



"AMERICA FIRST" EXPOSED

by John L. Spivak

A Pair of Parachutists: Rudolph Hess at Munich tells Charles A. Lindbergh how it's done.

The first time that the entire sordid story of "America First" has been revealed. The mysterious seven who dictate policy. Who are the pay-off men? Confessions of anti-Semitism. Why William R. Castle, Herbert Hoover's braintruster, told Spivak that a certain letter was "very embarrassing."

THE America First Committee has an attractive name. It professes to be for America first as against the interests of other countries. It speaks in the name of peace and opposes the foreign policy of the Roosevelt administration. It has money and a considerable organizational apparatus. Full page ads, public rallies, radio hookups, and a ceaseless barrage of mail flow from the committee in an effort to influence the country. The appeal is always on a "patriotic," "nationalistic," and "peace" basis. Many honest Americans accept that appeal at face value. Very few know anything of the organization, have any inkling of the Gestapo-like secrecy which veils the behind-the-scenes activities of the America First Committee. And the average America First member is completely in the dark as to the identity of those who are really financing this enormous propaganda machine.

America First is, of course, a misnomer. It should be America Next. For the leaders of the America First Committee are the American Vichymen. They are attempting to do to this country what Petain, Laval, and Darlan have done to France. When I tried to find out something about this influential organization, I was amazed at the veil of secrecy thrown over even its simplest activities. For patriots fighting for their country's best interests as they saw them, they were awfully nervous and secretive.

Such information as I did get convinced me that the United States, for its own protection, had better launch an official inquiry into this body to determine who is actually financing it and what contacts some of its leaders may have with Nazi agents. What I learned and will present in these articles shows that:

1. The America First Committee, while trying to create the impression that it has a large mass following, is run and chiefly financed by a small clique of "smart money" boys.
2. Its national committee, the guiding body which decides policies, has pro-Hitlerites and anti-Semites on it, and members of this guiding body were put on or dropped at the will of the small group of men actually running the organization without consulting the rest of the national committee members, or even informing them of the changes.
3. The America First Committee has offered to work secretly with known pro-fascists.
4. The America First Committee uses notorious anti-Semites as official speakers.
5. The America First Committee has received a minimum of over \$1,000,000 from unidentified sources for its propaganda work.



Copperhead Lindbergh

IS CHARLES A. LINDBERGH the American Quisling? If actions mean anything, he has the qualifications and aspirations for the job. The chief difference between Lindbergh and Quisling is that Hitler has not yet conquered the United States as he has Norway. But Lindbergh's activities and his publicly expressed opinions indicate that he is in truth, as *NEW MASSES* described him in its Jan. 7, 1941, issue, "our foremost Nazi."

In his Des Moines speech on September 11 Lindbergh touched new depths of un-Americanism when he attacked the Jews. This marked a new stage in the America First Committee's desperate effort to prevent this country from combating the Hitler threat to its independence. Millions of Americans were shocked by Lindbergh's Jew-baiting, but, as a matter of fact, appeals to race prejudice are nothing new for him. In his speeches and magazine articles Lindbergh has frequently introduced unmistakable innuendoes. Typical was his article in the November 1939 issue of *Readers Digest*. He wrote:

"And while we stand poised for battle, Oriental guns are turning westward, Asia presses toward us on the Russian border, all foreign races stir restlessly. It is time to turn from our quarrels and to build our white ramparts again. . . . Our civilization depends . . . on a western wall of race and arms which can hold back either a Genghis Khan or the infiltration of inferior blood; on an English fleet, a German air force, a French army, an American nation, standing together as guardians of our common heritage. . . ."

This Nazi racist verbiage, translated into the language of practical politics, means only one thing: that this apostle of "peace" wants a united war against the Soviet Union and the oppressed peoples of Asia. That is Hitler's policy. What Lindbergh objects to is that the United States and Britain are not helping Hitler.

Even before he entered the arena of public controversy, Lindbergh had revealed strong pro-fascist tendencies. In 1938 he was responsible for spreading the story that Germany was all-powerful in the air and that the Soviet air force was weak and insubstantial. This was the story that helped Chamberlain put over the Munich betrayal. Shortly after Munich Lindbergh visited Germany, on which occasion Goering rewarded him with a Nazi medal. When the Nazis launched the terrible anti-Jewish pogroms that shocked the world, Lindbergh showed where his sympathies lay by announcing that he planned to take up residence in Berlin during the winter of 1938-39. On the advice of friends, however, he reluctantly abandoned this plan.

Lindbergh is today the idol of various anti-Semitic and fascist groups, the fuhrer to whom they look for leadership in the campaign to make America Hitler's next victim. Symbolically enough, his home on Long Island's fashionable north shore used to be the headquarters of Benjamin Thompson, otherwise known as Count Rumford, one of the leading Tories, that is, traitors, in the War of Independence. President Roosevelt last April found another appropriate symbol for Lindbergh when he compared him to one of the Civil War's most notorious Copperheads, Clement L. Vallandigham of Ohio. It might be recalled that the Union Army found it necessary to court-martial and imprison Vallandigham.

NEW MASSES believes the time has come for Congress to find out just what this modern Copperhead is doing to deserve Goering's medal. How long will we permit traitors and fifth columnists to plot against our freedom?

6. The America First Committee flatly refused to check a dozen names, suspected of being channels for Nazi money passed on to the committee.

7. *Scribner's Commentator*, voice of America First's leading spokesman, Charles A. Lindbergh, who is an active member of its national committee, is secretly filing and coding lists of persons throughout the country who have been duped into lending support to the appeasers. Henry Ford is paying the bill.

8. The editor of *Scribner's Commentator* was in close contact with a Nazi emissary when the former arranged a session between ex-Col. Charles A. Lindbergh and a notorious pro-fascist.

9. America First Committee leading members established and financed subsidiary organizations which handled contacts with pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic groups, such as Coughlinites, which the parent body didn't want to handle directly.

10. The America First Committee is the most dangerous potential fascist body ever organized in the United States.

Wherever the inquiry into the organization turned, I found secrecy. Even the humble stenographers working in America First offices were cautioned to be on their guard, as in the memo issued by Robert L. Bliss, director of organization for the New York Chapter of the Committee: "I suggest that you conduct all your meetings in your office as quietly as possible and that you do not discuss confidential business matters in the hall or going to and from the teletype. This will prevent visitors in the outer office over-hearing remarks. . . . [Signed] R. L. B."

I had the same feeling while working on this organization that I had in France while looking into the Croix de Feu, the fascist organization which was the precursor of the groups that helped bring that unhappy country to its knees in thirty-nine fateful days. The Croix de Feu was run by native Frenchmen, but with Nazi agents in the background. It was supported by a handful of "big money" boys and numbered among its members active and reserve officers of the French armed forces. It, too, had a carefully filed list of all potential fascists for use at some future date which came all too soon. An investigation of this fascist body, started by the French government, was suppressed because too many men high in the country's political and economic life were involved. The French people were never told the facts; today the French republic is shattered and its citizens are under the Nazi heel.

Let me state that from all I could learn, the overwhelming majority of America First members are sincere people misled by America First propaganda into thinking that its foreign policy is best for the country. Outside of the public utterances of men like Lindbergh and Sen. Burton K. Wheeler of Montana, no idea is given as to what goes on within the organization's inner circle. Not

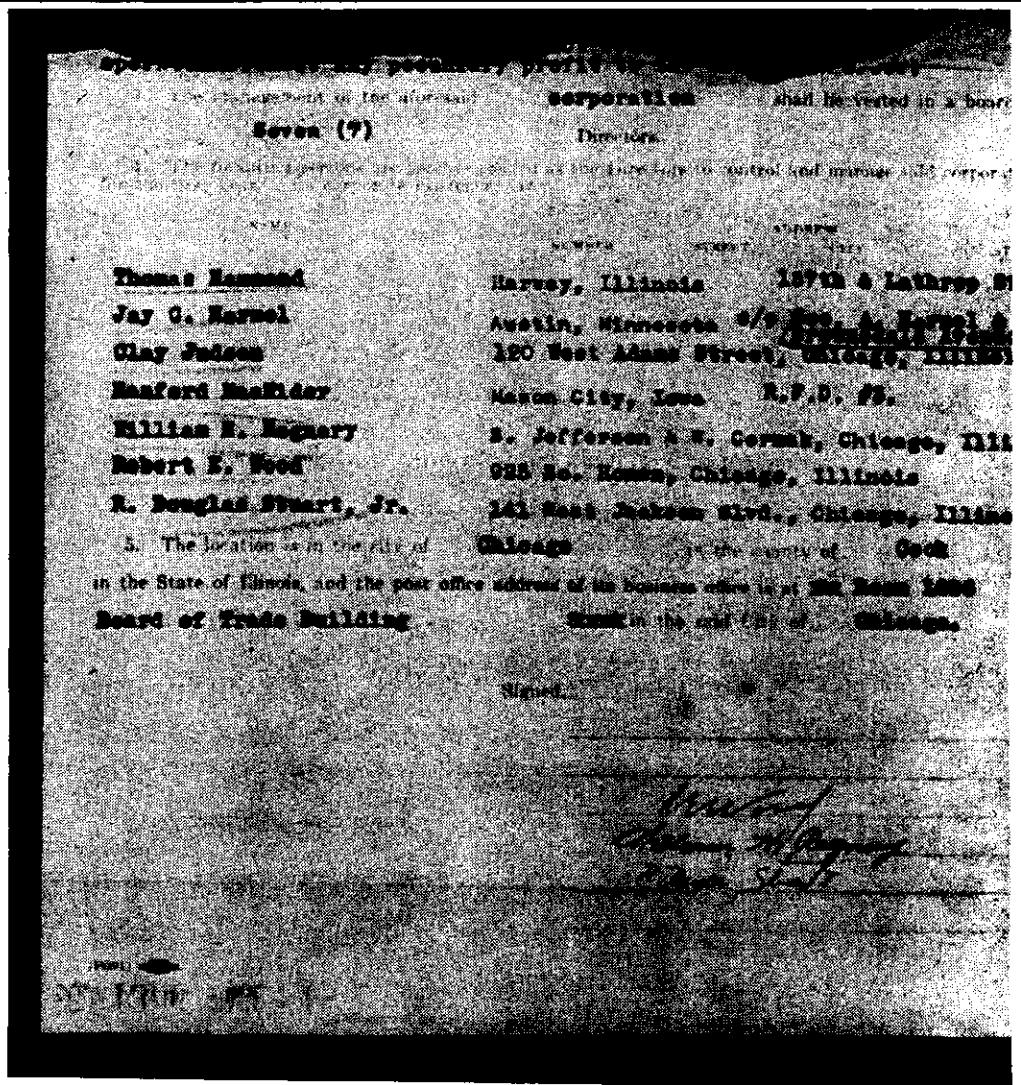
even all the members of the national committee are told everything.

THE AMERICA FIRST COMMITTEE was originally born in the mind of R. Douglas Stuart, Jr., a twenty-four-year-old law student at Yale, who is the son of the first vice president of the Quaker Oats Co. Stuart's idea got a little local publicity and a cordial note from Gen. Robert E. Wood, chairman of Sears Roebuck & Co. When Stuart went home to Chicago on his school vacation last year, the general and the youngster talked it over. Before long the wide-eyed, politically immature but ambitious boy was introduced, as he expressed it naively, to the "smart money" crowd. Among them were William H. Regnery, a Chicago multimillionaire, and Clay Judson, a Chicago attorney for some of the "smart money" boys. After several conferences Wood, Regnery, Judson, and young Stuart decided to incorporate the idea into an organization. On Sept. 19, 1940, the America First Committee began to function legally as a non-profit-making corporation.

One of the objectives of the committee was the "giving of help to refugees and the needy of other lands" with the idea of cooperating with Herbert Hoover's "Let's feed Europe" plan, but this proposed activity was promptly forgotten. Actually the committee's public activity centered around promoting appeasement. Wood, Regnery, and Stuart handpicked a body to serve as a national committee which was supposed to help formulate the organization's policies and direct its work. Actually, the national committee was and still is just a list of names on a letterhead. Only half a dozen persons in the organization really decide on policy and direct the work. When it seems advisable to General Wood, acting chairman of the America First Committee, to drop any of the national committee members and put on new ones, he does so without even informing the other committee members. It's what is known in business vocabulary as a closed corporation and in political vocabulary as dictatorship.

In the advertising world they still talk about how the "smart money boys" got advice from some of the best public relations and advertising men in the country, including ex-Congressman Bruce Barton's firm, Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn Inc. (whose assistance was obtained by Jay C. Hormel of Hormel Ham, Spam, etc.). The cooperation was given very quietly, for none of the agencies wanted to antagonize clients who opposed America First ideas. The public relations experts suggested that the committee start out with a bang by running a full page ad in the New York Times which would both attract national attention and at the same time get across considerable propaganda to an influential reading public. "The incorporators paid for the ad," as America First's director of organization explained it to me. With this public announcement America First was launched on its career.

It is significant to note some of the changes



THE SEVEN DIRECTORS who "control and manage" America First as revealed in the incorporation papers. Millionaire Regnery works closely with pro-Nazi Avery Brundage. Gen. Wood manipulates national committee membership as he sees fit. Wood, Regnery, lawyer Clay Judson, and R. Douglas Stuart, Jr., who first thought of the idea, run America First to suit themselves. The membership at large has no voice in committee affairs.

from the original committee. Avery Brundage and Henry Ford, both known to be sympathetic to the Nazis, were on it and there was one Jew, Lessing J. Rosenwald. They are no longer on the committee. Brundage was asked to leave "because of his anti-Semitism, though we know nothing about it," as an official spokesman for the committee put it. Henry Ford was dropped—just dropped, and the committee's spokesman insists that Ford's anti-Semitic activities and reputation had nothing to do with it. Ford and Brundage were dropped, as it became evident to me, not because America First is opposed to anti-Semitism, but because the committee wanted to keep its skirts clear. Rosenwald resigned. As America First explained it through its spokesman: "He's a Jew. Figure it out for yourself."

Lindbergh was not on the original committee because he was known to be strongly pro-Nazi and had been closely associated with the British appeasers who instigated the Munich deal with Hitler. Until recently Stuart denied that he had ever met Lindbergh and that because of Lindbergh's reputation America First was afraid to tie up with him. They met only when Lindbergh "dropped in" on America First offices "after

reading one of the full page ads published by the organization."

So many conflicting stories are told by Stuart as to how the leading appeasers in the country were brought together by America First that any, or none, of the half dozen versions might be the correct one. Who brought them together is important. As I shall show in a subsequent article, Lindbergh was put in touch with the No Foreign War Committee, an offshoot of America First, by persons having close contacts with a Nazi emissary. These conflicting stories on how Lindbergh finally became an active member of America First's national committee serve to illustrate again the secrecy surrounding even such matters as how and through whom they met.

America First also wanted its skirts clear of open association with "labeled elements" like Bundists, Coughlinites, and their ilk. In the business world, when a big corporation does not want to handle certain phases of a business, "independent" organizations are set up to handle them with one or more directors of the parent company sitting in as directors of the subsidiary company. This has been the technique employed by the America First Committee in regard to "labeled elements." I

shall discuss this aspect of its work in a subsequent article.

WANTED to ask America First officials some questions about their organizational setup and the sources of their finances. I went to Chicago where the national offices occupy half of the eighteenth floor of the huge Board of Trade Building. Again I was impressed with the nervous secrecy which hung over the place. There seemed to be an unusual amount of whispering and sign language. When I asked to see young Stuart, he sent word out that he was seeing no one. General Wood, acting chairman of America First, had left town and had also left orders that no one was to talk. When I persisted in seeing a spokesman for the organization, Stuart finally sent Richard A. Moore, the national office's director of organization. Moore, a tall, red-headed fellow in his early thirties with a Cassius-like look on his face, explained nervously that every one would be happier if I talked with the general—and the general, happily, was away. And what did I want, anyway? And was I an interventionist? And where was I at 8:19 on the night of June 17?

After thirty minutes of this stalling a rather nice looking, clean cut youngster came out, hesitatingly introduced himself as Stuart, and personally explained that General Wood had told him to keep his mouth shut.

"Isn't anyone in charge when the general's away?" I asked.

"Yes, I'm in charge," he said, backing away, "but I prefer that General Wood give the interview."

He looked as if he were about to vanish into the inner recesses of the national offices. I had a hunch, from what I had learned of the organization, that the one thing they were touchy on was their reported friendliness to Nazi views and I said: "All I want are some facts. This is a patriotic body and every real patriot I ever met was glad to shout his patriotism—even from the top of the Board of Trade Building. The only ones who were fearful were a lot of phonies working with Nazis—"

My hunch was correct. Stuart shrank back another step.

"Nazis?" gulped Mr. Moore.

The two exchanged glances.

"Perhaps Mr. Moore can help you out,"

said Stuart quickly, and then disappeared.

"Come into my office," said Moore.

"You know," I said when he had shown me to a seat, "that there are rumors that the America First Committee is working for the interests of the Nazis—"

"Yes, I know," said Moore, nodding his head and turning uncomfortably in his swivel chair.

"Now, some of your original national committee members are reputed to be friendly to the Nazis, so I thought I'd ask how they got on and why they are no longer with the committee. Henry Ford, for instance."

"Oh, I think Mr. Ford was asked to lend his name to the committee's work and when he didn't do any work and made no contributions, we dropped him."

"His name is still good on a letterhead. Why did you drop him?"

"He did no work and didn't contribute any money," Moore repeated.

"Are those the only reasons?"

"Yes. That is, why, ye-e-es."

"I heard it was because he was generally considered sympathetic to the Nazis, anti-Semitic, and you wanted to avoid that label—"

"Aw, I've heard a lot about Mr. Ford's anti-Semitism and pro-Nazism but none of that's ever been proved, you know."

"It's never been proved that Ford published and distributed anti-Semitic propaganda?"

"No, sir!" he said emphatically.

"All right. How did you drop Ford and what did he say?"

"Oh, we just dropped him."

"But people don't just drop Ford. He's the one who usually does the dropping."

"We just dropped him," Moore repeated, and added, "you know, we never got a nickel from him, directly or indirectly." His repeated emphasis that Ford had made no contributions made me wonder why he was so anxious for that impression to be circulated. While I was wondering, he suddenly asked, "Did you hear anything to the effect that he had?"

"Yes. I heard you got money through Harry Bennett, head of Ford's secret service, who arranged for meetings between Ford and the editor and publisher of *Scribner's Commentator*."

"Bennett," he said. "Never heard the name before."

"How was Ford dropped?" I persisted. "By wire, phone call, letter, or what?"

"I don't know," said Moore. "General Wood handled the whole thing personally and he's away. There's nothing in our files about it. It could have been handled by the general through his personal correspondence."

"Do matters involving the national committee concern him only or the entire membership?"

"The entire membership. Naturally."

"Was the rest of the national committee consulted about dropping Ford?"

"I don't know," said Moore. "I don't suppose so. I think the general handled it personally."



MERWIN K. HART. As head of the New York State Economic Council this notorious anti-Semite and pro-fascist cooperated with Franco's agents during the Spanish civil war. He has been quietly working with America First leadership ever since the committee was organized.

America First Committee

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS • 1006 BOARD OF TRADE BUILDING • CHICAGO
TELEPHONE BRIDGE 1000-1000

September 20 1940

R. DOUGLAS STUART, JR., DIRECTOR

Mr. Merwin K. Hart, President

New York State Economic Council, Inc.,
505 Fifth Ave.,
New York, N. Y.

My dear Mr. Hart:-

I am very sorry that I neglected to communicate with you sooner.

I have turned over in my mind the advisability of setting up a chapter of the America First Committee through your organization. Having discussed it with some of the members of the Committee, I have come to the conclusion that it would be a mistake. The paramount objection is, that your organization has been identified with a certain point of view, and our chapter of the America First Committee would immediately have a similar label attached to it. This I believe would be unfortunate.

However, as I stressed to you, it is imperative that we work together on these things. I will let you know the name of the man who will be chairman of our New York Chapter within a few days. I hope you will be able to work with him.

Thanking you for your cooperation and interest.

Sincerely yours,
R. Douglas Stuart, Jr.
Director

R. DOUGLAS STUART, JR., a director and founder of America First, informs fascist sympathizer Merwin K. Hart that it would be a mistake to be identified with him openly but that they can work together secretly.

"Am I to understand that members of the national committee, which is supposed to decide on policies, are put on and taken off at General Wood's whim without the rest of the committee having anything to say about it?"

"Well, I wouldn't say that——"

"What would you say?"

"Well, I guess that's a matter you'd better take up with the general."

"All right. What happened to Avery Brundage? He was on your national committee."

"All you can say about him," said Moore quickly, "is that he was dropped because of his anti-Semitism." His face got red and he added, "Now get me right on this. We don't know anything about that. I mean his anti-Semitism. You understand that. We don't know if he's anti-Semitic. But there are a lot of people who think so and we didn't want to get mixed up in that sort of stuff. We don't want to make an issue of it, so he was dropped."

"Were the rest of the national committee consulted about dropping him?"

"I think the general handled it personally."

"Without consulting the rest of the national committee?"

"I don't know," said Moore.

"What I'm trying to get at," I explained, "is whether General Wood is the whole works, including the national committee, or whether the national committee has anything to say about what America First does?"

"Of course they do!"

"Then aren't they consulted about matters like dropping members of the policy-making body?"

"I believe they are consulted."

"Were they consulted about dropping Ford?"

"I don't know. I couldn't say. The general handled it personally."

"Was there a vote taken about dropping Brundage because of his reported anti-Semitism?"

"I don't know. I don't suppose so. You don't take a vote on matters like that."

"That's what I'm getting at. Then who decides whom to drop from the policy-making body?"

"I think—I'm sure that's a question for the general to answer."

"All right. What about Lessing J. Rosenwald, who was on the original national committee?"

"Well," he smiled, "figure it out for yourself. He's a Jew. All I can say is he resigned."

HE WAS decidedly unhappy by now and there was no use making him unhappier on this aspect of America First activities, so I switched to another angle.

"Can you tell me how much Sterling Morton of Morton Salt gave America First?"

"Why do you want to know about him?" Moore asked suspiciously.

"I know Morton is one of your heavy contributors. He was also a contributor to Harry A. Jung's American Vigilant Intelligence Federation, an anti-Semitic organization—which

distributed the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion.' Jung has worked with Nazi agents operating secretly in this country. Naturally, when I find a man who contributed to Jung is also a heavy contributor to America First——"

"I don't know anything about that," Moore interrupted. "I don't know where you get your facts."

"It was uncovered by a congressional committee investigating subversive activities in the United States." (I was referring to the

Dickstein-McCormack investigation in 1934.)

"Well, we certainly have nothing to do with Nazis or fascists. That's definite," said Moore.

"Can you tell me what the relationship is between America First and Merwin K. Hart?"

"None," he said quickly and looked up at the ceiling as if trying to recollect the name. "I've heard the name some place."

"Hart is head of the New York Economic Council and is a prominent pro-fascist who

STATE

work of the Committee is supported entirely by voluntary contributions of time or money.

THE AMERICA FIRST COMMITTEE assures all contributors that its work is supported entirely by voluntary contributions of time or money. The Chicago office alone has a payroll of \$42,000. The committee's director of organization told Spivak he'd appreciate it if Spivak "didn't mention the payroll" business.

cooperated with Franco agents during the Spanish Civil War. Franco agents at that time, if not now, were pretty much synonymous with Nazi agents."

"Oh," said Moore. "I recollect the name."

I might have added that Hart's pro-fascist activities were not confined to crusading for Franco. In the summer of 1937 he sponsored a so-called American Congress of Private Enterprise at which two of the chief speakers were the Rev. Gerald L. K. Smith, one of the country's most notorious anti-Semites and fascists, and Harold Lord Varney, former editor of an avowed fascist organ, Lawrence Dennis' *The Awakener*.

"You say there's no relationship between Hart and America First. Did Hart and Stuart ever communicate with one another?"

"I don't know. I'd have to ask Stuart."

"Do you mind?"

While I waited, the director of organization hopped in to see the youngster in charge of the national organization who had been told to keep his mouth shut. Moore returned in a few minutes smiling affably.

"I got the whole story," he announced.

"Here it is: Stuart never had any communication with Hart. Once Hart called Stuart when Stuart was in the East. It was a day or two after the committee was announced by an ad in the *New York Times*. Hart asked for an appointment. Stuart knew nothing about him but had him come in. After talking with him, Stuart decided that they could not work together because Hart's views did not coincide with Stuart's or America First's. When Stuart returned to Chicago he wrote to Hart, telling him that they could not work together. Stuart never heard nor saw nor had any contact with him since. That covers it, doesn't it?"

"Only partly, I'm afraid. The letter you refer to is the one dated Sept. 30, 1940. Is that correct?"

"I guess so," he said, staring at me. "That would make his story accurate. Around the time America First was organized."

"That's right. Now that letter had a very important sentence in it. It did say that Stuart did not want Hart to start an America First Chapter in New York because Hart was labeled, but, and now I quote from Stu-

art's letter, 'It is imperative that we work together.' That's what I don't get. Why was it imperative that they work together secretly and not openly?"

"Is that what the letter said?"

"Yes. Here's a photostatic copy of it." Stuart's letter to Hart read:

"I have turned over in my mind the advisability of setting up a chapter of the America First Committee through your organization. Having discussed it with some members of the committee, I have come to the conclusion that it would be a mistake. The paramount objection is that your organization has been identified with a certain point of view and our chapter of the America First Committee would have a similar label attached to it. This, I believe, would be unfortunate.

"However, as I stressed to you, it is imperative that we work together on these things. I will let you know the name of the man who will be chairman of the New York chapter within a few days. I hope you will be able to work with him."

Moore read the letter carefully. "I don't know anything about it," he said. "All I know is that Stuart has had nothing to do with Hart or ever heard from him again. That's final."

"Is that what Stuart told you to tell me?"

"Yes."

"Let me read you a telegram Hart sent to Stuart:

"'Came to Washington yesterday from New York to confer with certain persons about formation committee to oppose drift to war stop Castle and man you saw at Hay Adams Hotel told me of your group and it will probably be well for us to talk together stop I have call in for you and will be Mayflower Hotel two thirty standard time today Friday if I don't get you sooner stop Return New York this afternoon address there five ought five Fifth Ave. Believe prompt action urgent.'

"Now in view of Stuart's statement and the telegram showing that they had had other contacts than those Stuart is willing to admit, I'm wondering if there are any other indi-

viduals or organizations with whom America First might be working secretly—"

"We are not working secretly with anybody," Moore said slowly.

"This telegram I just read to you shows that a member of your national committee, who is reputed to be the 'brains' of the organization, met with an unidentified man in a Washington hotel, who then met with a prominent pro-fascist who wired Stuart. Who is the unidentified man?"

"I don't know. I don't know anything about that telegram."

"Would you mind asking Stuart?"

"Stuart's gone for the day," he announced. Moore had not left the office since the last time he had hopped in to see the boy wonder. I therefore wondered how he knew that Stuart had left for the day, but assumed it was clairvoyance and didn't press the matter.

"Castle is known as an appeaser. Hart's reputation is also known—even to Stuart, you tell me. When such persons meet with unidentified individuals whose names aren't even mentioned in telegrams, it's subject to suspicion, isn't it?"

Moore didn't answer.

"Stuart was willing to work secretly with a known pro-fascist. Would it be unfair to assume that this mysterious individual might—"

"I don't know anything about that," Moore interrupted. "Nothing."

"I see. How did Stuart meet Castle in the first place?"

"Oh, Castle was a natural. When Stuart heard he sympathized with America First principles—"

"Who told him?"

"Sterling Morton, I think."

"Sterling Morton, who supported Jung, introduced Stuart to Castle, and Castle is in close touch with Merwin K. Hart, a native fascist—"

"Say," interrupted Moore, "why don't we forget about that?"

"I'm afraid," I said getting up, "that's a bit too important to forget."

I DECIDED to see Castle and find out what light he could shed on these behind-the-scenes machinations. William R. Castle, Undersecretary of State under Hoover, who is reported to be a close adviser of both Lindbergh and Hoover, was not at his Washington home. He had gone to Hot Springs, Va., for his health. When I arrived at Hot Springs, I phoned for an appointment. Mrs. Castle was not at all certain that Mr. Castle would be able to see me; he had been ill for some time. But Castle himself finally agreed. We met in the spacious lobby of The Homestead and walked leisurely to a secluded corner on the enormous porch facing the mountains surrounding the hotel. The signs of his illness were apparent in his voice and walk.

"I wanted to talk with you about some aspects of America First policy," I said, when we were seated. "As you know the committee is widely reputed to be—"

"I wouldn't dare say how much. I don't know."

"Does the national office keep you, as a member of the national committee, informed of how much they take in and spend?"

"No," he said slowly.

"Are members of the national committee consulted on policies?"

"They have meetings periodically in Chicago and I assume that policies are decided then. I've never been to one of them so I wouldn't know."

"Just exactly who decides the policies?"

"I think they're decided at those meetings." He smiled and looked keenly at me. "I have no doubt, though, that General Wood influences them a lot."

Both of us chuckled. "I understand," I said. "Is the general membership consulted about these policies?"

He recrossed his long legs, took his glasses off and wiped them carefully, put them on again, and stared up at a tree on which a bird was singing at the top of its voice.

"I can't answer," he said slowly. "I don't know. I suppose not. They have a limited budget and it costs a lot of money to start taking the vote of a large membership."

"What is the budget?"

"I don't know."

"Well, what's the size of the membership?"

"I don't know."

"You know, of course, about the belief that

there is a considerable amount of Nazi money coming in to America First for its propaganda. It's unfortunate, but the committee's refusal to make public its list of contributors of, let us say, \$100 and up, has caused this belief to be even more widespread. Now, if the list of contributors were made public so the names could be checked, it would be the quickest way to scotch the rumors that Nazi money is helping the committee in its propaganda."

"I agree with you on that," he said quickly. "If Nazi money were coming in to the committee I would like to know it. I'd get out so quick they wouldn't even see me go."

"Have you ever seen the list of contributors?"

"No."

"Then how can you know that no Nazi money, directly or indirectly, is coming in?"

"I don't," he smiled. "But I know General Wood and the people behind the organization. I know that if they suspected any Nazi money they'd throw the contributor and his contribution out."

But knowing appeasers, I felt certain that the man who endorsed Hitler's "peace" plan would lose no sleep over the possibility of Nazi money financing the America First Committee.

"Are membership and financial statements sent to the national office from the various chapters?" I asked.

"I should suppose so but I don't know for sure."

"You're a member of the Washington, D. C., chapter, for instance. How big a staff have you got?"

"I don't know what it is now, but some months ago we had a paid stenographer and quite a number of volunteers."

"That brings up the question of the payroll. Are you supposed to have a payroll?"

Castle's eyes grew big and round and bright behind his glasses and he didn't answer.

"In all requests for contributions," I continued, "there is the definite statement that 'The work of the committee is supported entirely by voluntary contributions of time or money.' Now, if we drop 'or money' we find a definite assurance that money is received with the promise that it is to be used for almost anything, but not for a payroll. All work must be voluntary."

"I'm not a lawyer," he said slowly, "but it doesn't seem right to me. But that applies only to the national office," he added, "not to our Washington office."

"You are a member of the national committee, responsible for the national organization—"

"I'm not a lawyer," he said, his eyes very bright and round.

"The national office has a payroll of \$42,000," I added.

"If it's as you say, it doesn't seem right. I wouldn't approve of collecting money with such assurances."

"In your own Washington chapter, has any check been made to be sure Nazis, pro-Nazis, and fascists were not giving considerable aid?"

"I wouldn't know if such persons were to offer aid, but we ourselves wouldn't have anything to do with pro-Nazis and fascists in our committee's work."

As soon as he said this, I knew exactly what question to ask next:

"Could you tell me how well you know Merwin K. Hart?"

The eyes behind the glasses got very big and bright and he held his head back with a haughty air.

"I have met the gentleman a few times," he said cautiously. "At small dinner parties," he added.

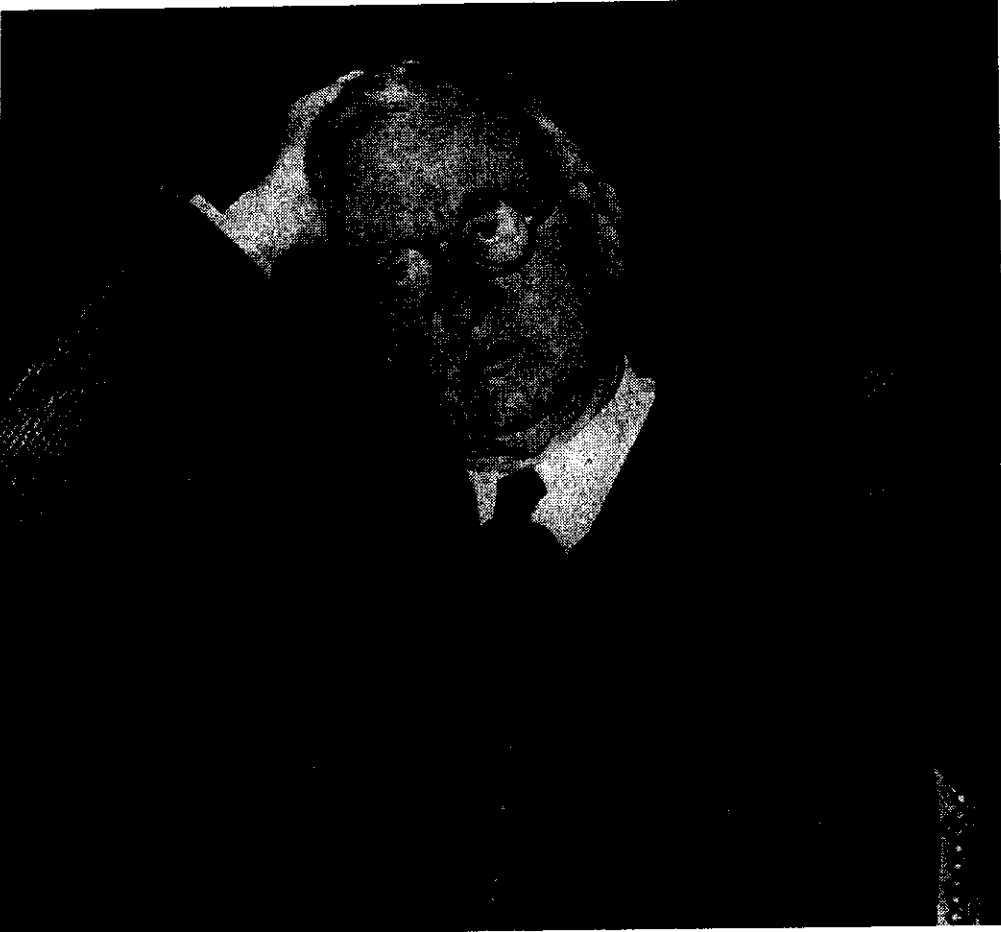
"You've been in communication with him?"

"Possibly," he said warily.

"It's one of your communications to him which tends to justify the widespread belief that the committee deals closely with pro-fascists, that some of its leaders are anti-Semitic and thus that the committee itself is anti-Semitic."

Castle didn't say anything.

"I'm referring to a letter you wrote to him on Dec. 28, 1940. In that letter you were discussing Verne Marshall, head of the No Foreign Wars Committee, and his explosive anti-Semitism. In talking about the Jews you wrote: 'God knows I have no particular affection for such people, but I should prefer to express it in private to you than in a public advertisement.' You recollect that letter?"



THE FORMER AMBASSADOR TO JAPAN, WILLIAM R. CASTLE. His "embarrassing" letter appears on the opposite page. He and Herbert Hoover see eye to eye on how to play ball with Hitler.

"Pro-Nazi," he murmured without letting me finish my sentence.

"Yes. Pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic. Now you are a member of the national committee and generally reputed to be the 'brains'——"

Castle crossed his long legs and stared up at the mountains.

"That is one of the funniest things that ever happened," he said smoothly. "Calling me the 'brains' of America First is very funny. Actually I've had as little to do with deciding the policies of the organization as any of the members. I kept away from the organization for a long time, but finally, seeing that they were pursuing a policy which met with my approval, I agreed to become a member."

"When you say you approved their policies, do you mean appeasement?"

He thought carefully for a moment. "I think you can call me an appeaser," he said slowly, "if appeasement means settling a thing by diplomatic methods without going to war. If it can't, I might well be in favor of war."

"Do you think we can settle the Nazi problem by appeasement?"

I had asked permission to take notes to avoid misquotation and he chose his words carefully, pausing when he saw he was going too fast for my scribbling.

"If it is true," he said as if dictating a statement, "that the Germans, a little while

ago, made an offer to England that they would let the British empire and the British navy alone and asked only that they be allowed to consolidate the Continent, I think it might have been a good thing to have made peace."

He saw me glance up. It didn't take a trained diplomat to read the thought that flashed across my mind: if the Nazis were permitted to consolidate the Continent, it would mean giving them time to prepare for a more intensive attack later to destroy Britain and the Soviet Union and then finally settle scores with the United States. Clearly Castle was advocating the kind of "peace" which Hitler himself desired.

"Could you tell me how you happened to become active in America First?" I asked.

"Oh, I talked it over several times with General Wood. He was down in Hot Springs and we discussed it here, too. I think that after that young Bobbie Stuart wrote to me. I kept away from it for a while, but when I saw the way they were going at it, I agreed to be a member of the national committee."

"Can you give me an idea of how America First operates—the setup?"

He had been staring at the mountains, but at this question he turned toward me. His eyes behind the tortoise shell glasses suddenly grew large and bright. It was characteristic, I noticed, that whenever I

broached a dangerous aspect of America First, his eyes invariably became large and bright. This was followed by an "I don't know."

"I know very little about how the organization operates," he said. "All I know is that the principal office is in Chicago and that it has branches all over the country."

"Do you know whether it is incorporated?"

"No, I don't."

It was difficult to believe that a man who was Undersecretary of State, American ambassador to Japan, a diplomat of many years' training, whose personal business interests were farflung, would wait months before joining an organization in order to be sure that it was the right kind and then jump feet first without getting the most elementary information about it. But one of the things not done in talking with diplomats is to imply too clearly that you think the suave gentleman is not telling the truth, so I continued:

"Just what is the relationship between the various chapters and the national headquarters?"

"So far as I know, the national office keeps them supplied with material. They don't pay anything for it. They raise their own money and carry on much of their own work, too."

"Have you an idea of how much the national or the Washington office, for instance, has taken in?"



SENATOR BURTON K. WHEELER and Lindbergh in a familiar salute. Wheeler's wife is a member of America First's national committee. He has openly espoused the committee's appeasement ideas. Last week rotten eggs were thrown at him while he was making a speech in his native state of Montana.

STERLING MORTON is one of America First's heavy financial contributors. He has also given money to the Vigilant Intelligence Federation, which has worked with secret Nazi agents.

December 28, 1940

Merwin K. Hart, Esq.
608 7th Avenue
New York, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Hart:

I am writing you in response to your letter of the 27th. I am sorry that I cannot reply to you more fully, but I am much more inclined to feel that with the furious pro-British sentiment, we are going to get much more sympathy if we go very slow and express our own honest feeling of sympathy and affection for that much beleaguered country. In other words, I cannot feel that there should be any exaggeration, that soft-pedaling is more useful at the moment. That is the danger, I think, of a man like Verne Marshall, whom I like and respect. *He is not only not able to work with other people but he is so violent on the subject of Jews and the New Deal that he is likely badly to overstep the mark. God knows, I have no particular affection for such people, but I should much prefer to express it in private to you than in a public advertisement.* Thank you for sending me the Christmas greeting. I hope you have a very happy day and that you look forward to a Happy New Year. People down here feel that the danger of our involvement in the war is getting less day by day. Very sincerely, (signed) William R. Castle.

WRC:B

Diplomat Castle's Anti-Semitic Letter

William R. Castle, former Undersecretary of State during Herbert Hoover's administration, is a member of America First's national committee and chairman of the Washington, D. C., chapter. He is generally considered to be the "brains" of the committee. In a letter written from Washington on Dec. 28, 1940, to Merwin K. Hart, the notorious pro-fascist and friend of Franco, Castle explained that he does not like the Jews either. The text of this letter which Castle told John L. Spivak is "very embarrassing" is as follows: "Can you tell me what sort of sheet the *New York Enquirer* is, and anything you know about the editor, William Griffin? I am asking this because I read with a good deal of interest the editorial printed as an advertisement in the *Times* a few days ago. I don't think it was very clever because it said too much against Britain. Possibly there must be some of that, but I am much more inclined to feel that with the furious pro-British sentiment, we are going to get much more sympathy if we go very slow and express our own honest feeling of sympathy and affection for that much beleaguered country. In other words, I cannot feel that there should be any exaggeration, that soft-pedaling is more useful at the moment. That is the danger, I think, of a man like Verne Marshall, whom I like and respect. *He is not only not able to work with other people but he is so violent on the subject of Jews and the New Deal that he is likely badly to overstep the mark. God knows, I have no particular affection for such people, but I should much prefer to express it in private to you than in a public advertisement.* Thank you for sending me the Christmas greeting. I hope you have a very happy day and that you look forward to a Happy New Year. People down here feel that the danger of our involvement in the war is getting less day by day. Very sincerely, (signed) William R. Castle."

Castle didn't answer immediately. He stared, motionless, at the trees on the mountain top and his voice almost purred when he finally spoke.

"That's a rotten thing, Mr. Spivak—stealing a person's private letters."

The silence that followed this statement was a bit heavy. The bird, hidden somewhere in a nearby tree, tried to split its throat in a new burst of song.

"I should say," he added, "that anyone who wants to play the game as the Nazis play it is just about as rotten as the Nazis themselves."

This moral outburst came rather strangely from the man who only a few minutes earlier had urged that America play the game as the Nazis play it and permit the saintly Adolph to be master of the world. For obvious reasons I was unable to reveal just how I had acquired a copy of this letter. So I was compelled to let Castle's insult go unchallenged. It was evident that the letter had hit him hard and we sat in an uncomfortable silence for a moment. Suddenly he turned to me with a friendly smile.

"That was an unfortunate letter, Mr. Spivak. It's very embarrassing."

"I feel sure you can explain it," I said helpfully.

"Yes. The explanation, as near as I can recollect it, is that someone wrote to me and suggested something about the committee. The question of Jews came up and I wrote saying that Jews should be represented on the committee the same as any other racial or religious group. Good heavens! It's absurd to say that I don't like Jews. Some of my best friends are Jews."

When with diplomats even a Spivak must be diplomatic, so I didn't point out that his letter, in which the "unfortunate" anti-Semitism appeared, had nothing to do with Jews being represented on the America First Committee. He was sufficiently embarrassed, so I dropped this particular aspect. At the end of the interview he asked that I submit my notes quoting him directly, so that there would be no misquotation. I agreed and he read the notes and inserted a few additions in a tiny handwriting. When I returned to New York, I wired him, calling his attention to the lack of clarity in his explanation of how he happened to write the letter to Hart, and asking for a clearer statement. Castle, however, had apparently had enough of putting things in writing about Jews and anti-Semitism; he didn't answer.

After he had announced that "some of my best friends are Jews," he repeatedly brought up the subject of anti-Semitism, insisting that neither he nor America First were either anti-Semitic or pro-Nazi.

"That was a very unfortunate letter," he repeated. "I scarcely know this man Hart. I've met him two or three times at small dinner parties."

"Have you had any contact with Hart other than these small dinner parties?"

"No," he said definitely.

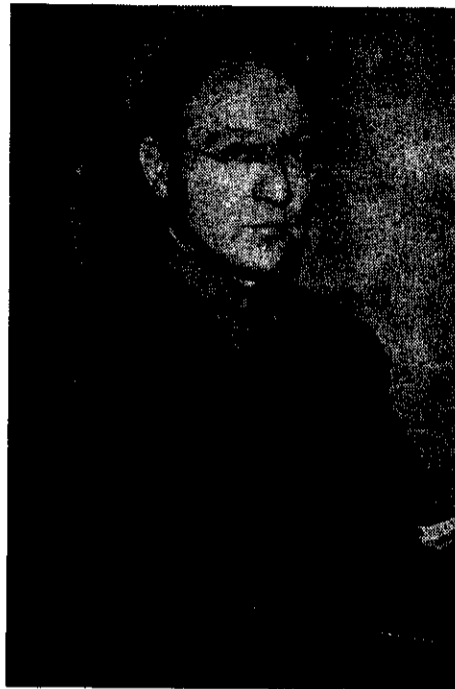
"Hart sent a telegram to young Stuart about a meeting that you, Stuart, and a mysterious unidentified person had at the Hay Adams House——"

"Sent a telegram?" said Castle, his eyes big and bright behind his glasses.

"Yes. A telegram. I have it."

"I can't recollect any such meeting. I don't believe any such meeting occurred. I can't understand such a telegram."

"I see," I said, and silence again fell upon us. I expected another moral commentary, but Castle made none. Instead, after a moment's silence, he purred: "This man Hart. Altogether too damn many things are stolen from his files."



ANTI-SEMITIC *Avery Brundage was dropped from America First's national committee, not because it is opposed to anti-Semitism but because it wanted to keep its skirts clear.*

"Yes," I agreed. "Quite a bit."

"M-m-m," said Mr. Castle, his jaw setting firmly. "It seems to me that this person Hart is entirely too careless."

"Quite careless," I agreed.

"There's an interesting point you raised before," said Castle. "You said he was notoriously pro-fascist. Ah, is there—is there any evidence of that?"

"Oh, yes. Among his choice activities was some intensive pro-Franco——"

"Ah, pro-Franco. M-m-m. Yes. But is there any evidence, Mr. Spivak, of his pro-Franco—ah, leanings?"

"He announced it in *Who's Who*."

"Oh, my God!" he exclaimed.

"I brought up Hart only as an illustration of one of the reasons for the widespread reports that America First was dealing with pro-fascists, pro-Nazis, and was anti-Semitic."

"But Hart was never a member of our national committee," said Castle.

"That's true. But other persons reputed to

be pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic were. For instance, what do you know about Avery Brundage?"

"Not a thing. Who is he?" he said quickly.

I explained briefly Brundage's background and told him that the national headquarters' spokesman had told me that Brundage had been dropped "because of his anti-Semitism."

"I'm not surprised they fired him," he smiled. "That would prove that the committee doesn't want pro-Nazis or anti-Semites on it."

"Or it might prove that when people began to talk about the committee's pro-Nazism and anti-Semitism, it wanted to get rid of the sore spots."

Castle shot a quick glance at me and laughed.

"Yes. It might prove that, too," he agreed.

"What about Henry Ford?"

"I have no idea how he got on the committee. We were not always very careful apparently. I didn't think Ford was pro-Nazi."

"Have you any idea why Lessing J. Rosenwald, a Jew, resigned?"

"I have my own idea, but it's not for quotation, so I don't suppose you want it. I do know that the committee felt very badly when he resigned. I felt badly personally. I know Rosenwald and like him. It's too bad."

"Were you, as a member of the national committee, consulted about dropping Brundage, Ford, or anyone else?"

"No, I wasn't."

"Were the other members of the national committee consulted?"

"I don't suppose they were. The executive committee in Chicago probably decided the matter."

"The point I'm driving at is that it seems the running of the America First Committee is in the hands of a few men in Chicago who appoint men to the national committee and drop them, apparently at their whim, without consulting even the other members of the national committee."

"If they do, they ought not to," he said, shaking his head disapprovingly.

Castle had looked at his wrist watch several times. This time he diplomatically stared at it until it was impossible for me not to notice it.

"I have to meet some people for tea," he said, rising and extending his hand.

We walked into the enormous lobby, neither of us saying anything. There was, of course, no one waiting to join him at tea. I walked him to the elevator and he returned to his rooms.*

JOHN L. SPIVAK.

Next week John L. Spivak will present documentary evidence that the America First Committee is sending out notorious pro-Nazis and anti-Semites as official speakers. He will also shed light on other ramifications of America First, including the amount of money the organization has received from unidentified persons to carry on its activities.

* Copyright 1941 by New Masses. All rights reserved.

