

How American Was “America First”?

Seventy-five years before the election of President Trump, another American demagogue, Charles Augustus Lindbergh Jr., inspired mass support and incited extreme controversy. Charles A. Lindbergh (1902-1974) joined the noninterventionist movement in 1939. He used his position as an international celebrity to become a spokesperson for the America First Committee, an isolationist organization founded in September 1940 which opposed US military and financial intervention in World War II (WWII). On April 23, 1941, soon after joining the America First Committee, Lindbergh spoke at New York City’s Manhattan Center and outlined his criticisms of the US entering the war against Nazi Germany or even extending further aid to England. In his ¹ 1941 Address to the America First Committee Meeting, Charles A. Lindbergh claimed to represent traditional American ideals of both freedom and democracy; instead, he subverted these beliefs by spreading misinformation and advocating for isolationism.

Charles Lindbergh was a relatively unknown US Air Mail pilot until his solo transatlantic flight in 1927, which catapulted him to fame. In 1932, Lindbergh’s toddler son was kidnapped and killed. The publicized nature of the resulting trials caused Lindbergh and his family to move to Europe in 1935. During his time there, Lindbergh visited Nazi Germany several times, and assessed both the British and German air forces. He returned to the US in 1939, where his fame gave him a platform to speak out against intervention in WWII. Lindbergh frequently expressed xenophobic and anti-Semitic views.²

¹Nicholas Wapshott, *The Sphinx: Franklin Roosevelt, the Isolationists, and the Road to World War II* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2015), chap. 20, 21.

²Wapshott, *The Sphinx*, chap. 5, 14.

In the 1930s, the US had maintained a fairly neutral position as dictatorships emerged in Europe, and as Nazi Germany and militaristic Japan took over large parts of Europe and Asia. In

1940, the Nazis invaded and occupied much of Europe, including France, through *blitzkrieg*, or lightning war. In the same year, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, initially elected in 1932,³ won reelection to an unprecedented third term, and began advocating for increased US involvement in the war. Roosevelt recognized the threat to liberty that Adolf Hitler, the dictator of Nazi Germany, posed and described America as the “arsenal of democracy”. On March 11, 1941, Roosevelt signed the Lend-Lease Act into law. This legislation allowed the president to lend arms and aid to US allies on the condition that the supplies would be returned or repaid after the war. Charles Lindbergh and the America First Committee strongly opposed the Lend-Lease Act.⁴

In his address, by emphasizing the dangers of intervention, Lindbergh argued that remaining neutral was the best way to preserve democracy in the United States. He said that, “I do not believe that our American ideals, and our way of life, will gain through an unsuccessful war.” Lindbergh ignored the potential consequences of a Nazi victory if the US did not⁵ intervene. A *New York Times* article written the day after the address described the remarks of Russell W. Davenport, editor of *Fortune Magazine*, on the threat that Hitler posed to America and its ideals, in response to Lindbergh’s speech:

Declaring that Hitler was leading a violent ‘counter-revolution’ against the democratic way of life that America established in its revolution in 1776, Mr. Davenport said that as long as any free people are left in the world the attack

³Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty! An American History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2017), pg 680.

⁴Wapshott, *The Sphinx*, chap. 19.

⁵Charles A. Lindbergh Jr., “Address to the America First Committee Meeting” (speech, New York, NY, April 23, 1941), *New York Times*,

<https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1941/04/24/85484039.html?pageNumber=12>. 2

would continue and that if Hitler did not continue to conquer, his revolution would fail.⁶

Mr. Davenport expressed the direct danger that a victory for Hitler would pose to the US, even if it had not entered the war. In his speech, Lindbergh focused on the immediate dangers of joining

the war, not the broader assault on freedom which the Nazis were perpetrating.

While discussing the unprepared state of the US military, Lindbergh ignored facts about the American, British, and German armed forces. At this point, the US federal government had begun military rearmament. In October 1940, President Roosevelt instituted the Selective Training and Service Act, the first peacetime draft in US history. Roosevelt requested a \$17.2 billion budget from Congress, most of which he designated for defense production of modern weapons and equipment. The government contracted private industrialists, such as Henry Ford, to produce thousands of arms and wartime supplies. Lindbergh did not mention these massive⁷ preparation measures and stated, “There is no shorter road to defeat than by entering a war with inadequate preparation.” His decision to depict the military as unprepared suggested that he wanted to emphasize the futility of resistance. Lindbergh’s assessments of the British and German air forces seemed to give him credibility, but his accounts were not entirely accurate.

The historian Nicholas Wapshott stated that,

According to Lindbergh’s estimates, the Luftwaffe had 10,000 planes and was building 800 more a month. The true figure was very different. In 1940, Germany had 4,665 warplanes: 1,711 bombers, 414 dive-bombers, 354 escort fighters, 1,356 pursuit planes, and 830 reconnaissance and other planes.⁸

⁶ “British Seek Another A. E. F., Lindbergh Tells 10,000 Here,” *The New York Times*, April 24, 1941, https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1941/04/24/85483806.pdf?pdf_redirect=true&ip=0.

⁷ Wapshott, *The Sphinx*, chap. 13, 19.

⁸ Wapshott, *The Sphinx*, chap. 8.

While it was likely that Goring misled Lindbergh, and that Lindbergh was not deliberately incorrect, the inaccuracy of his reports lessened his authority on this subject. Lindbergh therefore based at least part of his argument about the Allies’ hopeless odds on false information.

Lindbergh presented the war as the interventionists’ fault. He declared that, “When history is written, the responsibility for the downfall of the democracies of Europe will rest

squarely upon the shoulders of the interventionists who led their nations into war uninformed and unprepared.” Lindbergh ignored that the Axis Powers were solely responsible for these “downfall[s]”. The interventionists did not destroy democracy; indeed, they fought to preserve it. If Lindbergh truly stood for democracy and freedom, would he not want to protect them across the world? Lindbergh stated that, “There are times when we must sacrifice our normal interests in life in order to insure the safety and the welfare of our nation.” Hitler’s aggression did pose a threat to “welfare” of America, so this could have appeared to be an argument for intervention. That staying out of the war required sacrificing “normal interests” indicated that isolationism did not align with everyday values. In this instance, Lindbergh seemed to realize that nonintervention was in fact against traditional American beliefs.

Lindbergh’s avoidance of criticizing Nazi Germany demonstrated that he did not actually represent American ideals of freedom. During his time in Europe, Lindbergh visited Nazi Germany several times to inspect its air force and aircraft facilities. While there, Hermann Goring, Hitler’s air minister, welcomed him warmly. In 1938, Goring presented Lindbergh with the Grand Cross of the German Eagle, one of the highest Nazi decorations. Lindbergh not only accepted this award but also praised the organization of the German military.⁹

⁹ Wapshott, *The Sphinx*, chap. 5, 6.

In his address, Lindbergh reflected this connection to Nazi Germany by shifting the reason for entering the war from protecting freedom to helping England achieve its own aims. Lindbergh said of the British government that, “They have one last desperate plan remaining. They hope that they may be able to persuade us to send another American Expeditionary Force to Europe, and to share with England militarily, as well as financially, the fiasco of this war.” Lindbergh’s portrayal of England as deceitful contrasted to the idea of it as a democratic ally

fighting for freedom. At this time, the Battle of Britain had been going on for several months. British military sites and civilian populations were under constant German bombing, as the Royal Air Force and the Luftwaffe fought a series of battles in British airspace. Lindbergh¹⁰ acknowledged that England was “desperate”, but instead of lamenting its situation, he condemned its request for aid.

Lindbergh referred to England as if it were a hostile nation, blaming it not only for wanting aid, but also for causing the defeat of other Allied Powers. Lindbergh said of England that, “We now know that she declared a war under circumstances which led to the defeat of every nation that sided with her from Poland to Greece.” Lindbergh’s blame of England and its “circumstances” left out Nazi Germany’s role in those circumstances. Indeed, he did not condemn Germany’s unmitigated aggression even slightly. Lindbergh continued to accuse England, saying,

We know that in the desperation of war England promised to all these nations armed resistance that she could not send. We know that she misinformed them, as she has misinformed us, concerning her state of preparation, her military strength, and the progress of the war.¹¹

¹⁰ Foner, *Give Me Liberty!*, 680.

¹¹ Lindbergh, “Address”.

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Many would consider misinformation or propaganda, when used against the US, to be a tactic of an opponent or hostile country. Lindbergh equated England with the enemy, while not mentioning Germany, the actual foe.

Lindbergh even appeared to sympathize with Nazi Germany, despite evading overtly bigoted statements. He said, “In time of war, truth is always replaced by propaganda. I do not believe we should be too quick to criticize the actions of a belligerent nation.” This statement was ironic as Lindbergh had replaced truth with “propaganda” when disparaging England. That he denounced

England's attempts to seek aid as lies, but did not disapprove of Nazi Germany displayed Lindbergh's lack of support for democratic governments. "A belligerent nation", while pejorative, was not a harsh assessment of Nazi Germany, and Lindbergh avoided mentioning the "nation" specifically. Lindbergh's reluctance to "criticize" a fascist state committing unspeakable cruelties revealed his xenophobic and bigoted beliefs. Anyone who did not condemn the abhorrent Nazi ideology could not have represented any form of just American ideals. In this address, Lindbergh was not blatantly anti-Semitic or xenophobic, so that his argument seemed less prejudiced and more patriotic. Nevertheless, he had previously promoted eugenics and would continue to express anti-Semitic sentiments. For example, a few months later, on September 11, 1941, Lindbergh gave a speech in which he said that, "The three most important groups who have been pressing this country toward war are the British, the Jewish, and the Roosevelt Administration," and said of the Jewish community that, "The greatest danger to this country lies in their large ownership and influence in our motion pictures, our press, our radio,

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and our Government." Lindbergh's assault on England and evasion of denouncing Germany

¹² indicated that his use of American principles was empty rhetoric.

Lindbergh used examples of US neutrality to portray the America First Committee as an emblem of American ideals. He stated that,

There is a policy open to this nation that will lead to success -- a policy that leaves us free to follow our own way of life, and to develop our own civilization. It is not a new and untried idea. It was advocated by [first President George] Washington. It was incorporated in the Monroe Doctrine.¹³

Lindbergh indicated that neutrality would allow the US to follow its "own way of life". He was correct that George Washington advocated for neutrality. President Washington chose to stay out

of the French Revolution, issuing the Proclamation of Neutrality in April 1793, and condemned US involvement in foreign disputes in his 1796 Farewell Address. Lindbergh's argument that he was following the examples of Washington, a founding father, portrayed him and the America First Committee as patriotic. In his interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine, Lindbergh disregarded certain aspects. The Monroe Doctrine, drafted by Secretary of State John Quincy Adams in 1823, stated that the US would stay out of European conflicts, and would not tolerate future European imperialism in Latin America or intervention in the independent Latin American republics.¹⁴ Lindbergh did not mention the latter two parts. Despite being outside of the Western Hemisphere, Nazi Germany's aggression in Europe was an example of the European imperialism that the Monroe Doctrine declared the US would not permit. He again ignored that never before had the US faced a foreign enemy that posed as grave of a threat to America's ideals, or "way of life" as the Nazis.

¹²Bill Kauffman, *America First!: Its History, Culture, and Politics*. (New York: Prometheus Books, 2016), intro.

¹³Lindbergh, "Address".

¹⁴Foner, *Give Me Liberty!*, 225, 231, 290.

Lindbergh asserted that the America First Committee stood for American principles by using idealistic language to discuss neutrality. Lindbergh went on to say of this policy of neutrality that, "It demands faith in an independent American destiny," an example of patriotic language. Lindbergh seemed to define independence not as having autonomy, but as remaining completely isolated from global issues. The US had remained an "independent" nation while retaining relationships with other countries in the past, but Lindbergh did not highlight that fact. He used this language to justify the views of the America First Committee by saying that their policy, "is a policy not of isolation, but of independence; not of defeat, but of courage." Lindbergh's identification of the "policy" of the America First Committee as the same policy for which Washington advocated reinforced the idea that the Committee stood for American values.

“Independence” and “courage” underscored these ideas as well, and the parallel structure of the second sentence further emphasized them. Nevertheless, that Lindbergh tried to distance himself from the idea of “isolation” by replacing it with “independence” demonstrated his awareness that isolationism was less patriotic than he portrayed it.

Lindbergh declared that he was adhering to the democratic spirit by giving a voice to the majority of citizens, despite not actually having their support. He emphasized the importance of the democratic idea of the will of the people, saying,

I say it is the interventionist in America, as it was in England and in France, who gives comfort to the enemy. I say it is they who are undermining the principles of Democracy when they demand that we take a course to which more than eighty percent of our citizens are opposed.¹⁵

According to the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, a Gallup poll taken in March 1941 found that, when asked which was more important: “to keep out of the war ourselves, or to help

¹⁵Lindbergh, “Address”.

England win, even at the risk of getting into the war?”, 67 percent of respondents said help, while only 33 percent said keep out. The poll was from a month prior to the speech, so these¹⁶ results were likely still relevant. Therefore, Lindbergh’s claim that 80 percent of US citizens opposed the possibility of going to war was vastly incorrect. Indeed, by his own logic, he was “undermining the principles of Democracy” by insisting upon a course to which 67 percent of citizens opposed. Not only was his percentage wildly incorrect, but Lindbergh’s beliefs represented far less than half of the population.

Lindbergh claimed to be representing ordinary, good, and hard-working Americans, but at least some of his supporters were white supremacists. He said of his supporters that, “The majority of hard-working American citizens are with us.” Lindbergh chose to highlight the ideas of political engagement and hard work, both of which were important in American democracy

and society. Lindbergh concluded his speech by saying,

That is why the America First Committee has been formed -- to give voice to the people who have no newspaper, or news reel, or radio station at their command; the people who must do the paying, and the fighting, and the dying, if this country enters the war.¹⁷

Lindbergh depicted the America First Committee as the champion of ordinary Americans. Again, he focused on a democratic idea, that of providing a voice to all in the political process.

Lindbergh's description of his supporters was not entirely accurate.

The *New York Times* article written the day after the speech expressed a view of Lindbergh's supporters as more bigoted and violent than his words suggested. It mentioned

¹⁶“How Did Public Opinion about Entering World War II Change between 1939 and 1941?” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, <https://exhibitions.ushmm.org/americans-and-the-holocaust/us-public-opinion-world-war-II-1939-1941>.

¹⁷Lindbergh, “Address”.

rumors that organizers had invited white supremacist organizations to the event, then described an altercation that occurred outside the venue:

Nearly 100 persons, identified as members of the Friends of Democracy... marched down Eighth Avenue... Several hundred persons from the crowd first booed and then attacked the parade... During the disturbance pro-Nazi members of the crowd shouted, “Get out of here or we’ll kill you” at the pickets, and anti-Nazi elements yelled accusations that the crowd included “Joe McWilliam’s gang” referring to Joseph McWilliams, self-proclaimed anti-Semitic fuehrer of the Christian Mobilizers, who was reported to have...instructed his followers to attend the Lindbergh rally.¹⁸

That members of the crowd were “pro-Nazi” and “attacked” protesters from the “Friends of Democracy” confirmed that some of Lindbergh's more extreme supporters were Nazi sympathizers or held intolerant views. Their threat to the protesters to “Get out of here or we’ll kill you” was violent as well. While not all members of the crowd necessarily harbored these views, the beliefs of Lindbergh's supporters revealed more about Lindbergh's own character. Prejudice, discrimination, and violence, while unfortunately common in US history, were

incompatible with American ideals of freedom and democracy for all. Despite Lindbergh's efforts throughout the speech to distance himself from the unpatriotic side of isolationism, the behavior of the people he represented revealed his true values.

The idea of "America First" is still prevalent in today's world. On April 27, 2016, almost exactly 75 years after Lindbergh's address, Donald J. Trump, the Republican presidential front-runner at the time, gave a speech in Washington about foreign policy. The main focus of his speech was his promise to put American needs above those of other countries, and he asserted that, "America first will be the major and overriding theme of my administration." On the topic of allies, he declared that, "The countries we are defending must pay for the cost of this defense,

¹⁸"British Seek Another A. E. F."

and if not, the US must be prepared to let these countries defend themselves." President ¹⁹ Trump's remarks were eerily similar to Lindbergh's proclamation that, "We in this country have a right to think of the welfare of America first, just as the people in England thought first of their own country when they encouraged the smaller nations of Europe to fight against hopeless odds." President Trump resembles Charles Lindbergh in many ways, from his lack of political ²⁰ background to his hyperbolic rhetoric and xenophobic beliefs. That a leader so similar to Lindbergh could accomplish today what Lindbergh never could in the 1940s, amassing millions of supporters across the country, enough to win the 2016 presidential election, demonstrates ²¹ the relevance of Lindbergh's message in the minds of Americans across the country today.

Acknowledgements:

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¹⁹ Ryan Beckwith, "Read Donald Trump's 'America First' Foreign Policy Speech," *Time*, April 27, 2016.

²⁰ Lindbergh, "Address".

²¹ Although he won the electoral college, President Trump did not actually win the popular vote in the 2016 election.

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See attached appendix for Charles Lindbergh's Address.

12

ADDRESS

Charles A. Lindbergh

New York, April 23,1941

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*This address was delivered at 'an
America First Committee meeting in
New York City on April 23, 1941*

I KNOW I will be severely criticized by the interventionists in America when I say we should not enter a war unless we have a reasonable chance of winning. That, they will claim, is far too materialistic a viewpoint. They will advance again the same arguments that were used to persuade France to declare war against Germany in 1939. But I do not believe that our American ideals, and our way of life, will gain through an unsuccessful war. And I know that the United States is not prepared to wage war in Europe successfully at this time. We are no better prepared today than France was when the interventionists in Europe persuaded her to attack the Siegfried Line.

I HAVE said before, and I will say again, that I believe it will be a tragedy to the entire world if the British Empire collapses. That is one of the main reasons why I opposed this war before it was declared, and why I have constantly advocated a negotiated peace. I did not feel that England and France had a reasonable chance of winning. France has now been defeated; and, despite the propaganda and confusion of recent months, it is now obvious that England is losing the war. I believe this is realized even by the British government.

But they have one last desperate plan remaining. They hope that they may be able to persuade us to send another American

J.HERE are many viewpoints from which the issues of this war can be argued. Some are primarily idealistic. Some are primarily practical. One should, I believe, strive for a balance of both. But, since the subjects that can be covered in a single address are limited, tonight I shall discuss the war from a viewpoint which is primarily practical. It is not that I believe ideals are unimportant, even among the realities of war; but if a nation is to survive in a hostile world, its ideals must be backed by the hard logic of military practicability. If the outcome of war depended upon ideals alone, this would be a different world than it is today.

Expeditionary Force to Europe, and to share with England militarily, as well as financially, the fiasco of this war.

X DO not blame England for this hope, or for asking for our assistance. But we now know that she declared a war under circumstances which led to the defeat of every nation that sided with her from Poland to Greece. We know that in the desperation of war England promised to all these nations armed assistance that she could not send. We know that she misinformed them, as she has misinformed us, concerning her state of preparation, her military strength, and the progress of the

war. I, IN TIME of war, truth is always replaced by propaganda. I do not believe we should be too quick to criticize the actions of a belligerent nation. There is always the question whether we, ourselves, would do better under similar circumstances. But we in this country have a right to think of the welfare of America first, just as the people in England thought first of their own country when they encouraged the

smaller nations of Europe to fight against hopeless odds. When England asks us to enter this war, she is considering her own future, and that of her Empire. In making our reply, I believe we should consider the future of the United States and that of the Western

Hemisphere.

LT IS not only our right, but it is our obligation as American citizens to look at this war objectively, and to weigh our chances for success if we should enter it. I have attempted to do this, especially from the standpoint of aviation; and I have been forced to the conclusion that we can not win this war for England, regardless of how much assistance we extend.

M. ASK you to look at the map of Europe today and see if you can suggest any way in which we could win this war if we entered it. Suppose we had a large army in America, trained and equipped. Where would we send it to fight? The campaigns of the war show only too clearly how difficult it is to force a landing, or to maintain an army, on a hostile coast. Suppose we took our navy from the Pacific, and used it to convoy British shipping. That would not win the war for England. It would, at

best, permit her to exist under the constant bombing of the German air fleet. Suppose we had an air force that we could send to Europe. Where could it operate? Some of our squadrons might be based in the British Isles; but it is physically impossible to base enough aircraft in the British Isles alone to equal in strength the aircraft that can be based on the continent of Europe.

I HAVE asked these questions on the supposition that we had in existence an army and an air force large enough and well enough equipped to send to Europe; and that we would dare to remove our navy from the Pacific. Even on this basis, I do not see how we could invade the continent of Europe successfully as long as all of that continent and most of Asia is under Axis domination. But the fact is that none of these suppositions are correct. We have only a one-ocean navy. Our army is still untrained and inadequately equipped for foreign war. Our air force is deplorably lacking in modern fighting planes.

WHEN these facts are cited, the interventionists shout that we are defeatists, that we are undermining the principles of Democracy, and that we are giving comfort to Germany by talking about our military weakness. But everything I mention

here has been published in our news papers, and in the reports of congressional hearings in Washington. Our military position is well known to the governments of Europe and Asia. Why, then, should it not be brought to the attention of our own people?

I SAY it is the interventionist in America, as it was in England and in France, who gives comfort to the enemy. I say it is they who are undermining the principles of Democracy when they demand that we take a course to which more than eighty percent of our citizens are opposed. I charge them with being the real defeatists, for their policy has led to the defeat of every country that followed their advice since this war began. There is no better way to give comfort to an enemy than to divide the people of a nation over the issue of foreign war. There is no shorter road to defeat than by entering a war with inadequate preparation. Every nation that has adopted the interventionist policy of depending on someone else for its own defense has met with nothing but defeat and failure.

WHEN history is written, the responsibility for the downfall of the democracies of Europe will rest squarely upon the shoulders of the interventionists who led their nations into war uninformed and unprepared. With their shouts of defeatism, and their disdain of reality, they have already sent countless thousands of young men to death in Europe. From the campaign of Poland to that of Greece, their prophecies have been false and their policies have failed. Yet these are the people who are calling us defeatists in America today. And they have led this country, too, to the verge of war.

AT HERE are many such interventionists in America, but there are more people among us of a different type. That is why you and I are assembled here tonight. There is a policy open to this nation that will lead to success—a policy that leaves us free to follow our own way of life, and to develop our own civilization. It is not a new and untried idea. It was advocated by Washington. It was incorporated in the Monroe Doctrine. Under its guidance, the United States became the greatest nation in the world. It is based upon the belief that the security of a nation lies in the strength

and character of its own people. It recommends the maintenance of armed forces suf

ficient to defend this hemisphere from attack by any combination of foreign powers. It demands faith in an independent American destiny. This is the policy of the America First Committee today. It is a policy not of isolation, but of independence; not of defeat, but of courage. It is a policy that led this nation to success during the most trying years of our history, and it is a policy that will lead us to success again.

WE HAVE weakened our selves for many months, and still worse, we have divided our own people by this dabbling in Europe's wars. While we should have been concentrating on American defense, we have been forced to argue over foreign quarrels. We must turn our eyes and our faith back to our own country before it is too late. And when we do this, a different vista opens before us. Practically every difficulty we would face in invading Europe becomes an asset to us in defending America. Our enemy, and not we, would then have the problem of transporting millions of troops across the ocean and landing them on a hostile shore. *They*, and not we, would have to furnish the convoys to transport guns and trucks and

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munitions and fuel across three thousand miles of water. *OUT* battleships and submarines would then be fighting close to their home bases. *We* would then do the bombing from the air, and the torpedoing at sea. And if any part of an enemy convoy should ever pass our navy and our air force, they would still be faced with the guns of our coast artillery, and behind them, the divisions of our army.

-THE United States is better situated from a military standpoint than any other nation in the world. Even in our present condition of unpreparedness, no foreign power is in a position to invade us today. If we concentrate on our own defenses, and build the strength that this nation should maintain, no foreign army will ever attempt to land on American shores.

WAR is not inevitable for this country. Such a claim is defeatism in the true sense. No one can make us fight abroad unless we ourselves are willing to do so. No one will attempt to fight us here if we arm ourselves as a great nation should be armed. Over a hundred million people in this nation

are opposed to entering the war. If the principles of Democracy mean

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anything at all, that is reason enough for us to stay out. If we are forced into a war against the wishes of an overwhelming majority of our people, we will have proved Democracy such a failure at home that there will be little use fighting for it abroad.

A TIME has come when those of us who believe in an independent American destiny must band together, and organize for strength. We have been led toward war by a minority of our people. This minority has power. It has influence. It has a loud voice. But it does not represent the American people. During the last several years, I have travelled over this country, from one end to the other. I have talked to many hundreds of men and women, and I have had letters from tens of thousands more, who feel the same way as you and I. Most of these people have no influence or power. Most of them have no means of expressing their convictions, except by their vote which has always been against this war. They are the citizens who have had to work too hard at their daily jobs to organize political meetings. Hitherto, they have relied upon their vote to express their feelings; but now they find that it is hardly remembered except in the oratory of a political campaign. These

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people—the majority of hard-working American citizens are with us. *They are* the true strength of our country. And they are beginning to realize, as you and I, that there are times when we must sacrifice our normal interests in life in order to insure the safety and the welfare of our nation.

a time has come. Such a crisis is here. That is why the America First Committee has been formed—to give voice to the people who have no newspaper, or news reel, or radio station at their command; to the people who must do the paying, and the fighting, and the dying, if this country enters the war.

NEITHER or not we do enter the war, rests upon the shoulders of you in this audience, upon us here on this platform, upon meetings of this kind that are being held by Americans in every section of the United States today. It depends upon the

action we take, and the courage we show at this time. If you believe in an independent destiny for America, if you believe that this country should not enter the war in Europe, we ask you to join the America First
tion to defend itself, to develop its own civilization, and to contribute to the progress of mankind in a more constructive and intelligent way than has yet been found by the warring nations of Europe. We need your support, and we need it now. The time to act is here.

Committee in its stand. We ask you to share our faith in the ability of this na

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FIRST

Boston

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St., Boston

**America First Committee,
141 West Jackson Boulevard,
Chicago, Illinois.**

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