

Prophet Without Honor

Charles A. Lindbergh and the Battle Against American Intervention in World War II, by Wayne S. Cole, *New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1974. 298 pp. and illustrations. \$10.00.*

A GENERATION AFTER the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt it is difficult to explain to a grandson in college just what the United States achieved by the decision of that Administration to intervene in World War II. Any young person can see that Communism is now in control from the Elbe River to the Yellow Sea; that the once great empires of Western Europe are finished; that this country is beset by social, political, economic and financial problems which we seem unable to resolve. But none of this was an objective sought or desired by F. D. R. So what went wrong?

Probably several more decades must pass before Clio produces generally acceptable answers. But it is no longer premature to recall that there were many Americans who contemporaneously foresaw a disastrous outcome and did their utmost to keep their country from becoming a belligerent. Foremost among these, at least in the extent of publicity received, was the late Charles Augustus Lindbergh.

Wayne S. Cole, professor of history at the University of Maryland, has now written an objective, readable and deeply significant study of Lindbergh's anti-interventionist effort, both as made single-handed and eventually in conjunction with the America First Committee. The writing was completed before the famous aviator's recent death and at the publisher's instigation he read the proofs, making some marginal comments. "As a result," says Dr. Cole in his Preface, "I made minor factual corrections in seven instances, but I made no changes in analysis or interpretation." The book, therefore, is in no sense an "authorized" account. Nor is it a biog-

raphy. There are only passing references to the famous "Lone Eagle" flight; to the dreadful kidnapping and murder of his baby boy; to the conservationist, ecological and anthropological interests of Lindbergh's later years. This study is all but wholly concerned with the so-called "isolationist" period. In this controversial era of American history Professor Cole, in two previous volumes, was already known as a meticulous researcher and trustworthy expositor.

Long before joining the America First Committee, in April, 1941, Lindbergh had established himself as a highly effective speaker in behalf of neutrality. His reputation as a folk hero, his engaging personality and his straight-forward presentations combined to win respect and admiration. Moreover he told the American people what they undoubtedly wanted to hear—that they had no moral, legal or self-defensive obligation to get involved in Europe's second suicidal holocaust.

Lindbergh's Swedish-born father, as a progressive Republican congressman from Minnesota, had strongly opposed American entry into World War I. The son was much less of an agrarian pacifist, much more of a knowledgeable cosmopolitan, in his repetitive attitude. Living in Britain and France as the insensate Versailles Treaty fell to pieces he had seen how its gross injustices undermined the ethical pretensions of the victors. A German repudiation of the punitive terms was all but inevitable. The most generous interpretation provided that the Germans, defeated in 1918, should continue to pay reparations until the middle of the nineteen-eighties, when virtually all who had fought in behalf of the Kaiser would be dead. Since the United States had refused to underwrite the dictated "settlement" of the first war it should steer clear of the embittered sequel which there was all too much reason to anticipate.

Returning from more than three years of European residence in April, 1939, Colonel Lindbergh (as he was then) immediately accepted an active advisory posi-

tion with the Air Corps. But his strong concern for American immunity from the developing disaster was strengthened by the number of prominent citizens who felt likewise. On September 1, 1939 Hitler's legions invaded Poland and two weeks later the flyer spoke from Washington, over all the then radio networks, on "America and Foreign Wars." He had been offered a Cabinet position as Secretary of Air if he would not make the speech. He was retired from military service because he did make it. In his private journal Lindbergh summarized: "I do not intend to stand by and see this country pushed into war, if it is not absolutely essential to the future welfare of the nation."

In the months that followed his arguments, precisely and logically delivered both in speeches and articles, were impressive to a broad section of public opinion—as much as eighty percent judging by the polls taken before Pearl Harbor. For some Lindbergh revived George Washington's warning against "entangling alliances." For others he recalled the hard choice of forebears who had left home to find a land more spiritually promising than militarized and class-conscious Europe. To all he emphasized that the first war had failed utterly "to make the world safe for democracy" but had turned a large part to Communism. American intervention in a second round, with the wholesale bombing on which this expert could speak with unquestionable authority, would be senseless.

The popularity of Lindbergh's presentations quite naturally aroused an almost venomous reaction among all who saw Hitler as the personification of evil; the Germans and Japanese as goose-stepping barbarians and the United States as ordained by manifest destiny to crusade as the saviour of mankind. The more dispassionate the non-interventionist argument the more necessary it became to attribute guilt by association. Thus Lindbergh's opposition to war with Hitler's Germany made him a Nazi; occasional references to "Asiatic hordes" revealed racist propensi-

ties; a single ill-judged public criticism of Jewish pro-war propaganda was said to disclose a dangerous anti-Semite.

Strident and overdrawn as was this attack, spearheaded by high officials in the Roosevelt Administration, it had some elements of truth. Lindbergh could accurately be called a "racist," insofar as he thought Nordic unity essential both to world order and to the survival of the parliamentary system which northern Europe had created. He had much the same feeling as Rudyard Kipling for "lesser breeds without the law" and for the Russian "bear that walks like a man." He stressed the close relationship of the English and Germans, concluding that in their fratricidal conflict this country, owing so much to infusions from both, should not take sides. To speak personally, I well recall a long conversation with Lindbergh on this subject, towards the end of the war. He predicted that anything left of Germany would have to be rebuilt, as an ally of both the United States and Britain.

Lindbergh's anti-war manifestoes, as reviewed by Professor Cole, show a great deal of prescience. He foresaw an Imperial Presidency that would consciously deceive the electorate, disregard the Congress, use espionage and police repression against its critics, spend the nation into bankruptcy and engage in overseas adventurism of dubious constitutionality. All this, the Lone Eagle warned, would be done in the name and under the guise of "patriotism." A country slowly emerging from the trauma of Watergate can find much that is extraordinarily timely in these "isolationist" warnings. As Professor Cole summarizes: "He used arguments in attacking Roosevelt in 1941 that were almost identical to those that liberal internationalists would use in attacking President Richard M. Nixon thirty years later."

Lindbergh himself was at least outwardly indifferent to the abuse so abundantly heaped upon him. Early adulation had never turned his head and later defamation seemed to him equally inconsequential. To his aristocratic mind the fluctuating plebei-

an reaction was of far less import than fidelity to what he himself thought true. And in emphasizing this Professor Cole, whose purpose "has been neither to vindicate nor to indict, but, rather, to describe and explain," is forced to some pessimistic doubt. Is there, in this country, a repressive mentality which does not believe in free speech, which demands conformity with the thinking of a *Führer* in a manner more Nazi than anything of which Lindbergh could ever be properly accused?

In any case, there is no question that the well-organized smearing of Lindbergh was effective. After Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt kept what he called this "copperhead" from any active military participation and little credit has ever been given for the postwar relevance of this dissenter's thinking. Professor Cole's book will help, but the course of revisionist history is uphill. The Book Review section of the *New York Times* has lately given this work a fair and objective notice. Yet over the review somebody printed as caption the slurring words: "Lindy the peacenik." One wonders what sort of editor could apply that characterization to the man who first flew the Atlantic, alone, unsupported and unafraid.

Reviewed by FELIX MORLEY

Caution or Conquest?

Soviet Conquest from Space, by Peter N. James, *New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House Publishers, 1974. 256 pp. \$8.95.*

THIS IS NOT a cautious book, in either title or content, but Mr. James believes that the time for caution has ended. He assembles information on a variety of military and technical subjects, leading him to conclude that the U.S.S.R. enjoys a slowly widen-