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Letter From Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson to the Editor of the Waterbury American, October 30, 1941

Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson

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To the Editor of the Waterbury American:

About a fortnight ago a letter to Mr. Horace Taft from a local "America First" chairman appeared in the American. In the hope of clarifying the matter further, I beg leave to make a few comments.

The writer of the "America First" letter reiterated the old cliché about 83% of Americans' being against war. No doubt 99% are against our going to war, -- unless the alternative is worse than going to war. Here is the essential question; and ^{it} has, I think, never been answered by the isolationists. Let us examine this question soberly. If Hitler should conquer Britain, he and his dictatorial and militaristic allies would dominate the world, including the seven seas. Germany, with her conquered countries, could outbuild us, in ships, planes, and guns. Without invasion the Nazis could dominate the United States by remote control. Our choice would be to submit to that abject and miserable status, or else to become a regimented armed camp facing a hostile world alone for a long black future. I think that, when the question has been fairly stated, the poles have shown that a heavy majority of Americans are ready to have their country enter the war, if the alternative is the possibility of the fall of Britain, with its terrible consequences to the United States.

War is not a policy. It is "an instrument of policy". The policy adopted by the President and the Congress is to assure British victory because that is essential to America's safety. War on our part may be the necessary instrument of that policy. That

is a question for our Government. Wishful thinking cannot affect the decision. The march of events is deciding it. If German victory should threaten, certainly it would be better for America to fight now, with powerful allies, and bring this war to a relatively quick decision, than to wait and fight alone against overwhelming odds. This last possibility is implicit in the position of "America First", as I understand it.

The writer for "America First" objects to any interdependence between America and Britain. He ignores the well-known fact that the Monroe Doctrine has stood for over a century, without our having overwhelming sea-power, because of the friendly British fleet. He ignores the fact that Britain was our only friend and well-wisher during the Spanish-American war, as was demonstrated at Manila when a German admiral was tempted to interfere. He admits, I suppose, that the free institutions and just laws that attracted his forebears here are derived from Magna Carta, the Mother of Parliaments, and the English Common Law. He knows that India, that he is so sorry for, is loyally supporting and fighting for Britain; and that China, for which he also sheds a tear, is not thinking of past grudges but, like every other nation that longs for freedom, is praying for British victory. He must know that Britain now has a democratic government, with the king a mere symbol of loyalty. He should know that things have changed in a hundred years, and that Eire is free and independent. Why then this obvious hot hatred of Britain? Should America's future be decided by Ireland's past? He ignores the fact that Jefferson, when America was threatened from across the Atlantic, said, "We must marry ourselves to the British fleet and nation."

Whether one likes the English or not has nothing whatever to do with the case. America is threatened. Clearly it is better to fight far away and with a powerful ally than to risk having to fight alone on this side of the Atlantic.

Cooperation with Britain is the only way to beat Hitler; and the interests of every single American citizen require that he be beaten. American workmen know well that where Hitler prevails no "labor movement" is allowed. Labor unions and collective bargaining are abolished. In their place is slavery. They also know well that if Britain were beaten we should have either to submit to such conditions; or else, in our isolated struggle against Nazidom, with foreign trade and standard of living gone, we should have to be regimented for defense in similar conditions here, with most of our individual liberties indefinitely suspended.

Germany seeks the political and economic domination of the world. Of even deeper significance is the fact that this war is to decide whether lying, deceit, brutal cruelty and persecution are to rule mankind. All decent ethics, morality and religion are at stake. It requires a strange moral callousness, I think, for any layman, still more for any churchman, to balk at the action necessary to defeat this monstrous regime by all-out cooperation with Britain, by self-sacrifice, if necessary by war.

We help Russia because Russia is fighting Hitler. Not to do so, in our own interest, would be fatuous. We condone in no way the tyrannies, cruelties and irreligion of the Communist regime.

Force must be met by force, the only language Hitler understands. To talk of appeasement of Germany, or of a negotiated peace with Hitler, is to ignore the history of his consistent lying and

treaty-breaking; to forget that lying and bad faith are the avowed technique of present day German policy.

What then can justify the continuing isolationist agitation of "America First"? Citizenship is not a one-way street. If we enjoy the benefits of American citizenship we must be ready to give as well as to receive, to sacrifice and to fight, if need be, for our country.

F. M. Huntington-Wilson

Woodbury, Connecticut
October 30, 1941