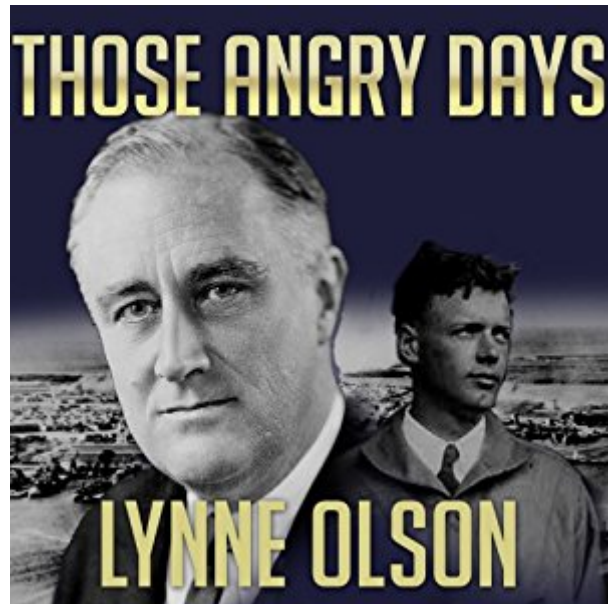


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Those Angry Days: Roosevelt, Lindbergh, And America's Fight Over World War II, 1939-1941



Synopsis

At the center of the debate over American intervention in World War II stood the two most famous men in America: President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who championed the interventionist cause, and aviator Charles Lindbergh, who as unofficial leader and spokesman for America's isolationists emerged as the president's most formidable adversary. Their contest of wills personified the divisions within the country at large, and Lynne Olson makes masterly use of their dramatic personal stories to create a poignant and riveting narrative. While FDR, buffeted by political pressures on all sides, struggled to marshal public support for aid to Winston Churchill's Britain, Lindbergh saw his heroic reputation besmirched-and his marriage thrown into turmoil-by allegations that he was a Nazi sympathizer. Spanning the years 1939 to 1941, *Those Angry Days* vividly re-creates the rancorous internal squabbles that gripped the United States in the period leading up to Pearl Harbor. After Germany vanquished most of Europe, America found itself torn between its traditional isolationism and the urgent need to come to the aid of Britain, the only country still battling Hitler. The conflict over intervention was, as FDR noted, "a dirty fight," rife with chicanery and intrigue, and *Those Angry Days* recounts every bruising detail. In Washington, a group of high-ranking military officers, including the Air Force chief of staff, worked to sabotage FDR's pro-British policies. Roosevelt, meanwhile, authorized FBI wiretaps of Lindbergh and other opponents of intervention. At the same time, a covert British operation, approved by the president, spied on antiwar groups, dug up dirt on congressional isolationists, and planted propaganda in U.S. newspapers. The stakes could not have been higher. The combatants were larger than life. With the immediacy of a great novel, *Those Angry Days* brilliantly recalls a time fraught with danger when the future of democracy and America's role in the world hung in the balance.

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Customer Reviews

In Lynne Olson's substantial new volume, we are plunged into an America both distant and familiar. It is impossible to read more than a few pages before realizing how little our fundamental national character has changed in the 70 years since these events. This is the nation as it was when Hitler's ambitions were becoming reality--the invasions of Poland and the Low Countries, the Battle of Britain. It was becoming evident in distant America that war was coming here. Two schools of thought were beginning to form. The interventionists saw the United States as a key to stopping the growth of Germany. They saw kindred spirits in England and the peoples already under the Nazi yoke. Isolationists cared little about the rest of the world and could not see the point of sacrificing America's youth in yet another European war. Either of those positions is an honorable place to be, and it's a perfectly good thing to debate them. But this is America and we don't quite do things that way. There were other groups--less honorable--who attached themselves to these positions. It didn't take long for racists, profiteers and zealots to begin questioning the motives of the other groups. Over the course of months, charges of Communism, Fascism, Socialism, anti-Semitism began to be hurled back and forth. News outlets affiliated themselves with one side, issuing scurrilous charges against their opponents. It is not hard to find strong parallels in later events. Debates around Vietnam and Iraq resonate with the same fervor and distrust. Olson doesn't make this point directly. She doesn't need to. The author has chosen two protagonists to carry much of the narrative. Roosevelt is an obvious choice.

It's a real tribute to a non-fiction writer when their 28 Chapter, 520-page account of history is a page-turner. The reader won't want to stop reading and when the book is done, the reader will be left wanting to read more. The overwhelming isolationist feeling in the USA prior to WW II is not that well known to the public. The history books talk about the Great Depression and jump to WW II. This is the story of what happened in the USA between those two great landmarks of American History. Most Americans probably don't realize how angry the American public was with the British and French after WW I. Great numbers of people felt that the USA had been tricked into getting involved in that "War to End All Wars." Huge majorities of American voters were even angrier with France and Britain than they were with the defeated Germans. Most people on this side of the pond felt that WW II was the direct result of how poorly the victors had treated the Germans after the

conflict ended. Their unfair treatment of the German people sowed the seeds of for another great conflict. This book deals with the two most popular personalities in America at the time. FDR was at the height of his popularity as the pain of the Great Depression lessened and an unknown farm boy had become a worldwide hero because of his solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean. Charles Lindbergh's "Lone Eagle" adventure provided the world with a brief respite from the everyday problems left by the worldwide depression. Lindbergh was a shy, private person who never quite adjusted to the fame that descended on the young man after his flight. But he became and remained the most famous adventurer on the planet.

Those Angry Days covers the fight within the U.S., between 1939 and 1941, over whether to join the war against Germany. It is a fairly detailed history of a fascinating chapter in U.S. history. The subtitle might lead you to believe that the book focuses mainly on President Roosevelt (FDR) and Lindbergh, but, in fact, the cast of characters is quite large. Olson does a good job bringing this large group to life and describes them with considerable empathy. She helps us to understand all the different reasons people wanted to stay out of the war in Europe:

- o Most Americans felt protected by the sheer distance from Europe.
- o Many felt that Britain had tricked them into the First World War and that that conflict had achieved nothing of value.
- o Many Americans were utterly blind to the evil of Nazism or equated it with the evils of British imperialism. Indeed, many military leaders were resolute Anglophobes.
- o Once Germany invaded the Soviet Union, many Americans saw little reason to favor Stalin over Hitler.
- o Many Americans were sincere pacifists, opposed to war on principle.

America's transition from scrupulous neutral to formal belligerent took over two years, a span that must have felt eternal to the beleaguered British. Knowing that Roosevelt wanted to keep Britain from falling to the Germans and then watching as he, time after time, delays providing real assistance can be exasperating to the reader, as it must have been to Churchill and his countrymen. Lindbergh, naturally, comes off looking bad. He had avoided public life so scrupulously beforehand, and for good reason: the press hounded him and his family mercilessly.

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