

from "A Man's Reach" Elmer Andersen 2600
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Charles A. Lindbergh

Anne accompanied Lindbergh on a fateful trip to Germany in 1936, and a second one in 1938, at which he accepted the gift of the Service Cross of the German Eagle from Gen. Hermann Wilhelm Goering. Lindbergh thought nothing about how the world would view that gift, but Anne was shrewd enough to sense immediately that it was trouble. She reportedly called it "The Albatross" on first sight. Lindbergh was much criticized for making those trips to Germany. What was not known then, but what has been revealed since, is that Lindbergh was there at the urging of the U.S. military. They were, in essence, using him as a spy. The proud Germans revealed to Lindbergh much more about the development of the Luftwaffe than they likely would have to any other American citizen. Lindbergh never publicly discussed the full purpose of his trip, even in the face of bitter criticism. In personal conversations with me, he was open and seemed happy to convey his side of the story. But he was not inclined to wage personal battles in the press.

Lindbergh joined America First, the antiwar, isolationist organization, prior to World War II, and became its leading spokesman. In 1941, only a few months before Pearl Harbor, Lindbergh gave a speech that he hoped would be so powerful that it would slow or stop the nation's rush into war. The speech in Des Moines, titled "Who Are the War Agitators," named Jews, the British, and the Roosevelt administration as the three entities pushing the nation into the conflict in Europe. He said he could understand why Jewish Americans would want the United States to enter the fight, with their having many personal ties to the Jewish community being persecuted in Nazi Germany. But he described them in terms that suggested they were an alien force and enemies of the best interests of the United States. He was blasted with criticism.

As I came to know Lindbergh, I became convinced that he was not anti-Semitic. He was as wholesome and generous and outgoing a person as there could be. He maintained that he never meant anything anti-Semitic by what he said in Des Moines. He thought he was just reciting the facts. But the charge of anti-Semitism followed him for the rest of his life—and still does.