike made decisions in a rational way. Moreover, advocates of intervention and of the Roosevelt Administration's aid-short-of-war policies were more reasonable. Aware of the need to exercise power, they were convinced that Great Britain constituted the Republic's front line of defence, and that a Nazi victory in Europe would threaten national security.

Noninterventionists, on the other hand, became 'losers' in the Great Debate, and therefore fare less well in most historical accounts. Condemned as appeasers before and after Pearl Harbor by their historical and historiographical adversaries, the noninterventionists felt that it was vital for the nation to remain aloof from the conflict. For these citizens, participation in the First World War constituted a warning that meddling in the affairs of Europe would prove self-defeating. Intervention in 1917 had not made the world safe for democracy; indeed, the war underlined the distinction between American and European institutions and values. Whatever their version of the good society – and there were many – noninterventionists conceived of the Republic's mission as setting for the world a

This article was commissioned by the Historian's Project, and reflects further research and criticism of my book, *To Save a Nation: American Countersubversives, the New Deal, and the Coming of World War II* (New York, 1973). I wish to thank for their suggestions Wayne Cole, Wilson Carey McWilliams, William Tuttle, Leo Ribuffo, and Richard Parry.

1 Wayne S. Cole, 'American Entry Into World War II: An Historiographical Appraisal', *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XLIII (1957), 595-617.

The International History Review, IV, 1, February 1982, Pp. 1-158
CN ISSN 0707-5332

shining example of what could be achieved by a self-reliant, virtuous, peaceable nation. That mission did not include redressing the European or Asian balance of power.

Global events during the 1920s and especially the 1930s revealed that twentieth century isolationism was a complex phenomenon, encompassing ideological, ethnic, and demographic components.[2] One of these factors was the moral sensibility – and related depth of feeling – that characterized the noninterventionist battle against participation in the Second World War. This crusade began long before 1939, but only after that year was it matched by a commensurate vehemence on the part of friends of the Roosevelt Administration.

Identifying this component is easier than specifying its impact upon the foreign policy debate. Like the epidemiologist – that gumshoe detective of the medical research world who must study disease outside the lab – the historian of emotion and psychological variables must deal in generalities, lest he reduce the intricacy that is history to what David Hackett Fischer termed a temporal provincialism – characterized by flat, monistic explanations of complex motivational problems.[3] One reason, therefore, why diplomatic historians have not flocked to answer the call of either Cole or William L. Langer to broaden 'our historical understanding through exploitation of the concepts and findings of modern psychology',[4] is the brute fact that practitioners of the discipline are themselves at war over the basic matter of premises and paradigms. Models provided by psychology, furthermore, are largely ahistorical, based upon inductive reasoning, with preconceived hypotheses determining not only one's frame of reference, but also the facts which count. Consequently, such theoretical constructs as Richard Hofstadter's 'paranoid style' often betray the values and biases of historians who employ them rather than illuminating the uniqueness of historical issues.

These problems notwithstanding, the historian must still find meaning in the commitment, moral absolutism, and explosive rhetoric that coloured the domestic debate before Pearl Harbor. While the devil theory of war reached its apotheosis in the 1930s, its mirror image – the conspiracy theory of dissent – achieved primacy in the 1950s, accompanying the emergence of consensus history. According to this version of the American past, dissent had no place in a country whose inhabitants demonstrated over-

2 Alexander DeConde, 'On Twentieth-Century Isolationism', in *Isolation and Security: Ideas and Interests in Twentieth-Century American Foreign Relations* ed. A. DeConde, (Durham, NC, 1957), pp. 2-32.

3 David Hackett Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* (New York, 1970), p. 187.

4 William L. Langer, 'The Next Assignment', *American Historical Review*, LXIII (1958), 283-304.

arching agreement upon political and economic fundamentals. Americans had differed, certainly, but only over the proper means to improve capitalism and better the nation's democratic institutions. The 1950s were thus influenced by the assumption that fundamental criticism of the status quo was illegitimate. Consensus history reflected, among other things, the nation's prosperity, the need for unity in the face of the Soviet challenge to American power, the overlapping of Democratic and Republican domestic and foreign policies, and the political fallout generated by McCarthyism, a phenomenon that confirmed élite groups in their desire to be rid of ideology, and in their feeling that mass democracy threatened national unity.[5]

Influenced by pluralist social theory, consensus scholars imputed the fear of subversion to the far left and especially the 'radical right' in American politics, exponents of what Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab termed a monistic persuasion.[6] Extracting the fear of conspiracy from the marrow of American politics, where earlier Progressive historians located it, albeit in blunt, dualistic terms, consensus writers derived inspiration from the social sciences and stigmatized dissenters, leaving them outside the mainstream of American history.

As the Johnson and Nixon Presidencies revealed, however, the fear of subversion – and the illusions this concern generated – was not confined to eccentrics and the alienated.[7] Indeed, countersubversion has exerted perhaps its greatest impact within party politics and mainline culture, influencing, for example, colonial ideology before the Revolutionary War, the debate between Federalists and Democratic-Republicans during the 1790s, the battle between abolitionists and their adversaries before the Civil War, the government's Espionage Act of 1917 and conduct during the subsequent 'Red Scare', and the attitudes of Americans toward the West Coast Japanese in the early period of the Second World War.[8]

The call for bipartisanship in foreign affairs also illustrated the belief at élite levels that dissent over foreign policy was not simply the result of honest differences of opinion toward international goals, but evidence of the work of those who would undermine national security. This demand

5 Bernard Sternsher, *Consensus, Conflict and American Historians* (Bloomington, 1975).

6 *The Politics of Unreason: Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1970* (New York, 1970), p. 3-34.

7 See Doris Kearns, *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream* (New York, 1976); and Jonathan Schell, *The Time of Illusion* (New York, 1976), especially pp. 131-4.

8 See, e.g., Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, 1967), and *The Origins of American Politics* (New York, 1970); Alexander DeConde, *The Quasi-War: The Politics and Diplomacy of the Undeclared War with France, 1797-1801* (New York, 1966), pp. 74-108; David B. Davis, *The Slave Power Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style* (Baton Rouge, 1970); Paul Murphy, *World War I and the Origin of Civil Liberties in the United States* (New York, 1979); and Roger Daniels, *Concentration Camps North America: Japanese in the United States and Canada during World War II* (Huntington, NT, 1981).

for unity became an integral component of Franklin D. Roosevelt's decision after 1939 to extend aid to European opponents of Nazism. While noninterventionists adhered openly to a devil theory of war before Pearl Harbor, interventionists and the administration fashioned their own conspiracy theory of dissent, which held important implications for citizens striving to prevent participation in the second global war in two decades.

In the years preceding the outbreak of European hostilities, however, wariness about potential élite subversion of the national interest dominated popular thinking. Isolationists, of course, counselled that the nation's foreign policy goal should be the avoidance of war – except in the case of direct attack. Few realized that by definition this precept might restrict the range of choice available to policymakers in the event of a crisis. This anomaly, though, was not apparent in the mid-1930s, as several forces made difficulties in Europe and Asia appear more remote than they were.[9]

The isolationist renaissance was shaped primarily by the Great Depression. American economic nationalism, epitomized by the prohibitive Smoot-Hawley Tariff of 1930, was itself a manifestation of worldwide autarkic tendencies. In the United States, as Roosevelt succeeded Herbert Hoover, public opinion demanded that the new President address the nation's economic woes. Even as late as December 1936, while civil war engulfed Spain, unemployment and economy in government ranked as the 'most vital issues before the American people today'.[10] This perception did not change until the spring of 1939, long after the nadir of the depression.

In the interim, Americans perceived world affairs as a distraction from the proper task of government, and as a danger to be parried by prohibiting commercial and other contacts with belligerents. Moreover, many citizens expressed doubt in their country's special mission. Capitalism and democracy seemed to be tottering; American politicans, bankers ('banksters'), and businessmen drew scorn; and many intellectuals expressed admiration for Soviet economic planning and for the leadership and organization with which Mussolini and his *fascisti* appeared to be banishing chaos and poverty from postwar Italy.[11]

But this phase was transitory. It did not require a sage to predict that Japan's advance into China in 1931 and German rearmament in 1933-34 threatened peace. As North Dakota's Gerald P. Nye saw matters in August 1935, the world was 'topsy-turvy and quite definitely headed to war'.[12] To prevent the United States from being sucked into the vortex, strong measures were necessary, and isolationists who shared Nye's fore-

9 Manfred Jonas, *Isolationism in America, 1935-1941* (Ithaca, 1966), p. 15.
10 *Ibid.*, p. 25.
11 John P. Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism: The View From America* (Princeton, 1972).
12 *Congressional Record*, XXIV. 1 (24 Aug. 1935), 14535.

boding produced nothing less.

To comprehend the major institutional expression of isolationism during the 1930s – the neutrality laws enacted by Congress between 1935 and 1937 – one must probe the ambiance that produced them. Contributing to the isolationist outlook, not surprisingly given its introverted nature, was a conspiratorial outlook, a countersubversive persuasion, didactic in purpose and alarmist in tone, purporting to find in the background of American intervention in the First World War lessons that would prevent a repetition of that blunder.[13]

From Erich Remarque to John Dos Passos, writers in the 1920s hammered on the theme that the wanton savagery of the Great War demonstrated the futility of martial conflict in the lives of nations. American journalists and scholars, led by John Kenneth Turner, Frederic Bausman, C. Hartley Grattan, and Harry Elmer Barnes built on historian Sidney Bradshaw Fay's revelation that, contrary to Entente propaganda and Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles, none of the warring European powers could escape complicity for the war. Fay also challenged the Wilson Administration's explanation that the nation had gone to war to defend its own interests, arrayed with the forces of good against Prussian militarism. Fay himself did not comment further on Wilson's policies, but other revisionists of the 1920s and 1930s were less reticient.[14]

Disillusionment with the war produced by the late 1930s an interpretive orthodoxy that endowed the isolationist (noninterventionist after 1939) camp with its retrospective, antigovernment tone. Beginning shortly after the war, Barnes led a phalanx of writers which argued that US intervention resulted from the emotionalism, errors in judgment, and wrong-headed patriotism of the Wilson White House. To these revisionists, the argument that Germany's resumption of submarine warfare caused American involvement proved less convincing than the administration's 'unneutrality, lack of courage, [and] maladroitness . . . in regard to English violations of international law'.[15]

Like many of his countrymen who earlier lent their talents to promoting the war effort, Barnes now joined the burgeoning crusade against crusades. Not only had the World War failed to extend democracy or provide insurance against future wars, the conflict had jeopardized global order by invigorating revolutionary ideology and nationalism. On the

13 In *The Vanity of Power: American Isolationism and the First World War, 1914-1917* (Westport, CONN, 1969), John Milton Cooper argues that the First World War isolationists formulated the entire constellation of arguments that isolationists and noninterventionists used in the 1930s.

14 A superb analysis of this revisionism is Warren I. Cohen, *The American Revisionists: The Lessons of Intervention in World War I* (Chicago, 1967).

15 Harry Elmer Barnes, *The Genesis of the World War* (New York, 1926), pp. 587-650. Barnes' papers are located at the University of Wyoming.

home front, furthermore, intolerance generated by American participation violated the civil liberties of thousands of dissenters. C. Hartley Grattan, Barnes's student at Clark University, elaborated on his mentor's thesis in 1929 with *Why We Fought,* a book that borrowed from Harold Lasswell's pathbreaking *Propaganda Technique in the World War,* and indicted British publicists and Wilson's Anglophile advisers, especially Walter Hines Page and Robert Lansing, for undermining neutrality. Grattan considered the crucial determinants to be executive irresponsibility and domestic, not Entente, propaganda, and he also criticized the capitalist order for producing conditions favouring intervention. This note struck a receptive chord among isolationists on the left, who carried with them traditional populist and progressive suspicion of Eastern business interests.

Flowing from diverse eddies, there coursed during the 1930s an historiographical torrent of articles and books illustrating what Charles Beard, the historian, termed 'the devil theory of war'. Proponents of this view felt that by exposing the influential financiers and munitions-makers, whose loyalty to profits led them in secret to manipulate foreign policy and engineer intervention, the nation might realize and check the threat to peace which they posed. This was the message conveyed by *Fortune* in March 1934, in an article entitled 'Arms and the Men', which criticized several European firms, and DuPont and Bethlehem in the United States, for supranational loyalty that led them to foment disputes and prolong war. In the same year, George Seldes published *Iron, Blood and Profits,* and Helmuth C. Engelbrecht and Frank C. Hanighen produced *Merchants of Death,* muckraking efforts which found the avarice of the munitions firms incompatible with peace.

The devil theory of war became by 1939 accepted conventional wisdom in college and high school textbooks, dominating the nation's foreign policy stance during mid-decade, and – in the two years before Pearl Harbor – affecting relations between noninterventionists and their opponents. Popular and scholarly studies alike stressed the subversive intent of bankers and war financiers, and the untrustworthiness of elected officials. Walter Millis's *Road to War* (1935) never quite explained why the United States entered the fray, but the volume's dust-jacket nonetheless pledged to recreate 'the frenzied years of 1914-17 when . . . a peace-loving democracy, misinformed and whipped to frenzy, embarked upon its greatest foreign war . . . Read it and blush! Read it and beware!'[16] In *Propaganda for War* (1939), Horace C. Peterson argued that between 1914 and 1917, many national leaders were busy fighting Great Britain's battles on American

16 Quoted in Selig Adler, *The Isolationist Impulse: Its Twentieth Century Reaction* (New York, 1961), p. 236.

soil. Cognizant, like Barnes, of the lessons history held for the present, Peterson lamented that Washington policymakers did not see that the nature of European politics made wars inevitable.[17]

A similar concern for the national interest informed *Neutrality for the United States,* written by two international lawyers, Edwin Borchard and William Lage, who argued that the policies of the Wilson Administration favoured the interests of other nations more than the United States. Sceptical of interpreting the actions of Wilson and his advisers as sinister, Borchard and Lage argued that 'the surrender was not made through malevolence but through short-sighted emotionalism, a confusion of ideas as to where America's interest lay.'[18]

Charles Callan Tansill's *America Goes to War* brought the First World War revisionism to full flower. The Irish-Catholic historian agreed that pro-British sympathies and anti-German suspicions, together with one-sided financial and commercial policies, led to American intervention. 'There was no clear-cut road to war', Tansill wrote. 'There were many dim trails of doubtful promise, and one along which [Wilson] traveled with early misgivings and reluctant tread was that which led to American economic solidarity with the Allies.'[19] In the most scholarly account of the era, Tansill explained how the pro-Entente loyalties of Page, Lansing, and Colonel Edward M. House undercut neutrality. The timely corollary to this argument indicated that Washington might have bypassed the war had policymakers been more loyal to national ideals.

Peterson, Borchard and Lage, and Tansill all wrote after 1938, when Germany's designs in Europe and Japan's in China had become unmistakable. The lessons these writers drew from 1914-17 were, they believed, heavy with meaning for Americans confronting the global threat to peace. Even before the late 1930s, however, the devil theory of war exerted a strong pull upon American foreign policy, as the Nye Committee investigations, the abortive Ludlow Amendment, and neutrality legislation all indicated how suspicion of bankers, munitions-makers, and executive perfidy permeated the consideration of the nation's proper stance towards world conflict.

Despite its realistic premise that some world problems were intractable, the devil theory of war posited that the main danger to peace lurked within

17 Horace C. Peterson, *Propaganda for War: The Campaign against American Neutrality, 1914-1917* (Norman, OK, 1939). Other studies of the impact of war propaganda on the United States include J. M. Read, *Atrocity Propaganda, 1914-1919* (New Haven, 1941); George Creel, *How We Advertised America* (New York, 1920); J. R. Mock and Cedric Larson, *Words That Won the War* (Princeton, 1939); and Harold Lavine and James Wechsler, *War Propaganda and the United States* (New Haven, 1940).

18 Edwin Borchard and William Lage, *Neutrality for the United States* (2nd ed., New Haven, 1940), especially pp. 334-50.

19 Charles C. Tansill, *America Goes to War* (Boston, 1938), p. 134.

business and government élites. The Senate committee to investigate the munitions industry, which held hearings between 1934 and 1936 'proved' that which pacifists such as Dorothy Detzer of the Women's International League for Peace and Democracy, progressive-isolationist legislators like Hiram Johnson, William Borah, and Robert La Follette, and conservative Anglophobes Robert A. Taft, Arthur H. Vandenbery, and Hamilton Fish, had known all along – that war profits threatened peace.

Headed by Gerald Nye, the committee made a thorough study of materials in the United States, but it ignored foreign sources. This gap reflected the committee's hypothesis that the munitions-maker, particularly in America, was the most dangerous kind of war profiteer. This view ignored that the United States ranked only third among munitions-producing nations, far behind Great Britain and France, and that access to the files of Vickers, Hotchkiss, Krupp, Skoda, and Schneider-Creusot would have clarified the impact, or lack thereof, exerted by domestic munitions firms upon their country's neutrality. Nevertheless, the Nye Committee etched in the national mind the image of 'an efficient, callous, international combine' that had 'comprised the integrity of public servants, undermined disarmament, ignored embargoes, lobbied for ever-increasing armament expenditures, plotted war scares, and in wartime dealt with all belligerents regardless of moral or legal position'.[20]

The Nye hearings 'transformed the revisionist interpretation of American entrance into the First World War into a popular orthodoxy'.[21] Both the committee and the revisionists, it should be noted, ignored several issues Wilson confronted in 1917: what kind of balance of power would have resulted had Washington stayed out of the war?; would a German victory have proved inimical to American interests? Nevertheless, the uncertain state of world affairs – which the isolationists viewed as the result of the war to extend democracy, and of the nation's floundering economy – led most citizens to embrace the committee's findings. If the United States had walled itself off from Europe in 1914-17, it could have escaped the war debt fiasco and also the Great Depression.

To prevent future problems, Congress in 1934 passed the Johnson Act,

20 John E Wiltz, *In Search of Peace: The Senate Munitions Inquiry, 1934-1936* (Baton Rouge, 1963) pp. 15, 69, 73-4. See also Agnes A. Trotter, 'The Development of the Merchants of Death Theory for World War I', (PhD, Duke, 1966).

21 Selig Adler, *The Uncertain Giant, 1921-1941: American Foreign Policy Between the Wars* (New York, 1965), pp. 164-5. Wiltz suggests, meanwhile, that contrary to the view of many liberal-internationalist historians, the Nye Committee actually strengthened the drive for efficiency and honesty in munitions control, facilitated – through creation of the National Munitions Control Board – aid to the Allies after 1939, and US mobilization after 1941. See Wiltz, *Search*, p. 232. For a sympathetic biography of the chairman of the munitions inquiry, see Wayne S. Cole, *Senator Gerald P. Nye and American Foreign Relations* (Minneapolis, 1962).

which prohibited loans to nations which had not paid their war debts. A year later, with the first of three neutrality laws, Congress abandoned the time-honoured defence of neutral maritime rights, in favour of seclusion and non-involvement. In this sense, the isolationism of the 1930s differed from the previous decade when, in Ruhl J. Bartlett's words, Washington dètermined 'to support the rights of its people under the rules of international law that, in turn, would contribute to the civilized conduct of nations'.[22] Given the assumptions of the devil theory of war, however, it was not surprising that the Neutrality Law of 1937 read like a legislative jeremiad against Wilson's failures two decades earlier. Indeed, the 1937 legislation stipulated that, should Roosevelt proclaim a 'state of war' involving two or more foreign nations, Americans would be forbidden to ship munitions, arms, or implements of war (as specified by FDR) to belligerents or to neutrals which might supply them; and to travel on belligerent ships. American merchant vessels, moreover, could neither arm nor carry outlawed war material. The only exception was the 'cash-and-carry' provisions Roosevelt requested, whereby noncontraband goods might be sold to belligerents, provided they paid for the goods before transporting them.[23]

In 1938, to prevent the President from taking an unwilling nation to war, Representative Louis Ludlow reintroduced a stratagem first proposed in August 1917 by Senator Thomas P. Gore of Oklahoma – a constitutional amendment that would subject a dèclaration of war to a national referendum. Gore's proposal had been reiterated by a string of legislators in successive Congresses, but it expired each time the measure was sent to the Judiciary Committee. This time, however, Ludlow nearly succeeded in reversing the trend. With broad support from pacifist and religious groups, stimulated by the *Panay* incident in December 1937, Ludlow garnered enough signatures on a petition to occasion a vote on removing the measure from the Judiciary Committee.[24]

Passage of the amendment, according to Hamilton Fish, would 'do nothing better or greater for world peace than to give the American people the right to vote to stay out of war'.[25] As Ludlow explained, the referendum would alter the Constitution 'so that the trigger that starts the war

22 Ruhl J. Bartlett, 'Neutrality', *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy: Studies of the Principal Movements and Ideas*, ed. A. DeConde, (3 vols., New York, 1978), III. 685.

23 The best study of the neutrality legislation of the 1930s remains Robert A. Divine, *The Illusion of Neutrality* (Chicago, 1962). See also Thomas A. Guinsberg's fine dissertation, 'Senatorial Isolationism in America, 1919-1941', (PhD, Columbia, 1969).

24 On the Ludlow Amendment, see W. R. Griffin, 'Louis Ludlow and the War Referendum Crusade, 1935-1941', *Indiana Magazine of History*, LXIV (1968), 267-88; and Richard Burns and W. A. Dixon, 'Foreign Policy and the "Democratic Myth": The Debate on the Ludlow Amendment', *Mid-America*, XLVII (1965), 288-306.

25 Cited in Adler, *Uncertain Giant*, p. 201.

machinery will be pulled, not by a little group subject to being cajoled and bullied by selfish interests, but by all the people'.[26] The issue the House faced was less grandiose, however; merely whether the referendum should be removed from committee and discussed.[27] And on this question the Roosevelt Administration prevailed. The measure failed to escape committee by twenty-one votes short of the required two-thirds majority.

Nevertheless, 1938 marked the high tide of isolationism and the zenith of the devil theory of war, deemed by Manfred Jonas 'the only original contribution of the isolationists of the 1930s to the definition of America's relationship to conflicts in other parts of the world'.[28] If many peace advocates appeared unaware that passage of a war referendum might actually restrict the President's range of diplomatic choices – thus, paradoxically, making the United States a pawn on the chessboard of European power politics – this consideration was not yet convincing. Most supporters of neutrality had no reason to question the conspiracy thesis, variations of which appeared in the writings and statements of people of such discrete views as Senator George Norris, scientist Albert Einstein, former President Herbert Hoover, Robert Maynard Hutchins of the University of Chicago, and, despite some ambivalence in his analysis of United States policy in the 1930s, Charles Beard.[29]

Outwardly critical of the devil theory of war, Beard felt that involvement in a European war would jeopardize the New Deal's battle to liquidate the Depression. He wrote extensively on the idea of national interest, counselling the President to eschew power-oriented policies which had resulted in naval expansion and unfortunate global rivalries over territory and markets.[30] A thoroughgoing nationalist, Beard hoped that the United States would de-emphasize its foreign trade and focus instead upon production for domestic consumption.[31] A defender of the quota system cod-

26 Cited in Jonas, *Isolationism in America, p. 165.*

27 Some writers suggest that the amendment actually reached the Senate floor for debate. See, for examples of this error, *ibid.*, p. 163n.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 140.

29 Beard's pre-war analysis and critique of US foreign policy in the 1930s has fascinated historians, just as his writing near the end of his life angered them. This dichotomy and its significance for American historiography needs further analysis. For the earlier Beardian analysis, see Thomas C. Kennedy, *Charles A. Beard and American Foreign Policy* (Gainsville, 1975); Richard Hofstadter, *The Progressive Historians: Turner, Beard, Parrington* (New York, 1968); Gerald Stourzh, 'Charles A. Beard's Interpretation of American Foreign Policy', *World Affairs Quarterly,* XXVIII (1957), 111-48; Bernard C. Borning, *The Political and Social Thought of Charles A. Beard* (Seattle, 1962); Arthur A. Ekirch, Jr., 'Charles A. Beard and Reinhold Niebuhr: Contrasting Conceptions of National Interests in American Foreign Policy', *Mid-America,* LIX (1977), 103-12; and *Charles A. Beard: An Appraisal,* ed. Howard K. Beale, (Lexington, 1954).

30 Kennedy, *Beard,* p. 67.

31 Charles A. Beard and George H. E. Smith, *The Open Door at Home: A Trial Philosophy of National Interest* (New York, 1934), pp. 210-33, 308-11.

ified in immigration acts in 1921 and 1924, he also argued that the nation should cultivate its own garden 'by setting an example of national self-restraint . . . by making no commitments that cannot be readily enforced by arms, by adopting toward other nations a policy of fair and open commodity exchange, by refraining from giving them any moral advice on any subject, and by providing a military and naval machine as adequate as possible to the defense of this policy'. Only in this manner could the country 'realize maximum security, attain minimum dependence upon governments and conditions beyond its control, and develop its own resources to the utmost'.[32]

Beard expressed respect for the work of the Nye Committee, but in several articles for the *New Republic* and in a book entitled *The Devil Theory of War,* he concluded that the conspiracy theory of American intervention in 1917 was simplistic. Mendacious politicians and avaricious bankers and munitions-manufacturers could not themselves provoke global wars. These interests did not exist in a vacuum, nor did they possess omniscient power: history did not work that way.

Élites acted in response to the dominant material conditions and sociocultural forces of the day. War, therefore, was 'not the work of a demon', he wrote. 'It is our very own work, for which we prepare wittingly or not, in ways of peace.'[33]

Despite this disclaimer, though, Beard could not dissociate himself from a conspiratorial interpretation of both American intervention in 1917 and of the nation's current diplomatic problems. For one thing, he reiterated much of the evidence unearthed by the Nye Committee. He also argued that Wilson had taken the nation to war to escape disaster at home. In an analysis that anticipated themes of 1960s 'New Left' revisionism – a cynical distrust of national leaders and emphasis upon economic requirements as the prime determinant of foreign policy – Beard advertised rather than refuted the devil theory.[34] In advocating neutrality legislation in the late

32 Charles A. Beard and George H. E. Smith, *The Idea of National Interest: An Analytical Study in American Foreign Policy* (New York, 1934), pp. 273-4.

33 Charles A. Beard, *The Devil Theory of War: An Inquiry Into the Nature of History and the Possibility of Keeping Out of War* (New York, 1936), pp. 17-29.

34 Jonas, *Isolationism in America,* p. 153. New Left approval of Beard's prewar critique of US foreign policy is revealed in Ronald Radosh, *Prophets on the Right: Profiles of Conservative Critics of American Globalism* (New York, 1975), pp. 17-38. William Appleman Williams, 'A Note on Charles Austin Beard's Search for a General Theory of Causation', *American Historical Review,* LXI (1956), 59-80 supports Beard's thesis of the 'open door at home', at the same time he rejects the conspiracy theory that dominated his books written after Pearl Harbor. See also Williams, 'Charles Austin Beard, the Intellectual Tory-Radical', in *American Radicals: Some Problems and Personalities* ed. Harvey Goldberg, (New York, 1957), pp. 295-308; and Robert L. Davis, 'The Search for Values: The American Liberal Climate of Opinion in the 1930s and the Totalitarian Crisis of the Coming of the Second World War as Seen Through the Thought of Charles Beard and Archibald MacLeish', (PhD, Claremont, 1970).

1930s, furthermore, he suggested that although such laws would prove difficult to enforce, they were required 'to prevent the bankers and politicians from guiding the nation into calamity as in 1914-17'.[35]

Given his assumptions about interest groups, particularly the naval establishment and the executive branch of government, Beard's critique of the 'scapegoat thesis' of 1917 belied his growing distrust of Franklin Roosevelt. Worried lest history repeat itself, he concluded *The Devil Theory of War* by warning against secret decisionmaking. 'If we go to war,' he advised, 'let us go to war for some grand national and human advantage openly discussed and deliberately arrived at, and not to bail out farmers, bankers and capitalists, or to save politicians from the pain of dealing with a domestic crisis.'[36]

Within two years, however, the historian's disillusionment deepened with Roosevelt's apparent abandonment of reform. This was apostasy of the worst sort, Beard reasoned, for he believed that the nation's culture and standing would improve only through fundamental change. Emphasis upon domestic edification, which he defined as the 'continental', or 'American civilization' school of foreign policy, led him to reject collective action that would only commit the Republic to 'old treaties of alliance in a new guise' and 'would probably lead to war rather than peace'.[37] Whatever its significance, and few historians agree on the matter, Roosevelt's Quarantine Address of 5 October 1937, comprised what historian Thomas Kennedy called 'the greatest intellectual-emotional watershed in Beard's long-held suspicions about Roosevelt – it seemed to confirm beyond question that FDR was irrevocably committed to a belligerent course of action, regardless of what other nations were doing throughout the world'.[38] That 'fascist goblins of Europe' could 'march across the Atlantic to Brazil', Beard found incredible. Geography insured American immunity to foreign attack. As he told the House Committee on Naval Affairs in February 1938, proposed fleet increases constituted 'a new racket to herd the American people into Roosevelt's quarantine camp', evidence that the Chief Executive had 'set out on the road to collective action that leads to war'.[39]

When Hitler's armies swept into Poland in September 1939, Beard became steadfast in his belief that 'beyond this hemisphere the United

35 Beard, *Devil Theory*, pp. 118-23.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 124.

37 Charles A. and Mary R. Beard, *America in Midpassage* (2 vols., New York, 1939), II, pp. 453-5.

38 Kennedy, *Beard*, pp. 86-7.

39 'Statement of Dr. Charles A. Beard, Historian, *'To Establish the Composition of the United States Navy: Hearings before the Committee on Naval Affairs, House of Representatives on House Resolution 9218 to Establish the Composition of the United States Navy, to Authorize the construction of Certain Naval Vessels, and for Other Purposes*, 75:3 (10 February 1938), pp. 2133-46.

States should leave disputes over territory, over the ambitions of warriors, over the intrigues of hierarchies, over forms of government, over passing myths known as ideologies – all to the nations and peoples immediately affected'.[40] As FDR fought to revise neutrality legislation to aid the Democracies, whose cause he identified with America's own, Beard pointed out that Europe had entered a new phase in its historic pattern of war, and that Washington would be foolish to become involved in a situation over which it could exert little influence.[41] In an extended polemic, whose title he borrowed from Shakespeare's *Henry IV*. Beard paraphrased that unfortunate monarch's deathbed advice to his son, Harry, 'to busy giddy minds with foreign quarrels'. Like Henry IV, Franklin I was taking a peaceful people to war. Unable to overcome the Depression, FDR had chosen to deflect public criticism of his leadership by embarking upon a foreign policy that, if unchecked, would destroy the nation.[42]

Well received by most noninterventionists, *Giddy Minds and Foreign Quarrels* drew fire from academic circles and from Americans favouring collective security. An editor at *Harper's,* which first carried the polemic, wrote that 'its effect on Liberal eastern seaboard aid-the-allies circles was instant. They could not bear it, and their protests were vehement.'[43] Indeed, by the end of 1939, the devil theory of war had become more than a matter of academic debate. With Hitler threatening to conquer Europe, and with the Roosevelt Administration seekings ways to increase aid to Great Britain and France, accusations of conspiracy and subversion became for the White House and its critics an integral strategic component in the evolving Great Debate on foreign policy.

Beard's warning seemed to make him a Cassandra, for the events in 1940 and 1941 appeared to many to substantiate his warning that the President was hell-bent for war and would stop at nothing to achieve his end. The unilateral nature of Roosevelt's foreign policy during this period is well-known: the incremental steps that brought the nation to quasi-war in the Atlantic – the Destroyer-Base deal, Lend-lease, the Atlantic Charter, naval convoys, and orders to American vessels to 'shoot on sight' at German submarines. Equally well known are the bitter charges and countercharges precipitated by what amounted to a *de facto* 'common law' alliance with Great Britain. During his campaign for re-election in 1940,

40 Charles A. Beard, *Giddy Minds and Foreign Quarrels: An Estimate of American Foreign Policy* (New York, 1939), pp. 69-70.

41 Charles A. Beard, 'Neutrality: Shall We Have Revision?' *Congressional Record,* 76:1, LXXXIV, pp. 11, 259-60.

42 Beard's last two books embodied most completely the 'devil theory of Franklin D. Roosevelt'. See *American Foreign Policy in the Making, 1932-1940: A Study in Responsibilities* (New Haven, 1946); and *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War: A Study of Appearances and Realities* (New haven, 1948).

43 Cited in Kennedy, *Beard,* p. 96.

FDR vowed not to send Americans to fight in Europe, but his actions in subsequent months convinced millions of Americans that he had decided to ignore the antiwar majority. Lend-lease, for example, symbolically numbered H.R.1776, was reputedly termed by Senator Burton K. Wheeler of Montana 'The New Deal's Triple-A foreign policy to plow under every fourth American boy' – a statement Roosevelt felt was 'really the rottenest thing that has been said in public life in my generation'.[44]

This interchange epitomized the heat which that domestic debate generated by 1941, as well as the contest's tendency to polarize objective policy conflicts into abstract, morally charged, conspiratorial terms. Although one cannot pinpoint the effect of the devil theory, however defined, upon the course of US policy, it is not difficult to see that conspiratorial thinking on both sides introduced into the debate several secondary matters which obfuscated such primary questions as preparedness, aid to Great Britain, and national security. These subjects – anti-Semitism, domestic 'fascism', and the related question of the loyalty of those who challenged Roosevelt's policies – were largely a product of internal cultural dislocations, combined with the emergence of European totalitarianism, during the preceding decade. These concerns became the basis of an emerging strategy by which ardent interventionists and the administration channelled public discussion, isolated their adversaries, and denied the sincerity of their arguments.[45] This strategy also compromised the respectability of the antiwar movement's battle against intervention.

Nowhere were interventionist imputations of disloyalty more important than in the case of Charles A. Lindbergh, premier spokesman for America First, which came into existence in September 1940 to counteract William Allen White's Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies.[46] At its inception, America First was not, according to a Buffalo spokesman, 'anti-British, not anti-anybody, merely anti-war'.[47] Representing the broad

44 Quoted in Adler, *Uncertain Giant*, p. 249.

45 A recent treatment of the Roosevelt Administration's sensitivity to public opinion, and its skill in manipulating that opinion, is Michael Leigh, *Mobilizing Consent: Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy, 1937-1947* (Westport, CONN, 1976).

46 The standard treatment of America First and the White Committee are, respectively, Wayne S. Cole, *America First: The Battle Against Intervention, 1940-41* (Madison, 1953); and Walter Johnson, *The Battle Against Isolation*, (Chicago, 1944). Subsequent analyses of the strategy and tactics of the interventionists have superseded Johnson's book. These include Mark. L. Chadwin's fine *The Hawks of World War II: American Interventionists before Pearl Harbor* (Chapel Hill, 1968), and two articles by William M. Tuttle, Jr., 'Aid to the Allies Short of War versus American Intervention: A Re-appraisal of William Allen White's Leadership', *Journal of American History*, LVI (1970), 841-58, and 'Willaim Allen White and Verne Marshall: Two Midwestern Editors Debate Aid to the Allies Versus Isolationism', *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, XXXII (Summer, 1966), 201-9. For interventionism in Asia, see Donald J. Friedman, *The Road from Isolationism: The Campaign of the American Committee for Non-Participation in Japanese Aggression, 1938-1941* (Cambridge, 1968).

47 Buffalo *Courier-Express*, 9 Jan. 1941, cited in Adler, *Isolationist Impulse*, p. 274.

spectrum of politics and culture, the organization feared that participation in another European war would have baleful effects upon republican ideals and institutions. The committee made little distinction between the respective causes of England, Germany, the Soviet Union, China, and Japan. As the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Treaty of August 1939 made clear, there was nothing to distinguish the two countries. They sought only power and territorial aggrandizement. Consequently, the isolationist lobby favoured a programme to strengthen the country's ramparts to the point where 'fortress America' would be impregnable to attack. Committee spokesmen endeavoured to convince the populace that intervention would jeopardize domestic liberty; that democracy would be safeguarded by staying out; and that Roosevelt's policy of 'aid short of war' would weaken defence capability and, worse, end in involvement.

These perceptions clashed with views held by ardent interventionists in the White House, most notably the President, the Secretary of War, Henry Stimson, the Navy Secretary, Frank Knox, the Interior Secretary, Harold Ickes, the Treasury Secretary, Henry Morgenthau, and by members of the so-called Century Group and Fight for Freedom Committee, successors to White's lobby. The Century Group, led by Herbert Agar, Peter Cusick, Ulric Bell, and Clark Eichelberger, worked tirelessly to convince Americans of the need for outright belligerency. These 'warhawks', as historian Mark Chadwin termed them, were primarily of Anglo-Saxon descent, many having served with Commonwealth military forces, and some having spent part of their lives in Great Britain. Like Wilson and his advisers before 1917, these citizens knew well that their country's institutions and culture derived mainly from an English heritage.

While antiwar forces traced their intellectual lineage to George Washington's Farewell Address and to the historic American image of Europe as beyond redemption, interventionists stressed the interrelationship of North America to the rest of the world, particularly Europe. Trustees of Wilsonian idealism and the realism of Theodore Roosevelt and Alfred Thayer Mahan, interventionists assumed that United States security depended upon Great Britain's repulsing the Nazis, and upon the restoration of European economic stability and parliamentary democracy. American safety, as well as a just and lasting peace, would be possible only through American participation and Hitler's defeat.[48]

Where isolationists located the conspiracy against peace in Washington and New York, interventionists argued that the threat was external. While noninterventionists assumed that Hitler's territorial objectives did not extend beyond Europe and, after June 1941, that the Nazi betrayal of the Soviet Union would exhaust both countries (and thus serve US interests),

48 Chadwin, *Hawks*, pp. 269-77.

interventionists emphasized that if Hitler secured the means, he might seek to control part of the Western Hemisphere. Moreover, Nazi scientists might develop a super weapon and alter the strategic balance of power. As early as June 1940, with the fall of France, ardent interventionists rejected the White Committee's 'one-step-at-a-time' programme of aid, in favour of immediate participation. This clarion grew louder with each passing month, and, coupled with FDR's policy initiatives, strengthened among isolationists the perception of a powerful, government-directed plot to make America a servant of British interests.

The theme of conspiracy, which in 1939 and 1940 lurked just beneath the policy differences which divided noninterventionists and their adversaries, became in 1941 a major force in the Great Debate. As the United States moved closer to war, and allegations against an Anglophile cabal grew more shrill, interventionists argued with telling force that opponents of Roosevelt's policies were at best irresponsible, and at worst minions of the Nazi cause.[49] In the emotional context of 1941, the liberal-interventionist practice of guilt-by-association made it difficult for noninterventionists to press their arguments. In the months before Pearl Harbor, in fact, America First and its Congressional allies discovered, like many peace groups before and since, that a lobby that must defend its legitimacy most likely has lost its fight at the outset.

American historians agree that the threat to national security by Germany no doubt ranked as the major force dissipating noninterventionist strength within the country. But the charges levelled by staunch interventionists that isolationist ranks were riddled with naive, partisan, anti-Semitic, and un-American 'fifth columnists', also discredited the doctrine of isolationism and its adherents.[50] Of the latter, Lindbergh proved the most pivotal figure in the battle against American intervention.[51] A scion of the agrarian midwest and its nostalgic politics, Lindbergh was also a stepson of the conservative values of Wall Street.[52] When, in 1929, he married the daughter of Dwight Morrow, a former partner with J. P.

49 Smith, *To Save a Nation,* pp. 139-81. My research at the Roosevelt Library at Hyde Park revealed a plethora of letters from both sides, denouncing conspiracies far more readily than they addressed specific foreign policy questions. Mark Chadwin makes a similar observation, in his investigation of the Fight for Freedom Committee papers, of 'extreme isolationists, denouncing the Warhawks and Roosevelt in one voice'. Chadwin, *Hawks,* p. 270n.

50 Wayne S. Cole, 'A Tale of Two Isolationists - Told Three Wars Later', *Newsletter* of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations, V (1974), 11.

51 On Lindbergh, see Smith, *To Save a Nation,* pp. 158-81; Wayne S. Cole, *Charles A. Lindbergh and the Battle Against American Intervention in World War II* (New York, 1974); Kenneth S. Davis, *The Hero: Charles A. Lindbergh and the American Dream* (Garden City, 1959); and Leonard Mosley, *Lindbergh: A Biography* (New York, 1976).

52 For Lindbergh as a symbol of the frontier, see Paul Seabury, 'Charles Lindbergh: The Politics of Nostalgia', *History,* II (1960), 123-44. There is much to support Seabury's view in *The Wartime Journals of Charles Lindbergh* (New York, 1970).

Morgan and Company, Lindbergh adopted a business philosophy, dominated by distaste for the Soviet Union and suspicion of New Deal liberalism. A man of paradox, the famous flyer was a shy individual who despised publicity but encountered adulation wherever he travelled. At war with America's press after the hysteria surrounding his son's kidnap-murder in 1932, he nevertheless championed a free press against an asserted conspiracy to silence him. A man who once considered forsaking American citizenship, he attracted supporters whose basic pride lay in their patriotism. Most ironically, by 1941 the man who in flying the Atlantic so invigorated the spirit of internationalism had become America's leading noninterventionist.

Lindbergh emerged from a period of personal isolation in 1939 and moved swiftly to centre-stage of the foreign policy debate. Since 1936 he had travelled widely throughout Europe, reviewing aviation developments and reporting his findings to Washington. Because of these missions, he concluded that the *Luftwaffe* stood pre-eminent throughout Europe, and that German technology might soon surpass American skill. This view was strengthened by motifs he discerned in national character. In speeches and articles, he argued that the war was not a contest between right and wrong, but between differing concepts of right. The British, being complacent muddlers, were well suited to the age of sea power, but were woefully equipped to meet the challenge of the new era of air power. Where England possessed organization without spirit, France exhibited spirit without organization, and also suffered from poor morale, a dearth of leadership, and class and political divisions. Germany, meanwhile, had what the Democracies lacked — spirit and efficiency.[53]

Given Lindbergh's premises, a negotiated peace remained the only sensible option. The United States could not halt the inexorable process which arrayed the forces of the present against those of the past. Like 'scum on the wave of the future', England and France were doomed.[54] Any effort to defeat Germany would result not only in failure, but would also imperil Western civilization. The only victors in such a confrontation would be Japan and the Soviet Union, and the Asiatic hordes who might take advantage of internecine conflict between the 'white races' and threaten the heritage of centuries. In his first radio broadcast as an isolationist spokesman, he argued that 'these wars in Europe are not wars in which our

53 Cole, 'Tale', 9; Charles A. Lindbergh, 'Aviation, Geography, and Race', *Reader's Digest*, XXXV (November, 1939), 64-7; other Lindbergh efforts included 'What Substitute for War?', *Atlantic Monthly*, CLXVI (March, 1940), 304-8; 'Our National Safety', *Vital Speeches*, VI (1940), 484-5; 'Our Drift Toward War', *Vital Speeches*, VI (1940), 549-51; 'Appeal for Peace', *Vital Speeches*, VI (1940) 644-6; 'A Plea for American Independence,' *Scribner's Commentator*, IX (December, 1940), 69-70.

54 Anne Morrow Lindbergh, *The Wave of the Future* (New York, 1940).

civilization is defending itself against some Asiatic intruder. There is no Genghis Khan or Xerxes marching against our Western nations. This is not a question of banding together to defend the White race against foreign invasions. This is simply one more of those age-old quarrels within our own family of nations — a quarrel arising from the errors of the last war — from the failure of the victors of that war to follow a consistent policy either of fairness or of force.'[55]

Interfering with this dialectic would be foolish. Aid short of war might prolong but could not alter the European conflict. Moreover, the cost of constructing planes to aid the British was prohibitive, and American military potential was insufficient. Even worse, aid to Great Britain would weaken American air defences. As Lindbergh warned a Chicago rally in August 1940, national frontiers did not lie in Europe, and the nation's destiny would not be decided on foreign soil.[56]

Lindbergh was no supporter of Hitler's totalitarianism, and he expressed dismay at the Führer's persecution of the Jews. Nonetheless, the flyer and other noninterventionist spokesmen discovered that their dissent was divisive, and that developments within and outside the country had cast them in the role of Nazi apologists. For one thing, America First was handicapped because it did not become well known until mid-1941. By that time, the Axis threat had substantially increased interventionist sentiment. For another, the organization could not escape the implications of its dismissal of the importance of a Nazi victory in Europe.

Lindbergh may have been a keen analyst of air technology, but he proved a naive judge of the moral absolution of liberal interventionists. In their eyes, he had crossed the line separating legitimate dissent from conspiracy. In fact, defenders of administration policy treated their opponents as if they confronted a 'fascist' cabal aimed at circumscribing the President's freedom of action. This polarization was evident when Roosevelt himself condemned Committee spokesmen as 'unwitting aids of the agents of Nazism' who 'preached the gospel of fear'. Harold Ickes predicted that they would make terms with Hitler 'at the expense of this country's welfare' and also observed that 'their subtle arguments and pretended willingness to sacrifice themselves for the common good' would 'bring about divided counsels until the harm they do is irreparable'. Presidential speech writer Robert S. Sherwood suggested that they desired to see 'America

55 Charles A. Lindbergh, 'The Air Defense of America', 19 May, 1940, cited in Cole, *Lindbergh*, p. 80.
56 Smith, *To Save a Nation*, p. 175.

become Hitler's next victim'.[57]

This type of criticism was unfair, but it was predicated upon sufficient circumstantial evidence to leave the impression that America First occupied the same promontory as the coterie of American 'fascists'[58] spawned by the economic dislocations of the 1930s. These extremists, led by Father Charles E. Coughlin, the Catholic 'radio priest' from Royal Oak, Michigan, William Dudley Pelley and his American Silver Shirts, and the German-American Bund, had become by 1937 unabashed admirers of German foreign policy and its hostility to communism. Raucous opponents of the 'Jew Deal', as they termed Roosevelt's reform programme, these demagogues gained their greatest influence before the President's re-election in 1936. Coughlin and Pelley, in fact, mounted impotent presidential campaigns that year.

Nativist countersubversion during this era had much in common with previous xenophobia. But in one crucial respect the nativists of the 1930s departed from tradition, and this difference had significant repercussions

57 'The Time Calls for Courage and More Courage', 29 March 1941, in Samuel Rosenman (ed.), *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Vol. x, 1941* (New York, 1950), pp. 86-7. Roosevelt's periodic blasts at the America First Committee were usually of an indirect nature, but they nonetheless intensified the personal bitterness and emotionalism that permeated the Great Debate. For other examples of the President's own preaching of 'the gospel of fear', see *ibid.*, pp. 136-8, 184-5, 190-1, 335, 338-9. See also Roosevelt to Harold Ickes, 1 July 1941, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, OF 3176; Clark Eichelberger to Roosevelt, 25 Oct. 1941, FDRL OF 198A; Roosevelt to General Frank McCoy (President of Foreign Policy Association), 21 Oct. 1941, FDRL PPF 5684; *New York Times*, 18 Dec. 1940, p. 30; Amos R. E. Pinchot to editor, *New York Times*, 24 March 1941, p. 30, in Pinchot MSS., File 87, Library of Congress.

James McGregor Burns notes that on two occasions FDR took liberties with known facts to galvanize public opinion - with rhetoric that sounded ominously like Joe McCarthy's in 1950. On 27 May 1941, after the Royal Navy had sunk the Bismarck, the President told Latin American representatives that the Nazis were bent on world domination. This was not speculation; it was in the 'Nazi book of world conquest'. Germany would 'treat the Latin American Nations as they are now treating the Balkans. They plan then to strangle the United States of America and the Dominion of Canada'. On 27 October, Navy Day, FDR told an audience packed into Washington's Mayflower Hotel that he possessed two documents, one a Nazi map of South America, the other a Nazi plan 'to abolish all existing religions - Catholic, Protestant, Mohammedan, Hindu, and Jewish alike'. Burns, *Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom, 1940-1945* (New York, 1970), pp. 100, 147-8.

58 For criticism of the loose usage of the term 'fascism' during the 1930s, see Smith, *To Save a Nation*, pp. 66-9; James P. Shenton, 'Fascism and Father Coughlin', *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, XLIV (1960), 6-11; and Leo Ribuffo, 'Fascists, Nazis and American Minds: Perceptions and Preconceptions', *American Quarterly*, XXVI (1974), 417-33; and Ribuffo, 'Civil Liberties for Villains? The Roosevelt Administration and the Far Right', paper delivered at Organization of American Historians, New Orleans, 1979.

for the evolving Great Debate.[59] Like most Americans, nativists historically drew their inspiration and strength from a national consensus notable for its uniform political, economic, and social goals and values. Speaking on behalf of this consensus in relatively tranquil times—that is, when citizens exhibited little disagreement as to what constituted a 'good' American—xenophobes generally attacked ethnic and religious minorities, emphasizing their alien character and criticizing their tendency to remain outside the mainstream of national life. But in eras marked by widespread economic distress or by significant ideological or military threats from outside the nation, the consensus has become brittle, made so by divisive debate on the issue of national loyalty.

Ironically, this is what transpired during the 1930s, when the country's political and economic consensus seemed for a few years shattered beyond repair. In a context dominated by uncertainty, Coughlin, Pelley, the Bundists, and other spokesmen of discontent sought to extirpate what they perceived as alien ideas from the body politic. Vigilantes of a peculiar sort, these Americans did not focus upon specific ethnic or religious groups as much as they aimed their ire at the nation's political and economic élites. Coughlin, for instance, did not attack foreigners, but condemned Herbert Hoover, financier Andrew Mellon, WASP *rentiers*, government functionaries, and finally, the whole Roosevelt Administration. This strategy allowed the priest's preponderantly Irish-American, German-American, and Italian-American supporters—traditional targets of earlier nativists—to retaliate symbolically against their former tormentors by impugning their patriotism.[60] Pelley's warnings against a 'Judeo-Bolshevik' plot served as a code phrase by which his small-town, predominantly agrarian-minded Protestant followers could express dissatisfaction at the urban-ethnic revolution that was changing the face of the nation. As the Roosevelt polticial coalition of 1936 made clear, new forces had combined

59 Lipset and Raab argue that the 1930s nativists shifted from attacking specific ethnic groups, such as the Jews, to more abstract targets, such as 'international Jewry', and that nativism became less ethnic than ideological in nature. (*Politics of Unreason*, p. 165). There is something to be said for this view, which I accepted in my 1973 book, but such as approach ignores the considerable ethnic conflict engendered by Coughlin's Christian Front and the Bundists in Northeastern and Midwestern urban centres. The Lipset-Raab approach, like other consensus approaches, does not allow the historian to see important differences between various nativist groups of the era.

60 On Coughlin, see Smith, *to Save a Nation, passim.*; Charles J. Tull, *Father Coughlin and the New Deal* (Syracuse, 1965); David H. Bennett, *Demagogues in the Depression: American Radicals and the Union Party, 1932-1936* (New Brunswick, 1969); and Sheldon Marcus, *Father Coughlin: The Tumultuous Life of the Priest of the Little Flower* (Boston, 1973). See also David J. O'Brien, *American Catholics and Social Reform: The New Deal Years* (New York, 1968); and two books by George Q. Flynn, *American Catholics and the Roosevelt Presidency, 1932-1936* (Lexington, 1968), and *Roosevelt and Romanism: Catholics and American Diplomacy, 1932-1945* (Westport, CONN, 1976).

to make liberalism the nation's dominant political ideology.[61] If the Nazi-like Silver Shirts provided a refuge for 'dispossessed' nationalists befuddled by the emerging technological-urban order and the heterogeneity of the Democratic Party, the German-American Bund provided a similar outlet for a minority of German nationals who sought to reconcile their residence in the United States with admiration for Hitler's Reich.[62]

Although the extremists generated most of their fire in contending that alien forces controlled the Republic's fortunes, this allegation was in itself less important that the reasons for its use. By suggesting that members of the legitimate political and economic order were the real aliens in America, the countersubversives in effect pinpointed those élites whom they perceived to obstruct the main routes to affluence and power. Sympbolic statements of Americanism by the countersubversives thus allowed their followers to become American nativists in good standing.

This inverted nativism was a novelty in the nation's history, and in the context of deepening crisis after 1939, a major problem for the noninterventionists. Coughlin, Pelley, and the Bundists may have reached the height of their influence before 1936, but it was in the two years before Pearl Harbor that they played perhaps their most important, though unintended, role. Having fought FDR's domestic policies, the inverted nativists now undertook the task of preventing 'Jewish-communist' conspirators from taking the United States to war. Soon, however, like the boy who cried 'wolf!', the countersubversives became targets of a counterattack launched by liberal interventionists who realized the use to which an indigenous 'fifth-column' might be put.

Interventionists soon discovered that that apparent 'fascist' menace struck many citizens as terrifyingly real, based as it was on Bundist parades replete with goose-stepping storm troopers and Nazi salutes; Coughlin's parrotting in *Social Justice* of anti-Semitic material churned out by Berlin propagandists: and Pelley's contention that Washington should support Hitler to prevent 'Jewish-Bolshevism' from conquering the world. The popular fear of countersubversive strength and unity after 1937 was

61 On Pelley, see Smith, *To Save a Nation,* pp. 53-65 and *passim.; State of North Carolina vs. William Dudley Pelley of the Silver Shirt Legion,* Superior Court of Buncombe County, January Term, 1942 (Ashville, 1942); Donnel B. Portzline, 'William Dudley Pelley and the Silver Legion of America', PhD, Ball State, 1965; Norman Dorson and Leon Friedman, *Disorder in the Court,* (New York, 1973).

On the urban ethnic revolution of the 1930s, see E. Digby Baltzell, *The Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy and Caste in America* (New York, 1966); and Otis L. Graham, Jr., *An Encore for Reform: The Old Progressives and the New Deal* (New York, 1967).

62 On the Bund, see Sander A. Diamond, *The Nazi Movement in the United States, 1921-1941* (Ithaca, 1974), and Leland V. Bell, *In Hitler's Shadow: The Anatomy of American Nazism* (Port Washington, NY, 1973). For the impact of the Bund upon German-American relations, see Joachim Remak, '"Friends of the New Germany": The Bund and German-American Relations,' *Journal of Modern History,* XXIX (1957), 38-41.

undeniably overdrawn, but it also reflected a generalized fascist scare that began in 1933. Influenced by the inaccurate picture of Italy and Germany given liberals by American Marxists, the ensuing loyalty debate that accelerated in the late 1930s mirrored the desire of liberal Democrats to attack some variety of un-Americanism not connected with the Communist Party.

This sensitivity is not difficult to explain. Roosevelt drew unsolicited support from the Communist Party in 1936, an endorsement conservative Republicans did not forget. A year later, the President was roundly criticized when he attempted to re-organize the executive branch, 'pack' the Supreme Court with liberal justices, and 'purge' several Southern Democratic senators who had not embraced the New Deal. Enmity flared again when FDR failed to employ federal troops to halt a sit-down strike by auto workers in Flint, Michigan. Property-conscious citizens perceived the strikers as revolutionaries. As a citizen's group proclaimed, 'Armed insurrection of law, order and duly elected authority is spreading like wildfire'.[63] Not surprisingly, congressional conservatism peaked at this juncture, finishing off Rooseveltian reform, lending substance to the somewhat paradoxical charges that the President favoured the lawless *and* aspired to dictatorship, and galvanizing the resolve of isolationists to withstand executive usurpation of Congress' prerogative in the making of foreign policy.[64]

These episodes produced another, more potent form of countersubversion, sanctioned both by Congress and public opinion. Ironically, the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) came into existence in 1938 ostensibly to counteract 'fascist' activities in the United States, but soon the attention of committee conservatives focussed upon leftist activities.[65] Highlighted by Chairman Martin Dies's charge that New Deal liberals were abetting communism, the committee's popularity reflected government vulnerability in this area. Although Roosevelt chided Dies twice in 1938 when the organization linked several Democratic congressional candidates to communism, the President avoided confrontation, wishing neither to sully his office, nor to challenge Committee popularity. HUAC, it appeared, in 1938 and 1939, endowed with some credibility the idea that Washington New Dealers were un-American. The Committee, in turn, became for many liberals a 'fascist' front in the nation's capital—led, according to Ickes, by 'a moron'.[66]

63 Quoted in Walter LaFeber and Richard Polenberg, *The American Century* (New York, 1974), p. 223.

64 James T. Patterson, *Congressional Conservatism and the New Deal: The Growth of the Conservative Coalition in Congress, 1933-39* (Lexington, 1967).

65 See Walter Goodman, *The Committee: The Extraordinary Career of the House Committee on Un-American Activities* (New York, 1968).

66 *Ibid.*, pp. 48-52.

Roosevelt became, therefore, a target of anti-communist attacks aimed not by the so-called lunatic fringe, but by mainstream party politicians. Concerned lest Congress control the loyalty issue, FDR exhibited growing concern with the extent of subversive activities of American left and especially right-wing elements. If congressional witch-hunters expressed primary interest in communism in government, Presidential countersubversion reflected the administration's shifting emphasis from domestic reform to foreign affairs and national defence. This concern became clearer after 23 August 1939, when a diplomatic bombshell in Europe handed Roosevelt control of the loyalty question and, more important, made that issue a question of foreign policy.

The Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact blurred distinctions between respective German and Russian political systems, ideologies, and foreign policy goals. The treaty thus solidified 'the already established consensus on the similarity of Stalinism and Nazism'.[67] This comparison, albeit misleading, was portentous.[68] If the Nazi-Soviet Pact increased the ethical distance between America and Europe, the image of 'Red Fascism' or 'Brown Bolshevism' also reinforced the dichotomy between democracy and totalitarianism. In the long run, though, the image threatened the strategic position of the noninterventionists, purging their ranks of radicals and popular front liberals. Now, furthermore, if groups like the Bund and the Coughlinites could be identified with alien forces, so also could persons who rejected the administration's distinction between European democracy and totalitarianism.[69] For noninterventionists the 'fascist-communist-banker conspiracy' satirized by Nathanael West in *A Cool Million* (1939), became by 1940 and 1941 no laughing matter. The Nazi-Soviet Pact shifted popular attention from reputed communists in the White House to the undeniable threat from across the Atlantic.

67 Thomas R. Maddux, 'Red Fascism, Brown Bolshevism: The American Image of Totalitarianism in the 1930s', *Historian*, XL (1977), 85-103.

68 Les Adler and Thomas G. Paterson argue in 'Red Fascism: The Merger of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia in the American Image of Totalitarianism, 1930s-1950s', *American Historical Review*, LXXV (1970), 1046-64, that during the early phase of the Cold War, numerous American leaders perceived Nazism and Stalinism as basically synonymous totalitarian systems directed by leaders who employed the same tactics and strategy in domestic and and foreign policies. Like Maddux and Daniel M. Smith, 'Authoritarianism and American Policy Makers in Two World Wars', *Pacific Historical Review*, XLIII (1974), 303-23, the present analysis indicates that the roots of 'Red Fascism' had taken in the American environment well before World War II.

69 The image of 'Red Fascism' cut both ways. As Maddux notes, although Roosevelt and his advisers did not often discuss the analogy, FDR most likely noticed it in the five newspapers he skimmed daily. 'Red Fascism', Maddux writes, 'increased the obstacles Roosevelt encountered when he tried to initiate co-operation with the Soviet Union in 1937-1938 and again in 1941. Since the press believed by 1938 that the only significant difference between Stalin and Hitler was their foreign policies, Roosevelt faced extensive media opposition to any co-operation with Moscow.' (Maddux, p. 102).

Intimations that conspiracy fears would affect the foreign policy debate became clear after 1939 as Congress and the President competed in stalking potentially subversive groups. As FBI records reveal, conventional historiography placing the loyalty issue in a category separate from diplomatic questions misses the impact the former exerted upon the contest between noninterventionists and their adversaries.[70] Congress took the lead in the hunt for subversives in 1940 when it passed the Smith Act, requiring aliens to register with the Attorney General, and making it a federal crime to advocate the violent overthrow of the government. Probably the most drastic restriction upon free speech in peace time, the law indicated that a majority of congressmen, and the President, believed that persons whose activities might serve the interests of belligerent nations represented a danger to US security. As noninterventionist legislators decried the 'un-American' (leftist and pro-British) leanings of government officials, the administration turned its attention to what the Attorney General, Robert Jackson, called 'that portion of our population which is ready to give assistance or encouragement in any form to invading or opposing ideologies'.[71]

Roosevelt was sensitive to the potential for abuse inherent in anti-subversive activity, having in front of him the excessive vigilantism of the First World War. Both Jackson and his predecessor, Frank Murphy, sought to limit government intelligence activity to legitimate surveillance operations, while warning against the prosecution of subversive activities, a concept not well defined in the courts.[72] As Jackson wrote in June 1940, 'some of our soundest constitutional doctrines were once punished as subversive. We must not forget that it was not so long ago that both the term "Republican" and the term "Democrat" were epithets with sinister meaning to denote persons of radical tendencies that were subversive of the order of things then dominant.'[73]

This concern was genuine. Six months earlier, a day after Germany invaded Poland, Murphy argued that civil liberty was not 'a fair weather concept' and that its defence constituted the 'real test of patriotism'. Murphy had felt the sting of HUAC superpatriots when he campaigned for

70 These documents comprise much of the basis for Athan G. Theoharis, *Spying on Americans: Political Surveillance from Hoover to the Huston Plan* (Philadelphia, 1978), which the author has found very useful.

71 Proceedings of the Federal-State Conference on Law Enforcement Problems of National Defense (5-6 Aug. 1940), cited in US Senate, Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, *Final Report: Supplementary Detailed Staff Report on Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans,* Book III, s963-3, 94:2 (1976), p. 411.

72 *Ibid.*

73 Robert H. Jackson, 'The Federal Prosecutor', *Journal of the American Judicature Society* (1940), cited in *ibid.*

Governor in Michigan, and wrote with conviction when he warned that to weaken the Bill of Rights on emergency grounds would 'destroy the very democratic principles we are seeking to preserve'.[74] 'If you want this [intelligence] work done in a reasonable and responsible way,' he told a press conference in September 1939, 'it must not turn into a witch hunt. We must not do wrong to any man.'[75] Murphy also assured Americans that the administration would meet the challenge posed by antidemocratic activitiy. 'Unless we are pudding-headed,' he wrote J. Edgar Hoover a year later, 'we will drive from this land the hirelings here to undo the labors of our Fathers.'[76]

The administration faced the dilemma of reconciling its determination to defend civil liberties with its dedication to checking internal subversion. Ultimately this proved intractable in a world where the exercise of brute force seemed to be the sole test of survival. This was how Roosevelt saw matters after France fell to the Nazis, concluding that an unprecendented national emergency demanded extreme measures. He recognized that he confronted a divided public, and remembered the problems Wilson faced in leading a disunited nation to war in 1917. But he was determined to aid Great Britain.[77]

If a majority of Americans wished to avoid war, a large part of the populace also shared its leader's belief, in historian Joseph Lash's words, that a 'Hitler victory would constitute mortal danger for American interests and the American way of life, and that the United States had a vital stake in supporting the nations fighting Hitler.'[78] Given this division, it is difficult to condemn Roosevelt for the guile he used to seek consensus. Contrary to the accusations of contemporary and subsequent devil theorists, it was not mendaciousness but a sense of urgency that caused him to proceed deviously in formulating his response to the European and Asian conflict.[79] His cunning, born of good faith, illustrated his understanding of Samuel Eliot Morison's dictum that 'the main object of foreign policy is not peace at any price, but the defense and security of the nation.'[80]

74 *New York Times*, 12 Nov. 1939, p. 29. See also Frank Murphy, 'The Test of Patriotism,' *National Lawyer's Guild Quarterly*, II (1939), 165, 168-9. The best assessment of Murphy is J. Woodford Howard, *Mr. Justice Murphy: A Political Biography* (Princeton, 1968).

75 US Senate, *Report on Intelligence Activities*, III. 404-5; *New York Times*, 7 Sept. 1939, p. 8.

76 Murphy to Hoover, 7 Sept. 1940, cited in Howard, *Murphy*, p. 207.

77 Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Imperial Presidency* (Boston, 1973), pp. 108-9.

78 Joseph Lash, *Roosevelt and Churchill, 1939-1941* (New York, 1976), pp. 417-21.

79 Thomas A. Bailey, *The Man in the Street: The Impact of American Public Opinion on Foreign Policy* (New York, 1948), pp. 11-12.

80 Samuel Eliot Morison, 'Did Roosevelt Start the War? History Through a Beard', *Atlantic Monthly*, CLXXXII (August, 1948), 94. But compare with the very different view offered in Victor Lasky, *It Didn't Start With Watergate* (New York, 1977), pp. 156-77. See also Burns, *Soldier of Freedom*, pp. 216-17, for Roosevelt's lukewarm attitude towards civil liberties of the West Coast Japanese after Pearl Harbor.

To achieve unity required control of the loyalty issue. In this quest, the administration held a trump card, FBI Director Hoover's well-known animus towards un-Americanism. Hoover's objectives in this area were broader than the President's, who was more interested in actual espionage than in subversive activities. Four years earlier, in 1936, Roosevelt ordered Hoover to begin surveillance of domestic extremism, after Hoover informed him of communist trade-union activities and a rumoured 'fascist plot' involving Father Coughlin and Smedley D. Butler, a retired, right-wing, army general.[81] Historians have never located that document, so one must conclude that FDR merely desired to discover any connection between internal agitation and the activities of foreign powers and agents.[82]

In conjunction with military intelligence, the FBI assumed full control of domestic surveillance operations, initiating the training of agents in counterespionage in 1938, and a year later investigating the Communist Party, the American League for Peace and Democracy, and the Bund, to help silence HUAC criticism of alleged administration violations of the Alien Registration Act.[83] Also in 1939, Hoover re-established the General Intelligence Division (GID), which had become notorious in 1919-20 during the 'Red Scare'. The FBI program provided for the detention of subversives in case of an emergency; hence, the GID compiled an index that included 'any activities that are possibly detrimental to the internal security of this country'.[84] Roosevelt knew of the plan's existence, but he never received a full briefing.[85] Nevertheless, in view of his security policies in 1940 and 1941, the protection of civil liberties had taken a back seat to the imperatives of national defence. Beginning in 1940, the administration reinstituted for the first time since 1917 what historian J. Woodford termed 'the symbolic prosecution of foreign agents'.[86] Communist Party leader Earl Browder became an early victim of this attack when he was arrested for using an invalid passport. The administration also sought, unsuccessfully, to jail several citizens who had recruited volunteers for the Loyalist cause in Spain during the early months of the civil war.

These developments foreshadowed the government's approach to Americans who opposed aid to Great Britain. If FDR and his advisers were prepared to deal harshly with foreign agents, they were equally ready to play hardball with the noninterventionists, particularly Lindbergh and

81 J. Edgar Hoover confidential memorandum, 24 August 1936, in US Senate, *Report on Intelligence Activities*, III. 393; Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *Politics of a People* (Boston, 1960), pp. 82-5.

82 US Senate, *Report on Intelligence Activities*, III. 393-4.

83 See Hoover to Alexander Holtzoff, special assistant to the Attorney-General. 18 Jan. 1939, *ibid.*, pp. 401-2.

84 Theoharis, *Spying*, p. 41.

85 US Senate, *Report on Intelligence Activities*, III. 405.

86 Howard, *Murphy*, p. 211.

America First. Lindbergh exerted little influence upon national politics, but he and other Committee spokesmen drew broad support for challenging government foreign policy. This frustrated both Roosevelt's diplomatic objectives and the President himself, and strengthened the bond connecting him with Hoover. Even before the appearance of America First, FDR demonstrated his concern with fifth-column activities when he cited 'the defense of the nation' to overrule the Attorney General's position on wiretapping. When 'sabotage, assassination, and "fifth column" activities are completed', he reasoned, it might be too late to act. Developments in Europe rendered proof of the need for vigilance.[87]

Probably unaware of the extent of FBI surveillence, Roosevelt nonetheless approved the Bureau's investigation of the connection between foreign agents and domestic subversives. FBI intelligence, he realized, could help him further his policy goals.[88] He worked closely with Hoover, authorizing him in the cause of national security to inspect mail entering and leaving the country; this might identify the link in which the President expressed so much interest. Five times in May 1940 Hoover sent the chief executive lists of individuals who telegraphed Washington, criticizing defence policy. In June, after Hoover forwarded a list of Lindbergh's supporters, FDR conveyed gratitude 'for all the reports and investigations he has made and . . . the job he is doing'.[89]

As the administration sought a connection between Lindbergh and Nazi-Germany in order to tarnish his loyalty and undermine the peace movement, the Great Debate grew fierce. On 19 May, Lindbergh reemphasized that the continental US was safe from attack, and that Roosevelt's preparedness programme was the work of a warmonger. The accusation stung the President, who noted that 'it could not have been better put if it had been written by Goebbels himself.' 'What a pity,' FDR continued, 'that this youngster has completely abandoned his belief in our form of government and has accepted Nazi methods because apparently they are efficient.'[90]

A week later Roosevelt enunciated his fear that if Lindbergh was not a fascist, certainly some of his supporters hoped to sow in American fields the seeds of discord. 'Today's threat to national security is not a matter of military weapons alone,' he announced. 'We know of new methods of

87 US Senate, *Report on Intelligence Activities*, III. 406; Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (New York, 1979), pp. 224-5.

88 Theoharis, *Spying*, p. 158.

89 Barton J. Bernstein, 'The Road to Watergate and Beyond: The Growth and Abuse of Executive Authority Since 1940', *Law and Contemporary Problems*, XL (1976), 58-86; Theoharis, *Spying*, p. 65.

90 Roosevelt to Henry Stimson, 21 May 1940, Henry L. Stimson MSS, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.

attack. The Trojan Horse. The Fifth Column that betrays a nation unprepared for treachery. Spies, saboteurs, and traitors are the actors in this new strategy . . . But there is an added technique for weakening a nation at its very roots . . . It is first, a dissemination of discord. A group — not too large — a group that may be sectional or racial or political — is encouraged to exploit its prejudices through false slogans and emotional appeals. The aim of those who deliberately egg on these groups is to create confusion of counsel, public indecision, political paralysis, and, eventually, a state of panic. Sound national policies come to be viewed with a new and unreasoning skepticism . . . As a result of these techniques, armament programs may be dangerously delayed . . . The unity of the state can be so sapped that its strength is destroyed. All this is no idle dream. It has happened time after time, in nation after nation, during the last two years.'[91]

In private, the President told Henry Morgenthau that he was 'absolutely convinced' that Lindbergh was a Nazi.[92] Secretary Ickes, critical of the flier since October 1938, when he accepted from Hermann Goering the Service Cross of the German Eagle, described Lindbergh as 'a peripatetic appeaser who would abjectly surrender his sword before it is demanded'.[93] Slowly, the administration began to compile evidence to compromise Lindbergh's claim that he was a loyal American. The grounds for this counterattack were circumstantial, but their effect was potent.[94] In the end, the administration's conspiracy theory, that Lindbergh and America First comprised part of a fifth-column to promote Nazi victory in Europe, proved more compelling than the devil theory purveyed by Lindbergh and other noninterventionists.

Ironically, noninterventionist allegations of Presidential perfidy resembled in large measure the version that emerged in the late 1920s to explain the nation's involvement in the First World War. This agrarian-minded analysis, with a heavy economic emphasis, coloured Nye's investigation in 1941 of prowar propaganda in motion pictures and radio circles in Hollywood and New York. While Nye also inveighed against other interventionist groups, Lindbergh directed the bulk of his criticism at

91 Quoted in Dallek, *Roosevelt*, pp. 225-6.

92 Quoted in Cole, *Lindbergh*, p. 128.

93 Quoted in Walter S. Ross, *The Last Hero: Charles A. Lindbergh* (New York, 1974), p. 301.

94 On 19 December 1940, FDR met with his Cabinet to consider the growth of the appeasement crowd, 'headed up by General Wood and Lindbergh and various others, which is assuming dangerous proportions'. Ickes, who kept a file of all Lindbergh's speeches, became head of a Cabinet committee to seek national unity and to counter the flier's attacks. Shortly thereafter, Roosevelt asked the journalist Jay Franklin (John F. Carter) to research for him the 'Copperheads' (Northern Democrats with Southern sympathies) of the Civil War. The result was a fifty-page essay that formed the basis of Roosevelt's counterattack upon Lindbergh in April 1941. (Cole, *Lindbergh*, pp. 130-1). See also Richard W. Steele, 'Preparing the Public for War: Efforts to Establish a National Propaganda Agency, 1940-1941', *American Historical Review*, LXXV (1970), 1640-53.

bigger game—the Presidency. Throughout 1941 he warned that Roosevelt was not levelling with the American people. This was 'government by subterfuge', characterized by executive secrecy and deception: in short, the greatest abuse of Presidential power in peace time.

In his quest for peace, Lindbergh did not see that in the eyes of his enemies he had become, however unwittingly, a forceful conduit of Nazi propaganda, and he was therefore shocked when at a press conference on 25 April Roosevelt labelled him a 'Copperhead'. The charge, which linked him to an Ohio representative convicted of treason and banished during the Civil War, became for Lindbergh an affair of honour. Anguished by this impugning of his loyalty, he concluded that he was 'no longer of use to this country as a reserve officer', and, after discussing his feelings with friends, he resigned his rank of Colonel in the United States Air Corps Reserve.[95]

Embittered by FDR's insult, Lindbergh confided to his journal that the administration, supported by American intellectuals, international financiers, British agents, and 'Jewish interests' in the communications industry, 'seems to have "the bit in its teeth" and [is] hell-bent for war'.[96] This analysis was essentially correct: Roosevelt and his advisers had stated their intent to do all they could to prevent Germany from achieving hegemony in Europe. In this context Lindbergh became a symbol, easily manipulated by interventionists to weaken their opposition's cause.

Having been America First's greatest asset, Lindbergh became by mid-1941 its major liability. There were several reasons for this. First, there was the matter of the Nazi medal which he had received, in fairness, unexpectedly and before German anti-Semitism became a global scandal. Second, while in Europe during the 1930s, Lindbergh had conducted scientific research on an artificial heart-lung machine with Dr. Alexis Carrel, a French physician whose accomplishments earned him a Nobel Prize in 1912, but whose racism and admiration for the Reich since made him a pariah in his profession. Third, Lindbergh received support from the more glandular countersubversives ranging from caustic radio commentator Boake Carter and fiery Iowa journalist Verne Marshall to the anti-Semites located within Coughlinite, Bundist, and Silver Shirt ranks. These extremists praised Lindbergh's 'rugged, patriotic virtues', and several even offered to support this potential 'man on horseback' if he ran for office.[97] For Lindbergh, as for America First, this support was an

95 *New York Times*, 26 April 1941, p.1; Lindbergh to Roosevelt, 28 April 1941, FDRL OF 92.

96 Lindbergh, *Wartime Journals*, p. 481.

97 *Social Justice*, (Coughlin), 18 Aug. 1941; *Roll-Call* (Pelley), 19 May 1941; Free-American (Bund), 24 May 1940; *Christian Front News*, (New York), 24 May 1940; O. John Rogge, *The Official German Report: Nazi Penetration, 1934-1942: Pan-Arabism, 1939-Today* (New York, 1961), p. 274; John Roy Carlson (pseud.), *Under Cover: My Four Years in the Nazi Underworld of America* New York, 1943), pp. 179-89, 250-4; and Michael Sayers and Albert Kahn, *Sabotage! The Secret War Against America* (New York, 1942), p. 153.

albatross. Unsolicited and rebuffed (though not forcefully enough), such extremist adulation helped create in the interventionist mind the image of a traitor. When Hoover sent Roosevelt a report on domestic fascism in 1941, America First found itself classed with the Christian Front, the American Mobilizers, the American Nationalist Party, and the American Destiny Party.[98]

On 11 September 1941, as FDR issued shoot-on-sight orders to the Atlantic fleet, Lindberg addressed an overflow American First rally in Des Moines. Content to this point to criticize an unspecified 'small minority of the people . . . who control much of the machinery of influence and propaganda', he picked this moment to identify as major 'war agitators' the British, the Roosevelt Administration, and the American Jewish community – 'the three most important groups who have been pressing this country to war'.[99] This assertion hit close to the mark, but represented a tactical blunder of great magnitude. Hitler had counted on the noninterventionists to keep the United States out of the European war. Now, however, their leader had stumbled into the forbidden thicket of anti-Semitism, and the cause was on the defensive, trying to rid itself of the imputed Nazi connection.

Lindbergh was no anti-Semite, but the controversy surrounding him had reached the point where any anti-Jewish remarks could be equated with Nazism. He denied that he attacked the Jews on the basis of race or religion. He had worded his Des Moines address carefully, mentioned the Jews in only two paragraphs, and had pointed to groups believed most interventionist. 'It seems', he wrote on 15 September, 'that almost any problem can be discussed today in America except the Jewish problem. The very mention of the word 'Jew' is cause for a storm.'[100] With the exception of John T. Flynn, Chairman of the New York chapter of America First, who opposed mention of the issue because of its emotional connotations, most noninterventionist leaders backed Lindbergh, believing him to be the victim of 'garbled fragments' excerpted by the interventionist press.[101] What America First did not realize, however, was the force of Lindbergh's timing.

The United States did not enter the war until December, but in its essentials the Great Debate was over. Clearly, although concern with

98 Theoharis, *Spying*, p. 159.

99 Quoted in Cole, *Lindbergh*, pp. 161-2.

100 Lindbergh, *Wartime Journals*, pp. 539-41.

101 Economic analyst and journalist John T. Flynn led the New York chapter of America First, which was more liberal than most units of the organization. Flynn long considered the Jewish issue dynamite, warned Lindbergh of this, and viewed the Des Moines speech as an 'incredible . . . open attack upon the Jews' that 'might be almost fatal' to the Committee. See Michele Flynn Stenehjem, *An American First: John T. Flynn and the American First Committee* (New York, 1976), pp. 135-40, a book based largely upon AFC and Flynn manuscript collections.

subversion affected the perceptions and the strategy and tactics of both sides, the demands for loyalty and patriotism encompassed within the administration's conspiracy theory of dissent proved more formidable than the devil theory of war and FDR promulgated by the noninterventionists. Roosevelt's drive to unify the nation in support of Great Britain emphasized the danger of domestic fascists, led, ultimately, by Lindbergh. This strategy no doubt strengthened the interventionist cause before Pearl Harbor and lent unity to the war against Hitler and the Japanese, but the administration's pursuit of consensus after 1939 also exacted a price. 'Rarely', Wayne Cole observed in his SHAFR Presidential address in 1973, 'have any movements or public figures been more thoroughly discredited than were isolationism and the isolationists.'[102] Indeed, the calumnies heaped upon leading peace advocates before Pearl Harbor impeded the desire and ability of national leaders after the war to consider alternatives to globalism. The Great Debate thus cast shadows upon the landscape of postwar American policy, affecting the ambiance of the Cold War in several ways. When the communist bogey replaced the fascist menace, the government knew how to deal with imputed domestic subversion. A foreign policy based upon power and demands for internal loyalty, rather than the domestic airing of sincerely held policy differences, became a basic theme after 1945.

Distinguishing between legitimate dissent and subversion has proved a difficult task since the founding of the Republic. This problem placed FDR in a quandary, which he resolved by employing conspiratorial methods to combat what he considered a subversive threat to national security. In so doing he restricted the civil liberties of opponents of his foreign and defence policies, and he strengthened the office of the President and its ties with the redoubtable Hoover.

Divided public opinion may have necessitated Roosevelt's guileful diplomacy, but several executive decisions made as the Great Debate reached its height impaired the country's long-term chances for peace. In September 1941, for example, he explained the *Greer* incident as a German submarine attack upon that destroyer, when subsequent investigation indicated that ultimate responsibility was unclear. Presidential manipulation of public opinion was nothing new in 1941, of course, but as Senator J. W. Fulbright observed in 1970, lamenting the results of the arrogance of power, 'FDR's deviousness in a good cause made it easier for LBJ to practice the same kind of deviousness in a bad cause.'[103]

If Roosevelt often manipulated public opinion (something any President must do to survive politically), he also sought, through the FBI, to control it.

102 Cole, 'Tale', 11.
103 Dallek, *Roosevelt*, p. 289; Lash, *Roosevelt and Churchill*, p. 421.

His use of the Bureau to vet noninternventionist mail and phone conversations established precedents which subsequent administrations acted upon, particularly during the Vietnam War. Even more unsettling, in retrospect, was Roosevelt's order to Hoover in September 1941 to investigate congressional attitudes towards his foreign policy. Granted that several legislators had misused franking privileges in disseminating anti-administration materials, one must conclude in view of available evidence that this transgression substantiated their wish to keep the Republic out of war, not Hoover's belief that they were Berlin's agents.[104]

If interventionist charges of noninterventionist perfidy became self-fulfilling before Pearl Harbor, notions of guilt-by-association and executive tyranny did not expire with the end of the war. After 1945, revisionist historiography re-emerged with a vengeance, befitting proponents of a point of view forced from centre-stage to the back benches during the previous decade. Beard, Barnes, and Tansill, among others, wrote new books which revived the earlier noninterventionist arguments.[105] But where these writers had been judged sympathetically before 1939, postwar revisionism encountered a climate similar in nature to the hostile climate of 1941.

Even more interesting was the reappearance in the early 1950s of a fusion of interventionist tactics and noninterventionist substantive arguments employed during 1939-41. For within the McCarthyite crusade against alleged communist subversion in government between 1950 and 1954, the historian of ideas encounters a strategy that combined an anti-élitist thrust with the charge that recent American global reverses reflected treason by national leaders. This accusation demonstrated the fickleness of history, as the liberal internationalists who earlier tarnished the noninterventionist cause with the tincture of fascism, now discovered that they themselves comprised what Alistair Cooke called *A Generation on Trial.* Yalta, the 'loss' of China, and the spy cases suggested that Harry S. Truman's containment policy and his internal security programme not only had failed but had facilitated the emergence of the Soviet Union as a world power.

As America's experience with fascism at home and abroad influenced the debates on foreign policy in the late 1930s, foreign and domestic confrontations with communism and the McCarthy phenomenon in the early 1950s strengthened liberal internationalists in their belief that earlier noninterventionist assumptions were dangerous to national security. This was unfortunate because it placed advocates of disarmament and conciliation even further on the defensive, outside the emergent, élite-dominated con-

104 Dallek, *Roosevelt,* p. 289; Theoharis, *Spying,* passim.
105 Cole, 'Tale', 12.

sensus. Opponents of the foreign policies of confrontation pursued by both the Truman and Eisenhower Administrations, became the antithesis of this consensus.

Moreover, if McCarthy's demise in 1954 relieved liberals, it did not alter either the government's or the public's perception of the communist menace. In fact, hindsight reveals that after McCarthy's fall the Soviet threat remained the paramount motif of a succession of Presidents seeking popular support for their policies. In focussing their countercharges upon the persona of McCarthy, furthermore, liberals failed to see that they might actually weaken the potential of congressional challenges to executive authority in foreign policymaking. The absence of this balancing factor assumed importance during the Johnson and Nixon years, when critics of American policy in Southeast Asia echoed complaints by Lindbergh and Beard about executive secrecy and deception, the erosion of Congress's prerogative in foreign affairs, and the dangerous growth of the power of the Presidency.[106] Johnson's decision in 1968 not to seek re-election and Nixon's Watergate provided evidence of how self-fulfilling the conspiracy theory of dissent became in recent years. These developments, however, provided little consolation for liberals and radicals whose sincere criticism of US policy earned them the opprobrium traditionally accorded a traitorous minority.

American campaigns against subversion have not been confirmed to a single ideology, political party, or social class. Nor have these crusades held a monopoly on morality. The linking by interventionists of Lindbergh and the noninterventionists with Nazi anti-Semitism provides a case in point. When Lindbergh singled out the Jews as one of the main groups seeking intervention, the outraged response of interventionists appeared to draw a distinct ethical barrier between a tolerant Roosevelt Administration and its bigoted opponents. As White House policy towards Jewish refugees from Germany indicates, however, this view is misleading. In their concern with glandular anti-Semites like Pelley and Coughlin–and, allegedly, Lindbergh–pre-Pearl Harbor interventionists either could not see, or, more likely, found it impolitic to admit that their own house was permeated by a genteel, albeit powerful, anti-Semitism.

Books by David Wyman, Henry Feingold, and Arthur Morse confirm as much as they indicate that fully one-third of the American people was

106 *Ibid.* A recent, important book by Justus Doenecke contains numerous insights about the persistence and changing nature of isolationist themes in the 1945-55 era. Empathetic yet critical, this study indicates that in their critique of liberal globalism and the growth of presidential and military power, the isolationists were prescient. Yet Doenecke also suggests that their fear of communism and of intervention in World War II coalesced to produce an unstable mix. See Justus Doenecke, *Not to the Swift: The Old Isolationists in the Cold War Era* (Lewisburg, PA, 1979).

prepared to approve anti-Jewish immigration measures, hardly astonishing in a nation still reeling from economic woes.[107] Even more important in shaping the State Department's restrictive immigration policy after 1938, however, was the fear shared by Roosevelt, Hoover, and the Undersecretary of State, Breckinridge Long, that Jewish refugees might themselves be part of a fifth-column recruited to serve Hitler's interests in the United States.[108] Long harboured an intense dislike for Jews, while he and Roosevelt were known to tell anti-Semitic jokes. The point here is not that anti-Semitism dominated the White House but, rather, to indicate the futility of defining the problem of anti-Semitism as a purely moral issue. From assessments by Feingold and Wyman, one concludes that anti-Semitism became during the Great Debate an issue as expedient as it was moral in character. These studies also indicate that the genteel anti-Semitism of Long and other administration members may have provided an élite role model for the more visceral Jew-baiters, and that the picture of the 1930s as an era of ethnic liberalism, marked by the assimilation of American Jewry, may be overstated.

In any event, concern with conspiracies restricted the fields of vision of both noninterventionists and their foes before and after Pearl Harbor. Both sides, to be fair, were responding to troubling events, and as David B. Davis observed of the context of countersubversion in American history, 'their perceptions even when wild distortions of reality, were not necessarily unreasonable given available information.'[109] Davis's comment merits reflection. As demonstrated by the emergence in the 1920s of a revisionist interpretation of US intervention in the First World War, by the Nye Committee investigations and neutrality legislation of the mid-1930s, and, most pointedly, by the controversy surrounding Lindbergh and America First, collective beliefs in subversion in the years preceding Pearl Harbor embodied and generated political and cultural conflict.

This conflict often expressed itself symbolically, in debate over loyalty, patriotism, and other issues which seemed to matter more to Americans than the merits and demerits of 'harder' foreign policy questions. The fear of subversion also imbued the latter sort of problem with an explosive content, making its resolution all the more difficult. Both the noninterventionists' devil theology of war and the administration's conspiracy theory of dissent, finally, carried with them a 'boomerang effect' of unintended

107 David S. Wyman, *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis, 1938-1941* (Amherst, 1968); Henry L. Feingold, *The Politics of Rescue: The Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust, 1938-1945* (New Brunswick, 1971); Arthur L. Morse, *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy* (New York, 1968).

108 On Long, see Feingold, *Rescue*. pp. 131ff.

109 David B. Davis (ed.), *The Fear of Conspiracy: Images of Un-American Subversion from the Revolution to the Present* (Ithaca, 1971), p. xiv.

consequences. Like the Puritan ministers who supported the witch trials of 1692 in an effort to shore up dwindling congregations and recall their flocks to orthodox theory; like the High Federalists, who attempted through the Alien and Sedition Laws of 1798 to silence Democratic-Republican opponents; and like Attorney-General A. Mitchell Palmer, who tried to advance in politics by fanning the fires of the 'red scare', the counterconspiratorial motifs of noninterventionists and liberal interventionists alike rebounded to their detriment. The latter group, however, required another decade to confront the fate that befell their antagonists in 1941.

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