

Felix

For the Record, by Felix Morley, *South Bend, Indiana: Regnery/Gateway, Inc., 1979. viii + 472 pp. \$15.00.*

FELIX MORLEY IS ONE of the finest, if not the finest, of thinkers in the garden of journalism, which is all too often given over to thistles and taken over by weeds and creepers. No doubt some would reserve this peak for the late Walter Lippmann, who began his career to the left of John Reed (the Communist activist and historian, who must sleep fitfully in his Kremlin grave), but who wound up professing to abhor collectivism and planned society. Lippmann could and often did change positions on issues overnight while Morley has consistently opposed burgeoning statism and imperialistic intervention.

Morley is of the British tradition of admirable leader or editorial writers: a Hilaire Belloc or a G. K. Chesterton, rather than a muckraker like Upton Sinclair or a gay adventurer like Richard Harding Davis. His memoir is no thundering boast of accomplishment or revelation of what can now be told, but is more like the warming verses of the simpler poet, who affords comfort and solace at the end of cataclysmic days.

In addition to being a journalist, Morley is a scholar, an educator, and an author. He has won distinction in all four fields. Best of all he has been blessed with a bubbling sense of humor, which has enabled him to escape bitterness in adversity and to enjoy life with the zest of the eternally young. There are people in this world who make us feel better because they are among us and such a one is Morley, who is still gathering and distributing knowledge in his eighty-fifth year.

The memoir begins with Morley's life in his placid and protected birthplace, the campus of Haverford College, where his English born and educated father, Dr. Frank Morley, taught mathematics. His two playmates and closest chums were his

brothers: Christopher, journalist and author of fifty volumes of novels, essays, and poetry, and Frank V., whose works range from a biography of *Christopher Morley* to the short and divagatious, *My One Contribution to Chess*, more a manual of life than of chess. Kit has been dead for twenty-two years, and Toto elected to return to the native land of his parents and now lives in scholarly retirement in Bucks. Co., England, to the east of towered Oxford, where the three brothers were Rhodes scholars.

All three brothers began their educations at Haverford. On graduation, Felix (the use of his first name becomes necessary as well as a custom) began a career in journalism as a police reporter in Germantown, Pennsylvania, and a news service reporter in Washington, D. C. World War I brought service in a Quaker ambulance corps attached to the British army. The war and his marriage to Isabel Middleton, of a long established Washington family, delayed his entrance into Oxford. Military service brought him exposure to international affairs.

The euphoria of victory did not blind him to reality, as it did so many of his contemporaries. He could not accept communism as the end of statism and the dawn of a millennium of the people, as Lenin promised, but foresaw it as the dawn of a new and terrible tyranny. Nor could he hail the Treaty of Versailles as a masterpiece of peace because he was mindful that it was no more than an unhappy successor to the machinations of the Congress of Vienna.

Felix was twenty-six years old when he made his belated entrance into Oxford. During his three years there he also travelled on the continent, which he had known as a youth in the company of his parents. There he observed the horrendous aftermath of war. Returning to America at the close of his student days, he became a foreign correspondent for the *Baltimore Sun* in the Far East, where the winds of change were approaching gale force. He then assumed a highly educational post as

a representative of the American League of Nations Association in Geneva.

In 1931 he returned to Washington to join the staff of the Brookings Institution. He was then plucked from this ivory tower for economic thought by the late Eugene Meyer, who had purchased the *Washington Post* at the suggestion of Herbert Hoover, to advance his quest of influence and identity. Under Morley's editorship the newspaper played a much different role in national and international affairs than it has since its Republican ownership embraced, first New Deal foreign policy and then its domestic policy.

Felix foresaw the coming of World War II, the grapes of wrath of the Treaty of Versailles. His clear analyses of rapidly moving international events and his efforts to avert recourse to war won him a Pulitzer Prize. In his attempt to avert another war, he urged the acceptance of Munich as a turning point toward peace, rather than a betrayal. He argued that the disastrous punitive course of 1919, which had never been accepted by the United States, had been discarded at Munich by Great Britain, France, and Italy. He thought that the way was possibly clear for a sound reconstruction.

One of his more interesting efforts to stop American involvement in war, which might possibly have changed history, was to introduce a former German Rhodes scholar, Adam von Trot zu Solz, to top State Department officials. The German aristocrat argued that there were men of good will and courage inside Germany, aiding in plans to overthrow Adolf Hitler. He contended that a war of extermination could only serve to defeat their commendable purpose by uniting even such promising elements behind the Nazi leader. Von Trot was suspected of being a Nazi agent bent upon keeping America out of the conflict and nothing came of his effort. The young German gave proof of his integrity in 1944 when he was garrotted for treason, one of some 5,000 who died in an abortive attempt to assassinate Hitler.

In 1944 Felix became president of

Haverford College, a post he held for five years. He then returned to journalism, founding the respected Washington newsletter, *Human Events*, conducting a monthly column for *Nation's Business*, becoming a correspondent for *Barron's Weekly*, and joining in a well-known radio news program. He also devoted himself to writing an impressive array of books in which he warned against the growth of imperialism in the United States, not the imperialism of territorial acquisition, but the no less virulent form of dollar diplomacy, entangling and involving the United States in every corner of the world, on the erroneous assumption that shrinking distance and growing needs made the world America's back yard.

All in all, a steady flow of books and articles and addresses have come from his typewriter, warning against the new imperialism, pointing out that American life is good, and trying to preserve the best in that life. In *The Power in the People*, Felix warned, "if a republic assumes imperial functions, it will not long remain a republic." In *Need for an Enemy*, he warned against growth of the military-industrial complex by the constant tattoo of threats against security. In *The Foreign Policy of the United States*, he saw American liberty endangered by foreign intervention and military spending.

He even turned to fiction in his crusade, writing a delightful allegorical science novel, *Gumption Island*, in which he sums up the political, social, and economic ills of our time, by sweeping his own beloved home, Gibson Island, off Baltimore, into prehistoric isolation as the aftermath of a nuclear blast. He emphasizes that freedom and liberty are not to be won by planned economy but through the workings of free enterprise.

Throughout his writings Felix expresses abiding faith in our federalist inheritance and voices suspicion of growing federal power. This does not mean that he is uncritical of America or that he would return to the days and ways of the Founding Fathers. He does not contend that the past

was perfect, nor that there is no room for improvement in American life. It is clear in his memoir that he has found life better here than anywhere else he has been. But he also warns that this life can only be kept so by vigilance against all forms of tyranny over mind, body, and spirit.

Reviewed by WALTER TROHAN