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Few conflicts in American politics have been as significant as that over the nation's entry into World War II. From the time that Germany invaded Poland in September 1939 until the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the nation engaged in a 'Great Debate' over the efforts of the Roosevelt administration to supply the Allies, particularly Britain, with armaments needed to continue the conflict. In its attempt to check the Axis powers, the United States increasingly took the risk of entering the war itself.

Though many aspects of this controversy have been examined, Andrew Johnstone's article offers proof that the subject is by no means exhausted. Thanks to Johnstone's labors, we now have a lucid, thorough, and balanced account of the impact of the field of public relations on four major organizations that were engaged in the struggle: the American Committee for Non-Participation in Japanese Aggression (ACNPJA), the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies (CDAAA), Fight for Freedom (FFF), and the America First Committee (AFC). The author has examined the manuscripts of the various groups and of the public relations firms involved. The book is steeped in the relevant secondary literature on both the debate itself and on the background of the budding public relations industry.

Both interventionists and anti-interventionists accused the other side of engaging in what later would be called 'brainwashing.' In the eyes of the two camps, sinister and well-funded elements were seeking to manipulate a gullible public to act against its 'true' interests, in the one case to ignore the dangers of an Axis seeking world domination, in the other to drag an unwitting public into a military quagmire that could only lead to national ruin. Certainly, so all participants realized, the populace was exposed to an incessant barrage of images from the press, cinema, and radio. Little wonder action groups sought the aid of public relations firms in their efforts to mobilize what Walter Lippmann once called "the phantom public."¹ Nothing less than the fate of the republic appeared at stake.

Each action group sought a public relations consultant. The ACNPJA, the Non-Partisan Committee for Peace through Revision of the Neutrality Act (known informally as the William Allen White Committee), and the CDAAA used the John Price Jones Corporation, a firm that initially had made its mark in heading the publicity for Liberty Bonds in World War I. FFF hired Tamblin and Brown. The AFC could never hire a public relations agency, in large part because such firms feared being branded as pro-Axis. It was, however, able to reply upon the informal advice of PR executive James Selva, as well as advertising executives Bruce Barton, Chester Bowles, and William Benton.

In the course of his narrative, Johnstone makes an extremely significant discovery: the PR experts became increasingly frustrated with their clients, sometimes thinking that their patrons broke every rule in the book. The John Price Jones

¹ Walter Lippmann, *The Phantom Public* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1927)

Corporation found the ACNPJA ignoring its pleas to create local committees, extend leadership beyond eastern elites, create a mass membership base, and publicize its activities. The same firm had greater luck with the CDAAA, successfully convincing the interventionist body to establish divisions for youth, college students, women, and labor. The agency offered crucial assistance in fundraising, organization, and management. Yet ironically, the CDAAA became victim of its own success. Once Lend-Lease became law in March 1941, Johnstone notes, supporters found the organization superfluous. Unable to go beyond Franklin D. Roosevelt's initiatives, its mission became amorphous and contributions dried up.

Tamblyn and Brown was equally frustrated with its own client, Fight for Freedom. From the outset, its fundamental reason for being, outright participation in the war as a full-scale participant, limited its popular appeal. The majority of the American population was willing to risk war in order to aid the British effectively, but it did not endorse outright belligerent status. By December 1941, the firm was able to raise one quarter of FFF's total contributions, but it bemoaned lack of organizing skills and of general fundraising ability.

Johnstone might be overstating the case by referring to America First's "unfortunately toxic brand in 1941" (247). Admittedly the more strident interventionist press (for example, the New York daily *PM*) and action groups (e.g., the Friends of Democracy) sought to portray the AFC as a "Nazi transmission belt." Indeed, the AFC bore some responsibility for its own negative reputation. In September 1941 Charles Lindbergh did the Committee irreparable damage when he all but accused American Jews of hoodwinking the public by "agitating for war." The anti-British rhetoric at some rallies, the extreme statements of such AFC speakers as Senator Burton K. Wheeler (Lend-Lease meant the "plowing up of every fourth American boy," 247), and the welcoming of followers of radio demagogue Father Charles E. Coughlin justly exposed the AFC to impassioned attack.

Yet, for a supposedly "toxic" organization, America First was able to stand up quite well during most of 1941. It was backed by two newspapers with vast circulation, the *Chicago Tribune* and the *New York Daily News*, as well as by the powerful chain of William Randolph Hearst. Members of the AFC national committee were quite diverse. They included physiologist Anton J. Carlson, Nobel Prize-winning physician George H. Whipple, former Illinois governor Frank Lowden, National Grange master Louis J. Taber, New Deal administrators Hugh Johnson and George N. Peek, and authors Samuel Hopkins Adams and Irvin S. Cobb. Informal support was given by Herbert Hoover, labor leader John L. Lewis, University of Chicago president Robert Maynard Hutchins, and *Christian Century* editor Charles Clayton Morrison. Socialist party leader Norman Thomas spoke at two major AFC rallies, and historian Charles A. Beard and novelist Sinclair Lewis endorsed the organization. Among the members of College Men for Defense First, an AFC conduit, were R. Sargent Shriver, later director of the Peace Corps; W. Willard Wirtz, later secretary of labor; Kingman Brewster, later president of Yale; Richard M. Bissell, later prominent in the Central Intelligence Agency; and actor José Ferrer. In April 1941, a young graduate student named John Fitzgerald Kennedy contributed a hundred dollars. Admittedly, prominent names among interventionists considerably outnumbered their foes, drawing particularly from the worlds of letters, radio, and journalism.

This quibble, however, is an extremely minor one. Johnstone's article makes a significant contribution. It is refreshing to see that the debate over World War II intervention is still the subject of excellent scholarship.

Justus D. Doenecke is professor emeritus of New College of Florida. Among his books relevant to this review are *In Danger Undaunted: The Anti-Interventionist Movement of 1940-1941 as Revealed in the Papers of the America First Committee* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1990); *From Isolation to War, 1931-1941*, 4th ed. (Arlington Heights: Harlan Davidson, 2015); and *Storm on the Horizon: The Challenge to American Intervention, 1939-1941* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000). He is currently writing an account of America's role as belligerent in World War I.