

distinction between “the superior man,” the natural aristocrat, and the mob, “the undifferentiated herd.” One or two of them, like the detestable Charles Angoff, bolstered their arguments with “remembered” — that is, invented — snatches of Mencken’s conversation. All of them, however they cooked up their arguments, were wrong. Mencken believed that some men were better than others, all right, but not on account of such accidents as their race or their color or their nationality or their religious background or their socioeconomic class. He believed that some men were better than others because some men were more competent and creative than others. But he believed in freedom for everybody. He believed that progress was possible “only if superior men are given absolute freedom to think what they want to think and say what they want to say.” And he saw that “the superior man can be sure of freedom only if it is given to all men.”

Fortunately, times have changed again since the days when all this was so grievously misunderstood. Mencken’s idea that a man should do his own thing and be left alone about it, that he should realize himself and leave others unmolested to realize themselves is fast becoming the conventional wisdom. His libertarian doctrine that that government is best which governs least grows daily in respectability and influence, as does his belief that “in the long run all battles are lost, and so are all wars.” And his own books are coming back into popular favor.

To my way of thinking, this is exactly as it should be. I believe that H.L. Mencken had a clearer vision of life, that he came nearer to its elementals and was less deceived by its false appearances, than any other American who has ever pre-

sumed to manufacture generalizations, not excepting Emerson, Thoreau, or even Mark Twain. I believe that, admitting all his defects, he wrote better English, in the sense of cleaner, straighter, vividder, saner English, than either Melville or James. I believe that four of his works — *The American Language*, *the Prejudices*, *Notes on Democracy*, and *The Days of H.L. Mencken* — are alone worth more, as works of art and as criticisms of life, than the whole combined output of Hawthorne, Dreiser, Fitzgerald, Thomas Wolfe, Norman Mailer and Saul Bellow. I believe that he ranks well above Hemingway and certainly not below Poe or Miller or Faulkner. He was one of the great writers of all time, the full equal of Cervantes and Dickens, Swift and Oscar Wilde. He was and is one of the few authentic world-class giants of our national literature.

How could it be otherwise? Before technological advance displaced it from its role as a preservative, sage was used, like many other spices, not only to make dishes individual in flavor, but also to make them last. And the spicy, everlastingly individual flavor the Sage of Baltimore put into his books not only made them unmistakably his; it also made them endure. We celebrate this year the centennial of his birth. He would have been 100 years old September 12, had he lived. But it is no matter that Mencken has been dead this past quarter-century. His works live. Like old wine or old cheese, they only improve with age. And like the oysters of his native Baltimore, they are things of prolonged and kaleidoscopic flavors; they are nourishing and exquisite dishes. They are pearls of literature, believe me, and not for swine.

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## An honest record

### JUSTUS DOENECKE

War Within and Without: Diaries and Letters, 1939–1944, by Anne Morrow Lindbergh. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 471 pp., \$14.95.

TO MUCH OF THE PUBLIC, particularly to those born in the decades after Pearl Harbor, those who opposed American intervention in World War II were a most unsavory lot. From 1939 through 1941, large sections of the media portrayed them as appeasers, individuals welcoming Axis domination overseas and fostering reaction at home. Indeed, the frequently used label “isolationist,” if somewhat derogatory, was less pejorative than many.

The Lindberghs in particular received abusive treatment. President Roosevelt publicly referred to aviator Charles A. Lindbergh as a “copperhead,” and interventionists accused his wife Anne of presenting fascism as an irresistible “wave of the future.”

At the height of the interventionist controversy, Anne Morrow Lindbergh wrote, “Each day that I read the lies about us in the newspapers I think there must be some honest personal record to show what it really was like.” Fortunately, she now shares her own record with us, thereby putting all historians in her debt.

The introduction sets the tone for the diaries, and puts them in context as well. After noting that most Americans see World War II as a just war against evil forces, she writes, “Few of us question what preceded Hitler or examine critically the conditions that caused his rise to power. Few stop to consider what consequences followed our enthusiastic embrace of Stalin and, inevitably, of his aims and

ends.” She tells of the influence upon her of the powerful novelist Erich Maria Remarque, whose *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929) made her a pacifist, and the revisionist historian Sidney Bradshaw Fay, author of *Origins of the World War* (1928) and one of her instructors at Smith College. Refuting certain criticisms of her husband, she asserts that Charles’s military mission to Germany in 1936 was performed at the request of army intelligence, and she denies that Charles had any influence upon the Munich conference. She quotes able historians to challenge the claim that only reactionaries and bigots opposed full-scale entry into the war.

What might make the preface even more significant is her account of official intimidation. The Federal Bureau of Investigation tapped their phone. The Roosevelt administration tried to fire government officials, such as Colonel Truman Smith, thought to have been writing Lindbergh’s speeches. Repeatedly, she notes, interventionist opponents took his words out of context, omitting main points so as to pin the label of treason on him.

Mrs. Lindbergh begins this volume of her diaries in April 1939, with her return to the United States after several years of self-imposed exile in Europe. Five months after she got back, when the European war broke out, she predicted that the conflict would be long and inhumane, with the United States eventually intervening to save Britain and France. “We will never see peace again,” she wrote on September 3, “even after ‘war’ ceases. The world will be in turmoil, revolution, terror. My husband and my friends will go in the beginning of this long struggle and my children in the end of it. I am an old woman already.”

By mid-September, Charles

was broadcasting against Roosevelt's cash-and-carry proposals, and Anne strongly supported his anti-interventionism. She, like Charles, loved France deeply, but —also like Charles— she saw the conflict as ruinous. On October 28, she mused, "A cessation of hostilities— what harm could it do, what good *might* it do? Not to yield to Hitler, *not* to disarm, but to stand fast behind the Maginot line and cease hostilities long enough to avert a suicidal conflict which will destroy everyone, winners and losers, with Russia there to eat up the remains."

Some of the best sections of her book deal with her provocative thesis, "the wave of the future." Seeing how the phrase was misinterpreted to imply endorsement of fascism, she wrote, "Will I have to bear this lie throughout life?" Far from being an Axis apologist, she called Hitler "that terrible scourge of humanity" and continually voiced horror over German atrocities. At one point, she says that she would rather have the United States enter the war than have a wave of anti-Semitism sweep the nation.

Charles too was no iceberg. "The flower of the Allied armies!" he cried out upon hearing of the abortive Belgian campaign. "I can't keep those troops out of my mind. I know what hell is going on there, what hell."

To Anne Morrow Lindbergh, Nazism was "scum which happens to be on the wave of the future." She thought of "some new and perhaps even ultimately good conception of humanity coming to birth—or trying to come to birth through these evil and horrible forces, these abortive attempts." Indeed, at one point, she saw world cooperation in the offing. Speaking of the interventionists, she wrote, "I want evil to be vanquished as much as they — only my mind tells me,



*Charles and Anne Morrow Lindbergh standing in front of their plane in 1934, at least five years before their opposition to World War II unjustly branded them as traitors.*

perhaps wrongly, that it cannot be done the way they think it can." At times, she despaired of the Germans ever possessing "any sense of humanity"; at other times, she absolutely refused to accept "the complete wrongness or rightness of either side."

The entire family, even including their children at school, received much hostility, and few could have withstood it. In January 1941 she commented, "I am now the bubonic plague among writers and C. is the anti-Christ." She noted with irony how far interven-

tionism had permeated all those with whom she grew up: "The East, the secure, the rich, the cultured, the sensitive, the academic, the good — those worthy intelligent people brought up in a hedged world so far from realities." The people backing the America First



Committee, on the other hand, were “not smart, not rich, not intellectual, dowdy, hard-working good people, housewives, shopkeepers, etc. I suppose it is the heart of America, those people who protest against war and then give their sons and their blood and their money without grudging or making a great fuss over it, taking their generosity just as a matter of fact.”

Some comments in particular are revealing. She expresses anger over the “petty, personal, and bitter mudslinging” of columnist Dorothy Thompson, and was hurt by the poet Carl Sandburg as well. She compares the pseudo-psychological attack of British diplomat Harold Nicolson unfavorably to the principled critique of Walter Lippmann, almost the only intellectual who did not resort to personal attack. When the British accused them of being ungrateful guests (they had spent several years in Britain), she responded, “The attitude seems to be that you should *sell* your country out of personal loyalty or gratitude to another country.” When she pleaded for feeding occupied Europe, the newsreels headlined her address, “Anne Lindbergh Suggests We Feed Hitler’s Europe.”

She ably captures the general hysteria as well. She notes the anti-parachute units organized in Philadelphia, the Bundles for Britain campaign of the smart set, Elizabeth Arden’s V for Victory lipstick. When actress Lillian Gish joined America First, critic Alexander Woollcott “told her no one would speak to her again.” The Reverend L.M. Birkhead, head of Friends of Democracy, Inc., boasted that for ten thousand dollars, he would “do the same job” on Charles that he did on Father Coughlin.

Through her deftly drawn portraits, the reader can well see the rich variety of indi-

viduals opposed to intervention. One meets international lawyer John Foster Dulles (“that sane cool air of tolerance, moderation, non-emotionalism”), poet W.H. Auden (“perhaps the most unworldly person I have ever met”), peace lobbyist Frederick J. Libby (“bright and hard—like a button”), elitist theorist Lawrence Dennis (“rather reserved and extremely sensitive”). Diplomat Joseph P. Kennedy is “this great breezy, ambitious, wealthy, and somehow nice man”; journalist John T. Flynn, a “healthy American—an old-fashioned liberal”; socialist leader Norman Thomas, “inflamed about ‘Humanity’ but not about men as individuals”; press lord William Randolph Hearst, “that gray and lifeless mask.” The best mind in the struggle, in her eyes, belonged to Philip La Follette, former governor of Wisconsin, though that of America First chairman Robert E. Wood came close.

War brought her no rest, but only long separations from her husband, who was occupied with defense work. In the middle of 1943, she wrote how much older she felt than her friends, and this reaction is quite understandable. Far from being insensitive to the conflict, she felt Europe’s suffering deeply. Her diaries close with the death of aviator Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, a man whom she believed could have offered much to France’s recovery.

This book will go down as one of the great memoirs of the wartime period. If read carefully, it offers an accurate as well as an understanding picture of certain major themes in American isolationism. In addition, Mrs. Lindbergh comes through as a woman of exceptional sensitivity; indeed, of a certain nobility.

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## The humane libertarian

EGAN O’CONNOR

The Writings of F. A. Harper: Vol. 1, *The Major Works*; Vol. 2, *Shorter Essays*, by F. A. Harper. *Institute for Humane Studies*, Vol. 1, 437 pp., Vol. 2, 611 pp., \$20.00 set.

THIS COLLECTION OF his works reveals F. A. “Baldy” Harper—economist, philosopher, humanist, 1905-1973—as one of the intellectual and moral giants

of all time. In these two volumes of essays, he makes such a morally attractive, well-reasoned, coherent, convincing, and virtually complete case for liberty (including a truly free market), that I think these books alone (plus enough readers, of course) could turn a large fraction of humanity libertarian, even if there were no other libertarian literature in existence.

One of Harper’s several magnificent achievements is the simplicity of his writing. These two volumes are easy reading in spite of their profundity. Just as the simplicity

