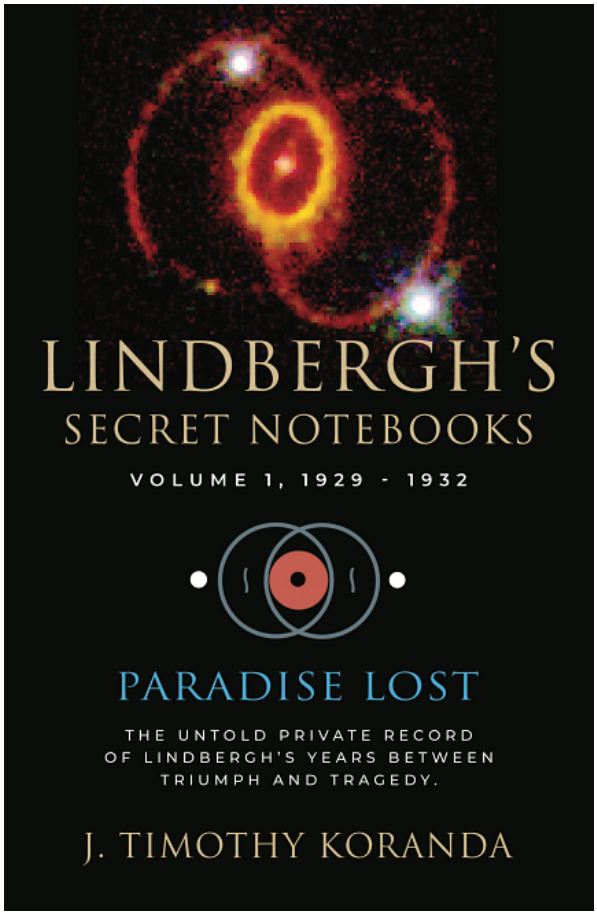

Lindbergh's secret notebooks detonate a Nazi plot behind the kidnapping, buried Roswell discoveries, and his covert influence on America's early space program—unmasking a hidden history darker and stranger than anyone ever suspected.

Lindbergh's Secret Notebooks -
Volume One: 1929-1932 Paradise Lost

By J. Timothy Koranda

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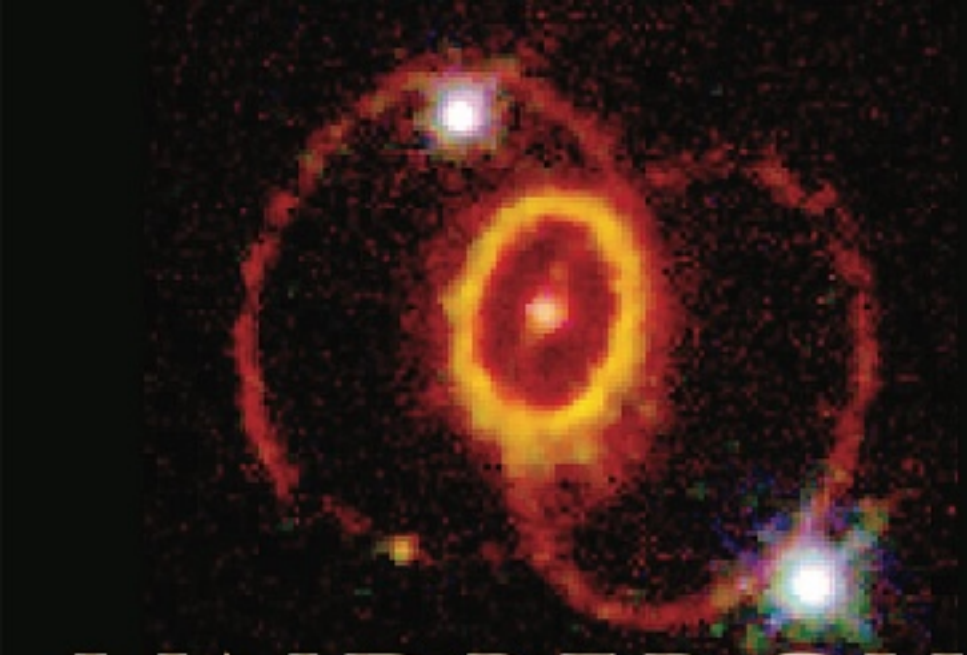

LINDBERGH'S SECRET NOTEBOOKS

VOLUME 1, 1929 - 1932

PARADISE LOST

THE UNTOLD PRIVATE RECORD OF LINDBERGH'S YEARS BETWEEN TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY.

J. TIMOTHY KORANDA

Lindbergh's Secret Notebooks

Volume One: 1929-1932

Paradise Lost

J. Timothy Koranda

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Table of Contents

Prologue: Orientation and Acknowledgments v
1: A Return to the Gold Coast 1
2: The Quiet Beginning 25
3: Crosswind to California 42
4: Under the Solstice Star 96
5: Dr. Carrel 160
6: The Price of Seduction 166
7: The Black Sun Over the Sourlands 205
8: The Great Circle 282
9: They've Stolen Our Baby 328
10: The Empty Nursery 356
11: A Wheel Within a Wheel 373
12: Money is Ready 409
13: A Tangle of Clues 416
14: A Sea of False Leads. 432
15: The Body at Mount Rose 453

Prologue: Orientation and Acknowledgments

In Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, the mysterious Society of the Tower does not reveal itself at the beginning but only after the reader has wandered some distance into the maze. By then one learns that Wilhelm has been watched, tested, and quietly guided by hidden hands until his apprenticeship to life is judged complete. The device is less Masonic than hermetic, less an initiation into doctrine than an education in destiny. I have often thought of that shadowed fellowship when considering Charles Lindbergh, whose life, too, seemed divided into visible acts and invisible designs.

Secrecy was not incidental to Lindbergh; it was the medium through which he lived much of his later life. Reeve Lindbergh, writing of her father, said that by the end he had made his life so complicated that each part had to be kept apart from every other, and that concealment fractured the intimate ties of his final years. Time, as Racine observed, reveals what secrecy only postpones. Yet some lives seem to resist revelation even after death, as though concealment had sunk from habit into character.

Unlike the White Queen in Lewis Carroll, who boasted of believing as many as six impossible things before breakfast, I have never made a practice of believing impossible things. But with Lindbergh the temptation is constant, because impossibility clung to him like an aura. He crossed the Atlantic alone when the feat still belonged to conjecture. He recognized, long before most of the world did, the brilliance of Robert Goddard, the obscure physicist whose experiments opened the way to modern rocketry. With Alexis Carrel, he helped devise the first practical perfusion pump, a machine some would later call the mechanical forerunner of the artificial heart.

He moved with equal restlessness among the technologies of flight and war and the threatened margins of the natural world—following missiles and the early logic of the space age, wandering into the Philippines on conservation journeys that carried an ethnographic cast, and lending his name to the defense of species and landscapes. Yet his political choices, including his embrace of America First, seemed to answer not only to ideology but to some buried hope he could neither defend in public nor wholly relinquish: the intolerable possibility that the Germans knew something about his kidnapped son that he did not, and might yet restore what history had declared lost.

Years later, even David Irving would repeat a version of that nightmare in his book, *Churchill's War*, suggesting that the Germans had not killed the boy but hidden him away in a Prussian military school—a claim too grave to assert as fact, yet too haunting to pass over in silence. The idea would later acquire a fictional afterlife, but at the beginning, it remained something more private and more difficult: a possibility whispered through fragments, recollections, and rumor.

The more difficult question is what to do with the impossibilities that did *not* enter the record, the things Lindbergh is said to have concealed so successfully that they remained buried for decades. Some of them are too strange to assert plainly. Some rest on notebooks, letters, and recollections that came to light only in pieces. Wherever the ground turns uncertain, I mean to treat it as such: as testimony, as allegation, as the residue of secrecy rather than the clean authority of settled fact.

Much of what had remained hidden stayed that way until 2003, nearly thirty years after Lindbergh's death and more than seventy years after the kidnapping that fixed his name forever in the American imagination. That summer, two newspaper stories crossed the world like aftershocks from an old disaster. One concerned newly recovered

material connected with the Lindbergh kidnapping, including a template bearing a startling German inscription that purported to exonerate Bruno Richard Hauptmann and invoked the initials of the Nazi Party. The other reported that Lindbergh had fathered children in Germany, and that letters, photographs, and later DNA testing had brought that secret life abruptly into daylight.

When I read those stories, I had the uncanny sensation of stepping back into a room I had not entered in years. In 1974, fresh out of M.I.T. and already numbed by a new job on Wall Street, I went looking for a way to reawaken my mind. My old interests—mathematical logic and cryptography—still pulled. I had come to believe the two subjects were more intimately related than they first appeared. Gödel's great maneuver had been, in effect, an encryption in reverse: the arithmetization of metamathematics, by which statements, formulas, and proofs were encoded as numbers so that arithmetic could make rigorous statements about its own syntax from within. Once symbols and proofs could be translated into numbers, mathematics acquired the uncanny power to speak about itself in its own language—and with that power came the possibility of self-reference, undecidability, and all the vertigo that followed.

Analytic geometry offered another version of the same enchantment: it taught algebra to dream in space and geometry to submit to number, until curves became equations, points acquired coordinates, and the visible world disclosed a second life as symbol.

I had pursued a related intuition in a paper I presented at the Tarski Symposium in 1971, where I argued that the propositional calculus and the first-order predicate calculus could be represented as vectors, and that syllogisms could be arrived at by parallelogram vector addition. These findings would naturally have been of interest to Alfred Tarski, the Polish-American logician and mathematician whose work helped

found modern logic and semantics, because he was the first to give a rigorous formal account of truth for formalized languages: a mathematical definition of truth precise enough to show how sentences in such systems can be assigned truth conditions without paradox.

Once truth had been formalized in that way, it became easier to see that meaning itself could be transferred from one symbolic medium to another without being lost—a perception that led naturally, at least for me, toward cryptography, where the central problem is how to preserve significance through transformation while withholding it from all but the intended reader.

In 1974, cryptography still lived half in shadow. Its deepest practice belonged to governments, militaries, and a handful of initiates who treated secrecy not as metaphor but as craft. Outside those enclaves, the field appeared narrow and austere, built largely upon the old regime of shared keys: one secret passed from hand to hand, and with it the perpetual danger that the secret might fail before the cipher did. The great conceptual upheaval that would soon make cryptography a public science had not yet fully declared itself. The discipline stood on the threshold, still wearing the aspect of an occult art even as it prepared, unseen, to enter modern life.

Since then, the change has been almost civilizational. What was once the guarded province of diplomats, spies, and mathematicians has sunk its invisible architecture beneath everyday existence. Messages, payments, signatures, identities, archives, software, trust itself—so much of modern life now passes through cryptographic gates without our noticing the sentries. The old art of hiding words has become something larger and stranger: a way of making confidence possible between strangers, even as every increase in power—computational,

political, or quantum—throws that fragile confidence back into question.

With the philosopher George Boolos, a friend whose brilliance wore an almost negligent air, I drafted a book proposal that joined the two subjects. I had large ambitions for it and imagined something in the spirit of Morris Cohen's *Logic and Scientific Method*: a book at once rigorous and lucid, capable of making difficult forms of thought feel not merely intelligible but alive. The obvious publishing destinations for such a manuscript were the specialized mathematical houses—North-Holland, with its formidable place in the technical literature, or Springer-Verlag, the great German publisher whose lists had become a kind of continental map of serious mathematics. But I wanted a wider fate for the book than those honorable channels were likely to provide. I did not want it confined to seminar rooms and departmental shelves. I wanted it to travel.

That ambition was what led me to think of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. Under William Jovanovich, Harcourt had become something larger than a textbook house: a serious trade publisher with reach, nerve, and a demonstrated appetite for difficult minds addressed to a broader public. Jovanovich himself had worked closely with writers and thinkers whose books did not belong to a single discipline and whose readership extended beyond the academy. But I was unknown outside the narrow circles of mathematical logic, and I doubted that I could find an agent willing to press the claims of such a manuscript upon an organization like Jovanovich's. The problem was not only to write the book, but to find a path by which it might be taken seriously.

I discussed all this with my childhood friend, Cleland Landolt, who had briefly shared rooms with me at 30 Bigelow Street in Cambridge during our undergraduate years. Cleland, a Harvard student a year my

senior, had long served as something of a father confessor to me—steady where I was restless, practical where I was inclined toward schemes. In 1974, he was attending Cornell Medical School on Manhattan's East Side, and I often lunched with him in the school cafeteria. There, over trays and institutional coffee, I told him about the book I wanted to write and the difficulty of getting it before the right eyes.

When I mentioned Jovanovich, Cleland's eyes opened. His brother Peter, he told me, had gone to Princeton with Peter Jovanovich, Bill Jovanovich's son. Soon after, Cleland gave me Peter Jovanovich's phone number. At the time, I was living in Chappaqua, and to my delight, Peter Jovanovich was ensconced in the neighboring town of Briarcliff Manor. I made an appointment and drove over. Peter received me cordially but without illusion. If I wanted to reach his father, he said, there was only one practical route: I must go through Hilda Prussein, his father's secretary. The word "secretary" did not quite do her justice. Hilda was the indispensable intelligence of the office, the person through whom supplicants, manuscripts, visitors, and vague enthusiasms had to pass before they could trouble William Jovanovich's attention. She knew how to distinguish vanity from promise, persistence from seriousness, and an eccentric proposal from one that might contain a real claim. In that world, she was not merely a gatekeeper but an interpreter of possibility; in any serious matter, Peter implied, her judgment carried its own quiet authority.

I followed his advice exactly. Before I met Jovanovich himself, Hilda became the first real examiner of the project. She did not gush, and she did not encourage fantasy. She asked clean, practical questions: who I was, what I had written, what George Boolos's role would be, why logic and cryptography belonged together, and why I imagined such a book might interest a house whose lists were crowded

with more obviously saleable things. There was nothing perfunctory in her attention. She listened as if sorting a manuscript already present in the air, weighing not only the idea but the temperament of the man proposing it. That approach led, in due course, to a summons from William Jovanovich himself. What began as an effort to interest the house in a book on logic and cryptography led instead, by a series of turns I could not then have imagined, into a different and far stranger commission.

Thirteen days after the proposal reached his hands through Hilda, a reply arrived—not from an assistant, nor from an editor buried somewhere in the hierarchy, but from the publisher directly. He asked me to meet him at the Morgan Library, where he served as a trustee. George had just returned to teaching, so I went alone. At the time, I maintained a pied-à-terre a few blocks away, in the upper reaches of Thirty-Fourth Street, and on the appointed day, I walked over with a notebook under one arm and a badly managed briefcase in the other, as if I were making my way not to a meeting but to an examination.

The library stood at 29 East 36th Street, grave and self-contained, like a private temple for the worship of money and power. Its entrance hall gleamed with that museum-like polish that makes a visitor instinctively lower his voice. Hilda met me inside and led me to a conference room, said to be the very chamber in which J. P. Morgan had once conducted the maneuvers that culminated in the creation of U.S. Steel. She was a compact woman with sharply attentive eyes behind rimmed glasses, and she had the composed efficiency of someone who did not merely manage access but arranged the terms on which access became possible; when she paused to listen, her head inclined almost imperceptibly, as though weighing not only words but the claims concealed behind them. At the far end of the room, a tall window admitted a pale, patient light. I took a chair near the door while

Jovanovich finished a telephone call, his back to the window so that his face lay in partial shadow, the features strong, broad, and deeply cut.

He was past fifty, heavy with authority but not with lethargy, a man whose manner suggested that command was less a posture than a native condition. A silvered lock of hair had fallen slightly forward at his temple, softening without diminishing the hard architecture of his face. When he finally crossed the room, he offered no pleasantries. Instead, he placed a box in my hands. Inside were 332 notebooks, each the size of a palm, dense with writing. Each was unusually thick, like a compact brick.

"I need you to decode these," he said, his voice so resonant it seemed to strike the room rather than pass through it. The quantity alone was intimidating. "What are they?" I asked.

"You tell me," he said. When I asked where he had gotten them, he answered without ceremony: "Charles Lindbergh gave them to me on his deathbed."

He then told me about the vast Lindbergh archive at Yale, established decades earlier and enlarged year by year until it had swollen to hundreds of linear feet: letters, legal papers, diaries, photographs, family records, business correspondence, memorabilia—the documented residue of an American life lived under relentless public scrutiny. It was, Jovanovich said, comprehensive in almost every respect. Almost. These notebooks had been withheld.

That omission, he confessed, was what had stirred his curiosity. Lindbergh's insistence that the notebooks remain outside the archive seemed, to him, less like an editorial decision than a deliberate act of concealment. Jovanovich had already spent hundreds of hours reading

a sprawling manuscript Lindbergh left behind, hoping it might be shaped into a memoir. Yet even there, Jovanovich said, he had felt the pressure of things withheld—as though the official record, however immense, had been built around a locked chamber. The notebooks, he believed, might contain what the archive did not: the fiercely guarded intimacies of a man who had spent a lifetime mastering what the world could see.

Jovanovich spoke readily of his friendship with Lindbergh and of the last phase of the aviator's life, when illness had reduced the body but sharpened the instinct to set things down. In those final months, he said, Lindbergh wrote with a kind of ferocious economy, rising from pain only to return to the desk, as though composition itself were a way to postpone extinction. The notebooks, in Jovanovich's telling, were not casual memoranda but the compressed residue of that struggle: old adventures recalled, old choices defended, old mysteries reopened under the pressure of imminent death.

He described a man compelled to revise not merely sentences but memory itself. Lindbergh would write in the first person for hours at a stretch, then return days or years later to erase, compress, and recast it, as if the event had not yet settled into its final form in consciousness. The result, Jovanovich warned me, was less a diary than a layered act of retrieval. Time and place blurred, chronology buckled, yet the pages carried an unnerving intensity—the feeling not of invention but of recollection pushed beyond comfort. History, in such hands, became less a sequence than a pressure system, with old facts darkening under the light of later knowledge.

Only after he had finished describing the circumstances of their preservation did Jovanovich begin to speak of the notebooks as objects in themselves. Until then, they had seemed almost abstract to me: a withheld archive, a deathbed trust, a promise of disclosure locked

inside hundreds of miniature volumes. But in any archival encounter, provenance gives way to contact: the story of how a document survived becomes less urgent than the stubborn fact of its presence in the hand. These notebooks crossed that threshold almost at once. Their scale, density, and air of compression altered the room. They were not merely evidence awaiting interpretation; they were artifacts of a mind that had trained itself to conceal even as it recorded. To look at them was to understand that Lindbergh's secrecy had not been a single act of withholding from Yale or from his family, but a habit so internalized that it had shaped the very surface of the page. The story was no longer only about what he had hidden. It was about the form concealment had taken, the pressure under which memory had been forced into signs, abbreviations, erasures, and cramped continuities that seemed to resist ordinary reading before any cipher had even been solved.

Lindbergh had long been a disciplined keeper of notes, but the notebooks themselves possessed a different texture—more urgent, more private, more recklessly compressed. They begin almost in *medias res*, with no patient establishment of scene, no dutiful clearing of the throat. A Christmas at Cape Kennedy. A remembered conversation. A mechanical sketch in the margin. A name half-veiled, then struck through. They proceed by flashes, as if each entry had been forced through a narrowing aperture before the moment vanished again.

What survived on those pages was often no more than the skeleton of a scene: short paragraphs, cramped marginalia, abrupt transitions, phrases packed with more implication than explanation. Reading them was like reading a telegram composed at ruinous expense, every word chosen under duress. The notebooks did not narrate so much as allude, and allusion is a dangerous form when the subject is a life already fossilized by fame.

That difficulty created a second threshold, quieter than the first but more troubling. It was one thing to hold the notebooks, to feel their smallness and density, their almost feverish compression, and to sense in them the urgency of a man writing against time. It was another thing to decide what sort of obligation they placed upon the reader. The room in which they had first appeared to me had carried the atmosphere of an archive, but also of a sickroom and a tribunal: something had been preserved, something had been withheld, and now someone else was being asked to make it speak. The pages did not simply ask to be transcribed. They demanded mediation, and mediation is never innocent. Their fragments had to be arranged without being domesticated; their silences had to be marked without being filled too eagerly; their scattered scenes had to be made intelligible while preserving the unease that made them credible. Every successful decipherment sharpened the ethical problem rather than resolving it. Restoring a hidden sentence also violated the privacy that had required concealment in the first place. To supply continuity was to risk imposing design upon disorder. To leave the disorder untouched was to abandon the notebooks to obscurity. Before any claim in them could be weighed, the pages had to be brought into a form in which their broken continuity could be followed. That was the point at which admiration, curiosity, and trespass became inseparable, and the work of decoding began to shade, almost imperceptibly, into the work of authorship.

A translator of prose is said to be the author’s servant. A decoder is something more compromising: an accomplice, a medium, an occasional betrayer. The cipher supplies the bones and sinew, but someone must still restore the connective tissue, decide where one silence ends and another begins, and infer the cadence that compression has obliterated. I have tried to do that without pretending to an impossible neutrality. Very little, I believe, has been subtracted.

Much has necessarily been supplied—transitions, continuity, atmosphere, the shape by which fragments become a story. Readers must judge for themselves whether the man who emerges here resembles the Lindbergh they thought they knew.

According to Jovanovich, Lindbergh wrote quickly, encoded slowly, and revised compulsively. He would set down an incident in plain language, transform it into cipher, then return again to erase, condense, and alter—as though each rewriting drew the memory closer while making its expression harder to seize. Some pages had the worn, abraded look of palimpsests. Repeated erasures had thinned the paper itself. In the margins, he copied a line from Meister Eckhart: “Only the hand that erases can write the true thing.” Whether this was confession, defense, or method, I could not yet tell.

The notebooks appeared, in places, to have been rewritten again and again, as if no version could quite satisfy the conscience that had produced it. That alone was enough to unsettle any easy confidence in the official record. A man who revised this relentlessly was not preserving memory so much as contending with it.

Jovanovich said Lindbergh was always looking backward, extracting an earlier note, revising it under the pressure of a later understanding, then rewriting it once more. The past, in those notebooks, was never inert. It remained active, accusatory, unfinished.

He also said that Lindbergh wrote against finality itself. Even in illness—breath shallow, body failing—he would summon enough strength to note a phrase, alter a date, convert a sentence into cipher, as though language, properly arranged, might hold dissolution a little longer at bay. There was something almost liturgical in the persistence.

At times, Jovanovich said, exhaustion would overcome him at the desk. His head would dip, the pen still in his hand. Then, after a brief sleep, he would wake with that eerie second wind known to the dying and resume work with renewed concentration, as if he had borrowed an hour from a future already closing over him.

He would rise, pace, return to the page, and begin again. What impressed Jovanovich was not merely the stamina but the quality of attention: the stubborn wish to remember precisely, to separate what had happened from what had since been said about it. The life being recovered was dramatic enough without embellishment. What the notebooks suggested was not theatricality but pressure—a mind unwilling to relinquish its own witness.

The rewrite, then, was a race against death and history. Lindbergh knew that posterity would not wait for him, and he seems to have feared two judgments at once: the historian's simplification and the family's resentment. Whatever he intended these notebooks to accomplish, they were plainly meant to outlast the evasions of public memory.

Even near the end, a reserve of patience and force remained in him that did not seem wholly proportionate to his failing body. One begins to understand why so many contemporaries described him in terms usually reserved for symbols rather than men. Great public figures are often flattened by admiration or resentment; the notebooks resisted both assessments at once.

As a young man, he had proved that one could fly an ocean in a single-engine aircraft when prudence said otherwise. In old age, he seemed bent on another impossible effort: not merely to remember his life, but to wrest its meaning away from the settled formulas of

biography. The account remained incomplete because he remained incomplete. That, too, felt honest.

What emerged was neither seamless memoir nor formal history but something closer to a private record under seal: a hidden narrative in which Lindbergh sought to reveal what the public version had polished away. The notes were scattered across margins, abrupt diary entries, sketches, and remembered voices. My task was to gather those fragments into a readable continuity without taming their strangeness, because the strangeness was part of the truth they claimed.

Over the years, he had filled notebook after notebook with details he dared not share, storing them in vaults or carrying them in a weathered leather bag from one continent to another. Concealment was not an episode in his life. It had become his organizing principle.

Even so, Jovanovich admitted that another possibility had crossed his mind: that the notebooks were an elaborate hoax, a final piece of theater from a man capable of mischief as well as grandeur. He recalled, half-amused and half-wary, one of Lindbergh's practical jokes from years before. The memory did not settle the question. It only deepened the sense that the notebooks stood somewhere between disclosure and performance, and that deciding which was which would be part of my work.

It was not immediately clear to me what manner of concealment Lindbergh had used, but that uncertainty did not last long. For most of the notebooks, he had written in a cipher I could, with patience, decipher. There are, broadly speaking, two kinds of private writing disguised from view: one meant merely to discourage the curiosity of family, the other designed to withstand the patient hostility of institutions. A diary kept from a wife is one thing; a record guarded

against governments is another. At first glance, these notebooks seemed to hover uneasily between the two.

Anyone who has ever brought an encoded text back into legibility knows the double sensation that follows: triumph first, then trespass. To decipher a hidden document is to cross a threshold one was never meant to cross. The page yields its meaning, but in yielding it also accuses the reader of intrusion. One becomes, at least for a moment, both discoverer and thief.

In ordinary speech, “code” and “cipher” are treated as synonyms, but they are not the same. A code substitutes one whole thing for another: a word for a number, a phrase for a symbol, a name for a false name. A cipher works at a more intimate level. It alters the letters themselves, changing the visible body of language while allowing the hidden sentence to survive beneath the distortion. That distinction mattered because, once I had spent enough time with the notebooks, I began to suspect that Lindbergh had not written in code at all, but in cipher—and in more than one cipher at that.

Cryptanalysis, despite its aura of sorcery, begins in patience. One studies recurrence, spacing, rhythm, and the habits of a hand trying not to be understood. In a long enough passage, letters betray themselves by frequency; patterns begin to echo; repetitions disclose a grammar of concealment. What looks at first like random debris slowly acquires intention. The hidden text does not leap forward. It approaches by degrees, like a face emerging in a darkroom tray.

For a time, the work became an informal relay, passed from one mathematically gifted friend or colleague to another, each bringing a different temperament to the same resistant surface.

I spoke about this with Judith Dunford, then a friend and colleague at Citibank where I was working, and she suggested that I show the cipher to her brother Jack Schwartz, the formidable mathematician and computer scientist at NYU's Courant Institute, already famous for the breadth of his work and, among other things, for the set-theoretic programming language SETL. He was intrigued by what I brought him and, in hours stolen from his own work, began trying to break the cipher with the aid of the Institute's computational resources. Later, he invited Martin Davis, one of the central figures in modern logic and computability theory, whose name was already attached to some of the deepest results on undecidability theory, to see whether he might succeed where we had only partly succeeded. The process stretched over decades and yielded its results piecemeal, more like the slow opening of a sealed chamber than a sudden solution.

Nor were Schwartz and Davis my only recourse. The next summer I visited with my friend William Margolis, a professor of mathematics and automata theory at the College of William and Mary in Virginia. Margolis stood near a different frontier that was beginning to attract mathematically inclined experimenters in those years: the use of computers in number theory. The atmosphere was full of problems that were elementary to state and maddeningly resistant to proof—most famously the $3n + 1$ conjecture, whose beguiling promise was that every positive integer, however wayward, would eventually descend to 1. (If a number is odd, you replace it with **3n + 1**, and if it's even, you divide it by 2 — and repeating these steps will *always* eventually reach **1**, no matter what number you start with.) Mathematicians believe this always works, but no one has ever proved it.

Around that conjecture clustered other computationally tempting questions: the search for large primes and new Mersenne examples, the behavior of aliquot sequences, the testing of perfect and amicable

numbers, and the first serious machine-assisted excursions into questions of pseudoprimes, factorization, and the irregular local behavior of arithmetic functions. What drew people to such problems was not merely that computers could calculate quickly, but that they made possible a new style of mathematical reconnaissance: one could push examples out to previously inaccessible ranges, watch patterns gather and dissolve, and learn—sometimes misleadingly, sometimes fruitfully—what a conjecture looked like before anyone knew how to prove it.

I spent a week with Bill and his wife Sue at their farmhouse in Bena, Virginia. There, in the heat and stillness of those Tidewater days, we laid the Lindbergh notebooks out before us and tried, together, to force some further confession from their symbols. The house had the patient quiet of country places where thought seems at once easier and more haunted: long tables, dim rooms after noon, the intermittent sound of insects outside, and on the page those stubborn characters that seemed always on the verge of yielding and then withdrew again into themselves. We worked at them in the mornings with fresh confidence, after supper with a more chastened determination, following frequencies, recurrences, and little formal temptations that promised openings. Now and then a pattern would seem to gather—just enough to quicken the pulse—only to collapse under the next line, the next exception, the next turn of Lindbergh's evasive hand. By the end of the week, we knew the problem more intimately, but we did not possess it. It remained what the best puzzles and the worst secrets often become: unsolved, unceded, only more deeply lodged in the mind.

The following year, I also visited with Jerry Fodor, George Boolos, Sylvain Bromberger, and James Thompson, who occupied esteemed spots on MIT's faculty. Boolos and Thompson—Thompson was also

a chess master—were puzzle freaks, and I knew this problem would engage them.

I next reached out to my cousin James Gordon Weil, MIT class of 1965, along with his fellow classmate Durk Pearson, both of whom relished an intellectual challenge. They wrestled with the cipher for months and finally gave up. Jim then turned his attention to stratified flow: an engineering and fluid-dynamical concept concerned with the behavior of layered fluids of differing densities; his expertise in that area eventually led him to accept a professorship at the University of Stockholm. Pearson, more distracted than defeated, shifted his attention to longevity research—more formally, biogerontology—and went on, with his wife Sandy Shaw, to write the best-selling *Life Extension: A Practical Scientific Approach*, an ambitious guide to biological gerontology that proposed ways to extend youth, reverse some of the effects of aging, improve the mental and physical quality of life, and increase lifespan. I remained determined and looked closer to home for my solution among my fellow speechwriters at Citibank.

Among them was David Kuryk, an M.I.T. graduate who like me had taken Course 18—that is, mathematics—and later gone on to earn a Ph.D. in literature. David was not only brilliant but deeply curious, and I asked him to take a crack at the cipher. Without access to one of the large mainframe computers—the only kind available then—he got about as far as I did.

Another of my fellow speechwriters at Citibank was Henry Ehrlich, whose gifts lay less in mathematics than in language and verbal nuance. Henry was the son of Eugene Ehrlich, the celebrated lexicographer and teacher of language at Columbia, whose books on usage, etymology, and expression had made him a kind of public custodian of verbal precision. For that very reason I asked Henry to try his hand at the notebooks. If David Kuryk represented the

mathematical side of the problem, Henry seemed to offer the linguistic one, and behind him stood a father whose life had been devoted to the structure, history, and hidden life of words. I hoped that between Henry's own ear and Eugene Ehrlich's philological instincts some clue might emerge that had escaped the rest of us. But they could not crack it either.

Around this same time, I heard from Christopher Riche Evans, the Welsh-born British psychologist, computer scientist, and writer whose career had carried him from experimental psychology into the Division of Computer Science at the National Physical Laboratory in Teddington. Evans began with the study of perception and never lost that double interest in machine and mind. At the NPL, he belonged to an early generation for whom computing was not merely a technical specialty but a new way of thinking about attention, behavior, intelligence, and the future of civilized life.

Chris was brilliant in the quick, anticipatory way one sometimes finds in people who stand just ahead of a technological wave. He saw that the microprocessor was not simply a smaller component, nor even a cheaper computer, but a social solvent. His book *The Mighty Micro*, published in Britain in 1979 and in the United States as *The Micro Millennium*, tried to explain that revolution while it was still scarcely visible to ordinary readers. The television version, *The Mighty Micro*, which Evans scripted and presented for ATV, was broadcast that same year posthumously.

Citibank, for obvious reasons, interested him. The bank had already begun installing the sort of financial technology that made Evans's argument visible: electronic funds movement, automated transaction systems, terminals, networks, and the first intimations of a banking world in which money would become less a physical object than a pattern of trusted signals. Chris wanted to film some of it. To

him, a bank was not merely a place where capital accumulated; it was becoming an information machine, and the microprocessor promised to alter the architecture of trust as radically as earlier machines had altered manufacturing. That was why he came to me. I could introduce him to the Citibank world from the inside, and he could translate what he saw there into the public grammar of television.

Naturally, I told him about Lindbergh. It was impossible not to. Evans had exactly the sort of mind the notebooks required: empirical, skeptical, playful, imaginative, and impatient with false mystery, yet alert to genuine strangeness. He had written against cults of unreason, but he was not a dry debunker. He understood that error, fantasy, myth, and intelligence often coexist in the same human system. That made him unusually well-suited to a problem like Lindbergh's cipher, where mathematical pattern, psychological motive, and theatrical self-concealment were so densely intertwined. I showed him samples and tried to get him to crack the harder portions. He was intrigued at once. Given time, I think he might have done it, or at least have found an approach none of us had yet imagined.

But Chris had less time than any of us knew. Within a year he was dead of cancer, only forty-eight years old. The loss felt abrupt and wasteful, not only because he was young, but because he had seemed to belong so completely to the future he was describing. The film project continued under the able hands of producer Lawrence Moore, and *The Mighty Micro* reached the screen without the man whose intelligence had conceived and animated it. His American book, *The Micro Millennium*, came out from Viking that year, but Chris was no longer alive to sign it. I remember that detail with disproportionate sadness: the book arriving from the future, as it were, while its author had already vanished from the here and now.

Chris's death left one more unfinished attempt among the many I had made to enlist extraordinary minds against Lindbergh's cipher. The pattern would repeat itself in another form years later, when I was working in the electric power industry and met a brilliant economist named Carl Courant, grandson of Richard Courant, the German-American mathematician who had studied under David Hilbert at Göttingen, founded the Mathematical Institute there, and, after emigrating to the United States, helped build New York University's great center for applied mathematics, which was later named the Courant Institute in his honor—the very place where Jack Schwartz was busily trying to crack the cipher. Carl had inherited mathematical gifts enough, but he was talented in other ways as well: a celebrated musician and composer, and even a Jeopardy! champion. Yet he too was flummoxed by the cipher.

After so many gifted minds had examined the problem without mastering it, I began to suspect that talent alone was not enough, and that the better course was to turn to someone for whom cryptography had not been an amusement or an intellectual sideline, but a life's work. So I called on an old friend, James Wardwell, who had taught cryptography at the Naval Academy and in Colgate's V-12 program during the war. By the time I caught up with Jim, he had retired to Florida, but he gave the notebooks the old college try. But the problem would not yield to him either. Years later, he telephoned with one of those coincidences that seem, in this story, almost to solicit belief: he had learned that Reeve Lindbergh had married Nathaniel Tripp in Vermont, and told me that Tripp, by a strange turn of kinship, was Wardwell's relative on Tripp's mother's side.

The connection with Tripp did not end there. Cleland Landolt reminded me that we had learned sailing one summer at Rye's American Yacht Club's JAYC program and that our sailing instructor

was a man we all knew as Commander Tripp. Cleland, who had a gift for noticing the hidden symmetry in scattered facts, said almost at once that the coincidence was too pointed to ignore: a Nat Tripp close enough to the Lindbergh circle to marry Reeve, and a Commander Tripp fixed in our own boyhood memory by authority, bearing, and name. He wondered whether the two might belong to the same family—father and son, perhaps, or uncle and nephew—some older Westchester line that had run, without our knowing it, through both our childhood and Lindbergh's afterlife.

A year later, in 1992, that same pattern reappeared much closer to home, when an occasion arose in Chappaqua to honor writer Ferdinand Lundberg. I recognized it at once as more than a sentimental reunion with a former neighbor and friend. It was another opening in the same widening circle, another chance that the past, in the presence of someone who had watched American power at close range, might speak in an unexpected voice.

Lundberg was then turning ninety, and I surprised him by arranging for Andrew O'Rourke, the Westchester County Executive and a recent Republican gubernatorial candidate, to issue a proclamation in honor of the occasion. I brought Richard Kagan with me, a fellow speechwriter whom I had met years earlier at Hill and Knowlton, the giant public-relations firm. In a previous life, Kagan had been a professor of political science at Brooklyn College and NYU, where he had taught Lundberg's ideas in the classroom, and he was eager to meet the great man in person.

Lundberg, a journalist, historian, and one of the fiercest American critics of concentrated wealth and institutional power, had first made his name with *Imperial Hearst* (1936), his devastating study of William Randolph Hearst—a book long said to have helped furnish the atmosphere, if not the direct architecture, from which the

screenplay of *Citizen Kane* eventually drew. His later *America's 60 Families*, published in 1937, was a sweeping indictment of the American plutocracy, arguing that a tightly interlinked circle of dominant families exercised outsized control over finance, industry, politics, education, and the press. He ranged widely after that—into such works as *Cradle of Freedom*, *The Rich and the Super-Rich*, and, with Marynia F. Farnham, the enormously influential and deeply contentious *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* (1947), that famous postwar broadside in which anxieties about sex, domesticity, emancipation, and modernity were gathered into one fierce and deeply American quarrel. In books like these, social criticism, psychoanalysis, and cultural polemic did not merely coexist; they fused, and Lundberg's name came to stand not only for attacks on concentrated wealth but for a larger and more troubled argument about the family, the republic, and the fate of modern woman.

My friend Marilyn Faludi, a feminist before the word had fully entered common speech, knew that book well and spoke of it with the wary familiarity reserved for a text both formative and exasperating. She told me at once that her daughter Susan had studied it closely on her way toward the line of argument that would find its full expression in Backlash, the book that later became a feminist classic around the world. Whether as antagonist, precursor, or dark mirror, Lundberg's work plainly survived in the intellectual afterlife of the very debates it had helped provoke.

At that reunion at Lundberg's home, at the intersection of Quaker Road and Seven Bridges Road, we spoke at length about Lindbergh's coded notebooks. Lundberg listened patiently, then answered with stories of his own about Lindbergh, since as a journalist in the 1940s he had once dined with the great aviator. Before the afternoon was over, he surprised me with another tidbit. "You know," he said,

"Lindbergh's daughter Reeve married a Chappaqua boy named Nat Tripp. He was a friend of my son, Randy. Before he entered the Army, he used to jog the roads around here wearing combat boots. I used to see him tearing down Roaring Brook Road." I asked him what year that had been. "The summer of '65, I think," he said. "He was preparing to go to Vietnam."

Four years later, I read Nathaniel Tripp's memoir, **Father, Soldier, Son,** about his service as a platoon leader in Vietnam, written with uncommon vividness and moral intelligence about combat, command, and the difficult inheritance of fathers and sons—and in the same instant it dawned on me that his father was the very same Commander Tripp who had taught me to sail in Rye back in the summer of 1962.

The dinner with Lindbergh, as Lundberg remembered it, took place in the wary atmosphere of the 1940s, when Lindbergh was already becoming less a national hero than a national argument. Carl Sandburg was also present at the dinner.

At first, Lundberg said, Lindbergh regarded him with guarded suspicion. The reason was plain enough. William Randolph Hearst had been one of Lindbergh's close personal friends, and Lundberg's Imperial Hearst had been a devastating assault on Hearst's press empire, political ambitions, and use of journalism as an instrument of personal power. Lindbergh, loyal by temperament and alert to attack, may well have assumed that a man who had written so fiercely about Hearst would be another hostile intellectual from the Roosevelt world. But as the evening lengthened, Lundberg felt the suspicion soften. Lindbergh discovered that Lundberg's quarrel was not with achievement, enterprise, or technical mastery, but with concentrated power operating behind democratic forms. In that respect, Lundberg sounded less like a fashionable radical than like an old Midwestern insurgent, and Lindbergh recognized in him something close to the

political language of his own father, Charles August Lindbergh, the Minnesota progressive who had fought the money trust, distrusted Wall Street, opposed the Federal Reserve, and believed that banking and public policy had to be brought back under democratic control.

That recognition lent the conversation an unexpected warmth. Lundberg said he had expected Lindbergh to be stiff, perhaps even vain, but what struck him instead was Lindbergh's economy of speech. He did not dominate the table. He listened with that pale stillness people often mistook for coldness, and when he did answer, he did so as though every sentence had first passed through an instrument panel of private gauges. They talked about aviation, Europe, Roosevelt, Hearst, the press, and the peculiar cruelty of American celebrity. Lindbergh spoke with admiration for machines and distrust of crowds, and seemed already convinced that public opinion, once inflamed, behaved less like judgment than like hostile weather. Lundberg, who had spent his life studying wealth, power, and the hidden arrangements beneath public life, found that quality in him both fascinating and troubling. Lindbergh did not sound like a demagogue to him. He sounded like a man who believed that most public explanations were covers for something deeper and who had begun to confuse secrecy with truth.

There was a Swedish undertone to all this that should not be overlooked. Lindbergh's father had been born in Sweden and brought to American politics a strain of Scandinavian radical liberalism: suspicion of inherited privilege, hostility to financial oligarchy, sympathy for farmers and workers, and a belief that democracy meant more than voting while banks and newspapers set the real terms of life. Lundberg, though American in formation, belonged emotionally to a related tradition of social criticism.

Viewed in that light, the sympathy that developed between Lindbergh and Lundberg was not so surprising. Beneath their differences lay a shared anti-plutocratic Swedish inheritance, transplanted to America and refracted through two very different lives.

That recollection stayed with me not because it solved anything, but because Lundberg's presence in it gave the coincidence a broader frame. He belonged to an older American tradition of anti-plutocratic inquiry, one trained to notice how private lives, public reputations, and institutional power intersect beneath the surface of events. What struck me, looking back, was that the path into Lindbergh's hidden world had not come through archives alone or from the notebooks. It also came through what I learned, often quite by accident, from people who had known him or had moved near the concealed traffic of his life. This book, in the reader's hands, is therefore more than what Lindbergh wrote down in his notebooks. It also incorporates what later experience, unexpected recollection, and accidental discovery taught me about Lindbergh, his circle, and the shadow history surrounding him.

Among the names that surfaced in that shadow history were Lawrence Dennis and Philip Johnson, figures who belonged to the most charged and compromised precincts of the prewar right. Dennis was a man of extraordinary contradictions: a former diplomat, Harvard graduate, economic polemicist, and one of the few Americans of his generation willing to give fascism an explicitly intellectual defense. His books, **Is Capitalism Doomed? The Coming American Fascism** and **The Dynamics of War and Revolution**, argued that liberal capitalism had exhausted itself and that some form of authoritarian national planning would replace it. He was not a street-corner demagogue but something more unsettling: a polished, multilingual analyst of collapse, a man who could make dictatorship sound like an

administrative necessity. In later years, his life acquired another layer of concealment when scholars explored evidence that he had been born into a Black family in Atlanta and had passed for white throughout his adult career, an irony almost too severe for a writer who had moved among racial nationalists, isolationists, and the American fascist fringe.

When I found Dennis, he received me with unexpected courtesy. He had no wish, at that late date, to reenact the old indictments or defend every position of the 1930s, but he spoke freely enough about the atmosphere in which Lindbergh's America First speeches had taken shape. From him, I learned that the speeches were not always solitary compositions delivered from the Olympian isolation of Lindbergh's own mind. They passed through rooms, conversations, suggestions, and drafts; and near some of those early drafts, Dennis said, stood Philip Johnson. Before he became the great architect of the Glass House, the Museum of Modern Art's apostle of the International Style, and later the designer associated with AT&T's headquarters, Johnson had spent part of the 1930s in a far darker political country. He had admired Hitler, written for Father Coughlin's *Social Justice*, traveled in Germany and Poland, and moved for a time among men who imagined that modernity required not liberal compromise but aesthetic and political hardness. That such a man should have hovered near Lindbergh's America First language was not proof of authorship, but it was evidence of climate: the speeches emerged from an atmosphere in which isolationism, technocratic elitism, anti-Roosevelt resentment, Germanophilia, and authoritarian temptation could mingle before each was forced, by war, into a clearer and more damning light.

Johnson was harder to approach. Years earlier, when I was writing speeches at N.W. Ayer for John DeButts, the chairman of AT&T, DeButts mentioned that Johnson's designs were among those under

consideration for the company's new headquarters. I used that slender thread to arrange a meeting. Johnson was at first cold, almost glacial, when the prewar years came up. One could feel the old danger in the room: not danger from him, but danger to the carefully rebuilt life by which the celebrated architect had outlived the reckless political young man. Gradually, however, he thawed. He did not offer confession in any theatrical sense, and he certainly did not solve Lindbergh. But he acknowledged enough of the America First world, enough of the conversations around Dennis and Lindbergh, to make clear that Lindbergh's public words had moved through a charged intellectual field before they reached the microphone. That field—Dennis's authoritarian analysis, Johnson's aestheticized politics, hatred of Roosevelt, German prestige, and the isolationist longing for an America sealed off from Europe's catastrophe—formed one more chamber in the hidden architecture around Lindbergh. To understand his quarrel with Roosevelt, one had to pass through it.

The natural historian of this charged field was Wayne S. Cole, a delightful man and the most authoritative historian of the America First movement I ever knew. His **America First: The Battle Against Intervention, 1940–1941** was the first full-length study of the committee and quickly became the indispensable account; his later **Charles A. Lindbergh and the Battle Against American Intervention in World War II** carried that inquiry further, placing Lindbergh himself at the center of the prewar struggle with a fullness and documentary command no later student of the subject could afford to ignore. Both books had long and honorable afterlives, remaining standard works for anyone seeking to understand that embattled chapter of American history. Cole mattered to me because he stood at just the right angle to Dennis and Johnson: close enough to the America First world to understand its documents and internal

arguments, yet distant enough to keep its temptations from becoming excuses.

Cole also helped me trace the public aftermath of Lindbergh's America First speeches into lived memory. Not long after our conversations, chance provided another witness, Florence Banks, who told me she had been present when Lindbergh spoke at Fort Wayne's Gospel Temple before some three thousand people, widely understood as his first major appearance after the storm of denunciation that followed his speech in Des Moines. Her recollection fit naturally with Cole's history: he supplied the documentary frame, she supplied the atmosphere in the room.

That same line of inquiry soon carried me from the speeches to their impetus. In a subsequent phone call, I asked Cole about a discussion in Lindbergh's notebooks about a meeting convened by the public-relations wizard Carl Byoir, whose largest account at the time was the Nazi government. Through my good friend Jack Bergen, the president of the public-relations giant Hill and Knowlton, which had by then acquired the Byoir firm, I was introduced to Josh Howell, the chief executive of Carl Byoir. Deep in the bowels of the Graybar Building, where Hill and Knowlton then operated, I tracked down the minutes of that meeting—the very minutes I dramatize in this book.

It was a quiet, invitation-only meeting where publicists, intermediaries, and sympathetic American figures discussed ways to improve Nazi Germany's image in the United States. Lindbergh noted the presence of Lawrence Dennis, the country's most prominent fascist theorist, along with German diplomats and American isolationists. The conversation focused on shaping press narratives that portrayed Germany as disciplined, modern, and unfairly maligned by "war agitators," with Byoir's staff outlining how favorable stories could be placed through cultural channels and friendly newspapers. Though

Lindbergh attended as an aviation authority rather than a propagandist, his notebooks make clear that he understood the meeting's purpose: a coordinated effort to soften American opinion toward the Reich through carefully managed public relations.

At the time of the Byoir meeting, Lindbergh and Roosevelt were already locked in open antagonism, and nothing illustrates that rupture more clearly than the Air Mail Crisis of 1934, when Roosevelt abruptly canceled the private airmail contracts and turned the mail over to the Army Air Corps. Lindbergh protested the cancellation as an arbitrary blow against aviation and due process. The episode was more than a quarrel over contracts. It placed the President and America's most famous aviator on opposite sides of a question that touched technology, monopoly, administrative power, and the future of commercial flight. Roosevelt saw collusion and the need for reform; Lindbergh saw government overreach and the imperiling of an industry he had helped legitimize. From the beginning, their conflict joined policy to symbolism: the New Deal state against the solitary pilot, federal power against technical independence, and democratic reform against the prestige of heroic expertise.

Nor was the conflict merely administrative. In the darker political weather of 1933 and 1934, when Roosevelt's enemies in finance and industry whispered about executive excess and social revolution, Lindbergh's name had a dangerous glamour. The so-called Business Plot, exposed by Smedley Butler's testimony before the McCormack-Dickstein Committee, belonged to that anxious moment when certain conservative and Wall Street circles contemplated organizing veterans and disaffected patriots behind a figure of national prestige.

In the notebooks, Lindbergh says plainly that he had been the man chosen to run the country if the plot succeeded. Thomas W. Lamont, the Morgan partner and one of the great symbols of American finance,

moved in the world where such resentments gathered, and his interest in Lindbergh reflected the plotters' central fantasy—that the solitary hero of 1927 could be converted into the public face of an anti-Roosevelt regime. What none of them understood was that Lindbergh had never sought power for himself. He possessed fame, discipline, technical authority, and a nearly mythic public standing, but not the appetite of a Caesar. The men who looked at him saw an instrument of command. Lindbergh, as the notebooks present him, saw only another attempt by organized power to make use of a name he had spent his life trying, however imperfectly, to keep under his own control.

Corliss Lamont later offered a more personal and unsettling illumination of that same episode. In 1990, I formed the East-West Alliance, an organization devoted to easing the last rigidities of the Cold War and encouraging a more humane disengagement between the superpowers. Through that effort, I came to know Corliss, and he, in turn, opened a different path into Lindbergh—less cryptic, less haunted by intelligence, yet in some ways more intimate. He was already one of the grand old dissenters in American intellectual life: a humanist philosopher, prolific author, civil libertarian, peace advocate, and a stubborn defender of free inquiry against the political orthodoxies of both right and left.

Born into immense privilege as the son of Thomas W. Lamont of J. P. Morgan, he had spent much of his life opposing the very concentrations of wealth and coercive power from which he had sprung. He had written and campaigned for secular humanism, academic freedom, civil liberties, and Soviet-American understanding, enduring subpoenas, surveillance, passport battles, and the long suspicions of the Cold War without surrendering his faith that reason and conscience could still operate in public life. That background mattered. Corliss was not easily impressed by inherited

authority, patriotic theatrics, or the romance of power. When he spoke about Lindbergh, Roosevelt, and the Business Plot, he did so as someone who had studied American power from the inside and resisted it from the outside. He knew the plot not merely as a public controversy or a footnote to Roosevelt's first term, but through family and proximity. His father belonged to the financial world through which many of the period's anti-Roosevelt resentments moved, and Corliss spoke to me in detail about both his father's role and Lindbergh's imagined usefulness to the men who disliked the New Deal enough to contemplate extra-constitutional remedies. In Corliss's telling, the important point was not that Lindbergh had plotted like a politician. It was that others had plotted around him, seeing in his name the disciplined, heroic, seemingly incorruptible figurehead they lacked. His fame could be made to sanctify what their own names would have discredited.

My dealings with Corliss in the East-West Alliance showed me what that peace advocacy meant in practice. He was not a ceremonial liberal lending his name to a cause but a worker in the old moral style—writing letters, making calls, urging meetings, and pressing skeptical acquaintances to imagine that the Cold War could end without humiliation or triumphalism. He spoke of Soviet-American relations with the stubborn patience of a man who had spent decades being called naïve, subversive, or worse, and who had learned that the work of peace often meant staying in conversation after more fashionable minds had moved on. I remember his delight in improbable openings, his habit of seizing on a small contact or a faint diplomatic thaw as though history had left a door ajar, and his refusal to confuse patriotism with hostility. He had been denounced often enough to know the cost of dissent, yet he retained an almost schoolboy faith that reasoned appeal, personal friendship, and public conscience could still alter the behavior of states. That was why his

testimony about Lindbergh carried such force for me. Corliss understood both the seductions of power and the loneliness of dissent, and he had spent his life trying to keep moral seriousness alive in the narrow passage between them.

Corliss's view of Lindbergh's politics was therefore severe, but not simple. He did not regard Lindbergh as an ordinary fascist or a crude reactionary, and he disliked the ease with which public argument reduced complicated men to slogans. What troubled him was something more particular: Lindbergh's susceptibility to order, hierarchy, technical mastery, and heroic discipline when those values were detached from democratic sympathy. "Charles was not a politician," Corliss said in effect. "That was part of the danger. He thought politics could be solved by character, machinery, and will." In Corliss's judgment, America First had given Lindbergh a platform for instincts that were not merely isolationist but anti-democratic in their emotional structure: distrust of mass politics, impatience with ordinary compromise, admiration for efficiency, and a belief that those who saw farther had earned the right to stand apart. Yet Corliss also insisted that Lindbergh's politics could not be understood as hatred or ideology alone. They were bound up with injury, celebrity, grief, and the old Midwestern suspicion of banks, propaganda, and centralized power inherited from his father. "He was wrong," Corliss told me, "but he was not shallowly wrong." That distinction mattered. It let Corliss condemn the political consequences without losing sight of the wounded, complicated man behind them.

Corliss's authority on Lindbergh did not come only from politics. He had known Anne Morrow before her marriage, had been one of her former boyfriends, and remained close enough afterward to observe the Lindbergh household from an unusually intimate angle. That position made him a witness of a different order: not a conspirator, not

an intelligence man, not a historian reconstructing an atmosphere from paper, but a cultivated friend who had once stood near Anne's affections and later remained close enough to see how the marriage arranged its silences. "Anne had the room," he told me in substance. "Charles had the horizon." By that, he meant that Anne's social and literary gifts could carry an evening, while Charles, even seated among friends, seemed partly absent—listening more than speaking, measuring the company with that pale, disciplined stillness that many mistook for coldness. Corliss remembered visits in which household conversation moved easily among books, children, travel, and public events, only to tighten whenever Charles's absences, political judgments, or private arrangements came near the surface. "He could be perfectly courteous," Corliss said, "but you never felt he had surrendered himself to the room." In that recollection, Lindbergh could be charming, but the charm was intermittent, controlled, and never quite relinquished. Some part of him was always elsewhere—calculating routes, guarding compartments, preserving a freedom no domestic intimacy could quite claim.

The anecdotes were small, but their smallness was precisely their value. Corliss spoke of Anne trying, with tact and intelligence, to translate Charles to others—softening a silence, explaining an abrupt departure, finding language for a man who often seemed to resist language itself. "Anne was always translating him," he said. "Not from one language to another, but from silence into something the rest of us could live with." He remembered the household as one in which affection and tension coexisted without open drama: books and correspondence on one side, maps, schedules, machines, and departures on the other. Charles's need for order entered even ordinary moments. Plans were exact, time was guarded, and emotional claims were often answered indirectly, through action, provision, or withdrawal rather than confession. "It was not cruelty," Corliss

insisted. “It was distance made into a principle.” What he described was subtler and, in some ways, more painful than ordinary harshness: a marriage and family atmosphere organized around a man whose greatness had trained everyone near him to accommodate distance as though it were a form of discipline.

Corliss, too, spoke most candidly about the emotional complication surrounding Anne’s sister Elisabeth Morrow. The public record preserves Elisabeth largely through her early death and the grief her loss imposed on the Morrow family, but within the family atmosphere, Corliss suggested, her relation to Lindbergh had been remembered with a more troubling intensity. He did not present gossip as proof, and neither do I. But he was aware of the rumor, persistent in some circles, that Lindbergh had fathered an out-of-wedlock child with Elisabeth. Whether the rumor was fact, family mythology, or the distorted echo of an intimacy no one wished to name, it mattered because it revealed how far the unease around Lindbergh’s domestic life extended. Long before the later revelations of his secret European children, whispers already suggested that the boundaries of his marriage, his household, and his obligations were more complicated than the public legend could bear.

From Corliss Lamont’s remembered household, the line of witness passed naturally to another observer who had seen Lindbergh up close but judged him by a very different tradition: Sir Harold Nicolson. If Corliss brought the American humanist’s eye, affectionate yet politically wary, Nicolson brought the eye of the British diplomat, diarist, aristocratic insider, and professional observer of character. He was not merely repeating drawing-room rumor. He had entered the Morrow world intimately while writing his 1935 biography of Anne’s father, Dwight Morrow. During that work, he lived for a time in the Morrow household, absorbing its habits, loyalties, silences, and grief.

Later, after the Lindberghs withdrew from the United States in their self-imposed exile following the kidnapping and the Hauptmann trial, Nicolson and Vita Sackville-West became their landlords at Long Barn, the old Kent house at Sevenoaks Weald where Charles and Anne tried to rebuild a life beyond the American press. Long Barn had already belonged to a literary and political geography of its own, but in the Lindbergh years it became another chamber of exile: English fields, guarded children, letters from America, and the tense quiet of a family famous enough to be hunted even in retreat.

That difference matters because it captures the central problem for every witness in this story. Corliss saw the distance within the household; Nicolson saw the public and political meaning of that distance; neither could explain the full pressure Lindbergh felt. Yet together, their recollections sharpen the portrait. The same traits recur from opposite sides of the Atlantic: reserve, control, secrecy, a fascination with order, and a terrifying capacity for silence to be mistaken for assent. From there, the story returns to the public arena, where those private and social impressions hardened into the Roosevelt-Lindbergh confrontation and the great national quarrel over intervention, America First, and the meaning of democratic loyalty in the face of Hitler's Europe.

Nicolson's diaries, therefore, carried a peculiar authority and a peculiar danger. He had watched Lindbergh not from across an ocean of headlines but from the close proximity of host, landlord, biographer, and social equal. What he recorded was cool, polished, and damaging: Lindbergh as remote, disciplined, humorless, morally incurious, and increasingly susceptible to the German argument. In Nicolson's diary portrait, the aviator appears less as a bereaved father under pressure than as the familiar prewar figure of liberal nightmare—the great American hero whose admiration for German order and air power

shaded into Nazi sympathy. When the entries appeared in diary form in 1966, Lindbergh was furious. He believed Nicolson had exposed private impressions without understanding the hidden coercion under which he had acted. To Nicolson, who did not know the leverage the Germans were applying to him, Lindbergh's conduct looked like conviction. To Lindbergh, reading those pages decades later, it must have seemed like a second betrayal: a man who had seen him up close had described the outward symptoms while missing the inward compulsion.

Before Lindbergh became the great public voice of America First, he had already tried, more privately and more socially, to influence Britain against war with Germany. England was the first theater of persuasion. During the Lindberghs' exile there, he moved through the very circles in which appeasement was not merely a policy but a mood: country houses, diplomatic dinners, embassy conversations, and the aristocratic-political world gathered around Cliveden, the home of the Astors. The name "Cliveden Set," coined by hostile journalists and later debated by historians, has always been imprecise; it was less an organization than a social weather system around Nancy and Waldorf Astor, Lord Lothian, Lord Halifax, Geoffrey Dawson of *The Times*, Robert Brand, Lionel Curtis, Nevile Henderson, and others who believed, in varying degrees, that Britain should seek accommodation with Germany rather than another continental war. Lindbergh found that world congenial because it treated his air-minded warnings as knowledge rather than defeatism. He had seen the Luftwaffe, had been received by German officials, and spoke with the authority of a pilot who understood how aviation had upended notions of defense. To men and women still thinking in naval and imperial terms, he said, in effect, that the Channel was no longer the shield it had been.

His sympathies also brought him near the former King Edward VIII, by then Duke of Windsor, whose own admiration for aspects of Nazi Germany and desire for an Anglo-German understanding placed him in the most compromising region of the same appeasement landscape. Lindbergh's closeness to Edward was not incidental. Both men had been turned into public symbols before they became fully private men; both distrusted democratic rhetoric, disliked press persecution, and believed established elites might still rescue civilization from mass politics. Against them stood, in different ways, the men Lindbergh regarded as pushing Britain toward ruin: Stanley Baldwin, whose government had presided over rearmament too slowly and abdication too painfully; Winston Churchill, still outside office for much of the 1930s but already warning that Hitler could not be appeased indefinitely; Robert Boothby, the young Conservative rebel and Churchill ally; and others who believed that German power had to be met before it became unanswerable. To Lindbergh, their agitation looked like recklessness. To them, his counsel of restraint looked like surrender dressed as technical realism.

With Baldwin, the conflict was partly temperamental and partly historical. Baldwin embodied the caution of a country still traumatized by the last war, a prime minister who understood how deeply pacific British opinion remained and believed that democratic government could not be driven faster than the public imagination would bear. He had also been the man who forced Edward VIII to choose between the throne and Wallis Simpson, and that alone placed him in opposition to circles that Lindbergh found sympathetic. To Lindbergh, Baldwin represented the respectable face of delay: the politician who spoke of rearmament while moving too slowly, distrusted spectacular men, and insisted that public authority belonged to Parliament rather than to heroic outsiders, royal rebels, or technical seers. Baldwin, for his part, could hardly have welcomed an American aviator, intimate with the

exiled Duke of Windsor and listened to by appeasers, speaking with oracular certainty about Britain's vulnerability from the air. Lindbergh's reports from Germany made Baldwin's caution look cowardly to the anti-war set and insufficient to the war mongers at the same time. He was useful to neither Baldwin's balance nor Baldwin's authority.

With Churchill, the antagonism was sharper because both men claimed to read the future through machines. Churchill had made German rearmament and air power the center of his long warning from the political wilderness; Lindbergh, after his Luftwaffe inspections and conversations with German officials, reached almost the opposite conclusion. Where Churchill saw German strength as a reason to accelerate British resistance before the balance worsened, Lindbergh saw the same strength as proof that resistance would be suicidal. Churchill's imagination was historical, imperial, and moral: Hitler had to be stopped because unchecked power would not stop itself. Lindbergh's imagination was technical and strategic: bombers, fighters, production figures, range, and airfields seemed to him more persuasive than parliamentary rhetoric or moral indignation. Each man therefore regarded the other as dangerously romantic. Churchill thought Lindbergh had mistaken German display for destiny and had allowed himself to become an instrument of intimidation. Lindbergh thought Churchill was turning courage into catastrophe, urging Britain toward a war whose arithmetic had already been lost in the air. Their quarrel was never merely about Germany. It was about how modern war should be understood—by character and history, or by machinery and calculation—and about whether democratic courage could still matter once the bomber had made distance obsolete.

But Churchill was only one pole of the British argument. If he represented the prophetic language of resistance, Chamberlain

embodied the official burden of delay, accommodation, and calculation. Lindbergh's influence, such as it was, therefore has to be followed not only toward Churchill's enemies but into the quieter machinery of appeasement itself, where private warnings, aerial estimates, diplomatic pessimism, and Conservative back channels helped shape the policy that would define Britain before the war.

Near Chamberlain stood Sir Joseph Ball—more fully, Sir George Joseph Ball—the former intelligence officer, Conservative Party organizer, and discreet political operator whose importance lay precisely in the channels he could open without leaving the usual marks of office. Ball had been close to Chamberlain's circle and belonged to that hidden apparatus of Conservative influence through which appeasement was defended, opponents were watched, and back channels to continental powers could be explored. Lindbergh's British influence passed through this world as much as through formal diplomacy. It also reached Joseph P. Kennedy, Roosevelt's ambassador in London, who was already inclined toward pessimism about Britain's chances and toward sympathy with Chamberlain's desire to avoid war. Lindbergh's reports on German air strength and British vulnerability reinforced Kennedy's deepest instinct: that war with Germany would be catastrophic and that America should not be drawn into Britain's fate. In that sense, Lindbergh's America First position had a British prehistory. Before he tried to keep the United States out of the war, he had tried to persuade Britain—and the Americans stationed in Britain—that war itself was the catastrophe to be avoided at almost any price.

Between 1940 and 1941, the quarrel widened into the great argument over America's place in the war. Roosevelt moved by degrees toward aid to Britain, rearmament, Lend-Lease, and the language of the arsenal of democracy. Lindbergh, speaking for

America First, insisted that the United States could and should remain out of Europe's war, fortify the hemisphere, and resist what he saw as the entangling pressures of British need, interventionist propaganda, and presidential ambition. The dispute became personal because each man embodied a competing national imagination. Roosevelt believed that American security required engagement before catastrophe crossed the Atlantic. Lindbergh believed that aviation, geography, and national self-possession made an independent American destiny still possible. Their speeches increasingly answered one another across the airwaves, and after Lindbergh's Des Moines speech, the conflict acquired a moral bitterness from which Lindbergh's public reputation never fully recovered.

Anne Morrow Lindbergh's **The Wave of the Future** deepened the unease. Published in 1940 as a brief confession of faith, it argued that the totalitarian movements then convulsing Europe could not be dismissed as mere accidents or criminal aberrations; they were, in her phrase, part of a wave that had to be understood before it could be resisted or transcended. To many readers, including those in Roosevelt's world, that sounded less like a tragic analysis than accommodation. Anne meant, I think, to describe the spiritual and historical pressure of modernity; her critics heard surrender to fascism. The controversy placed not only Charles but also Anne herself at the center of the Roosevelt-Lindbergh conflict, as though marriage had become one more theater in which the future of liberal democracy was being argued.

And yet, for all that public antagonism, the conflict was not beyond courtesy, even intimacy. In 1941, Roosevelt hosted Charles and Anne Lindbergh for dinner at Hyde Park. The fact is astonishing when set against the bitterness surrounding them. Here were the President, who had come to see Lindbergh as a dangerous isolationist; the aviator, who

believed Roosevelt was drawing the nation toward war; and Anne, whose own book had made her suspect to much of the liberal world, sitting together under the domestic roof of the Roosevelt house. Nothing in such a dinner could erase the public quarrel, and nothing did. But it revealed that the relationship still belonged to an older political culture in which personal encounter could coexist with ideological combat. For a moment, at Hyde Park, the airmail dispute, the Wall Street shadows, America First, and The Wave of the Future were gathered not into agreement, but into recognition. That recognition is what makes the Roosevelt-Lindbergh connection so elusive and so important: the men were adversaries, but not strangers; symbols, but also guests and hosts; combatants in history, yet still capable of meeting across a dinner table before the war made such ambiguities impossible.

I had looked fruitlessly in the public record for proof that such a dinner had taken place. In 1991, I attended an event at Hyde Park marking the sixtieth anniversary of the New York Power Authority, one of Roosevelt's titanic achievements as governor of New York. At the event were former New York State governor Charles Poletti, Dick Flynn, then NYPA's chairman, Andy Logan from *The New Yorker*, and Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., who delivered the keynote address. Schlesinger's presence mattered. He was not merely another eminent historian invited to speak under Roosevelt's roof. He was, by then, perhaps the primary historian of the Roosevelt years, the writer whose great trilogy, **The Age of Roosevelt—The Crisis of the Old Order, The Coming of the New Deal,** and **The Politics of Upheaval**—had done more than any other work to fix the New Deal in historical memory as a drama of democratic rescue, political improvisation, and liberal reform.

Born into history as almost a family vocation, the son of the distinguished Harvard historian Arthur M. Schlesinger Sr., he had graduated from Harvard at twenty, served during the war in the Office of War Information and the OSS, won a Pulitzer Prize for *The Age of Jackson*, taught at Harvard, advised Adlai Stevenson, and then entered the Kennedy White House as special assistant and unofficial court historian. His later **A Thousand Days** would win another Pulitzer, and **The Imperial Presidency** would name one of the central anxieties of the Nixon era. But at Hyde Park that day his authority rested above all on Roosevelt. He had made himself the great literary interpreter of FDR's political imagination, and if anyone alive could recognize whether the Lindbergh dinner belonged to the true Roosevelt world or merely to rumor, it was Schlesinger.

When I put the question to Schlesinger, he did not dismiss it. On the contrary, he said he, too, had heard that such a dinner had been held. The reason, as the story had reached him, was astonishing. Roosevelt's next-door neighbor at Hyde Park, Vincent Astor, had installed a private telegraphy and intercept system of his own, one capable, as Schlesinger understood it, of receiving or reading Nazi communications outside ordinary official channels. Those intercepts, according to Schlesinger, matched what Roosevelt's friend William J. "Wild Bill" Donovan—then functioning as Roosevelt's unofficial spymaster before the formal creation of the OSS—had learned through other channels: that Lindbergh's son had not died as the public had been told, but had been stolen by the Nazis, and that the Germans had used the child's fate as leverage to force Lindbergh into the speeches that made him the symbol of America First and to induce Anne Morrow Lindbergh to write The Wave of the Future. It was a bombshell, the sort of revelation that, if true, would reorder not only the Lindbergh story but the moral history of the prewar years. Yet Schlesinger was adamant about the limits of what he knew. He said he

could find no corroborating evidence for the theory, no documentary proof that would permit a historian to state it as fact. We spent the remainder of the afternoon searching the records at Hyde Park for evidence of such a meeting, but found none. Schlesinger, however, would not allow the absence of proof to become proof of absence. Roosevelt, he reminded me, was a man who kept secrets, too.

Dick Flynn entered the treasure hunt with the same blend of skepticism and appetite for recollection. He had stories of his own, inherited from his father, Edward J. Flynn, one of the most powerful Democratic politicians of the Roosevelt era and, in many respects, Roosevelt's closest political confidant. Ed Flynn had served as sheriff of Bronx County, secretary of state of New York, leader of the Bronx Democratic organization, and chairman of the Democratic National Committee, and he was a master of the practical politics that held Roosevelt's coalition together. He was not a New Deal intellectual but one of its indispensable operators: loyal, shrewd, discreet, Catholic, Irish-American, and trusted by Roosevelt in precisely those matters where friendship, political instinct, and secrecy mattered more than official position.

When Ed Flynn was sheriff of the Bronx, Dick told me, he even named Dutch Schultz a deputy sheriff, not out of admiration for the gangster but in the hope that Schultz's underworld connections might help trace the Lindbergh child's kidnappers through gangland channels. The fear was not abstract in the Flynn household. Dick was only a year younger than Charles Lindbergh Jr. at the time of the kidnapping, and his father worried that if men could seize Lindbergh's son from a nursery, they might one day snatch his own. The case, therefore, entered the Flynn family not merely as a headline or political problem but as domestic dread.

Dick said his father never believed that Bruno Richard Hauptmann had kidnapped the child. He said Ed Flynn had gone to Hauptmann's home, interviewed Hauptmann and his wife, and spoken with German neighbors who insisted that Hauptmann had been at Friedrichsen's bakery, where his wife worked, on the night of the kidnapping and therefore could not have committed the crime. Flynn did not pretend this settled the matter, but it made him distrust the official prosecution's tidy finality. If Hauptmann was not the kidnapper, or not the sole kidnapper, then the Bronx and upper Manhattan offered other possibilities: men such as John Knoll and others moving through the German-American neighborhoods of the Bronx and Yorkville, where the Friends of New Germany, a pro-Hitler organization, found recruits and sympathizers in the years before the war.

Flynn also told me that his father had spoken with Lindbergh about these suspicions in Ireland when Lindbergh flew there in November 1936, during the Pan American and Imperial Airways survey of possible transatlantic air routes. The public account of that trip has its own improbable charm. Lindbergh arrived with Juan Trippe and other aviation figures, inspected the Shannon possibilities, dined at Dublin Castle with Éamon de Valera, and then took de Valera up for what contemporary accounts described as the Irish leader's first airplane flight, from Baldonnel Aerodrome, with Lindbergh at the controls. It was one of those ceremonial moments when aviation, diplomacy, and personal myth briefly merged: the austere Irish statesman, born in New York and remade by revolution, carried into the air by the world's most famous pilot.

According to Dick Flynn, the more private conversation occurred during a dinner at Dublin Castle honoring James A. Farley, Roosevelt's postmaster general, Democratic national chairman, and one of Ed Flynn's closest political friends. Farley was a crucial Roosevelt

lieutenant: the genial, tireless organizer who had helped build the national Democratic machinery in 1932 and 1936, distributed patronage through the Post Office with consummate political skill, and knew almost everyone worth knowing in the party. If Lindbergh, Ed Flynn, and Farley came together at such a dinner, the setting would have been ideal for the sort of guarded exchange Flynn remembered—publicly ceremonial, privately political, with the kidnapping, Hauptmann, German-American networks, and Roosevelt's intelligence worries all capable of passing beneath the surface of ordinary conversation.

That was the lesson of Hyde Park in 1991: even when the records yielded nothing decisive, the search itself had a way of summoning men whose memories still touched the hidden perimeter of the story. Schlesinger had brought Roosevelt's world to bear on the notebooks; Dick Flynn had added the remembered anxieties of a Roosevelt intimate's household and one more private channel through which Lindbergh rumors had traveled. The inquiry was no longer moving in a straight line from document to document. It was moving through people—neighbors, old friendships, family connections, and recollections offered almost casually before their weight was revealed.

Another line of inquiry had come to me earlier through Ludovic Kennedy, the Scottish journalist, broadcaster, and crusading re-examiner of disputed murder convictions, whose **The Airman and the Carpenter** appeared in 1985 with the subtitle *The Lindbergh Kidnapping and the Framing of Richard Hauptmann*. I had met Kennedy through a woman named Miss Wolf, who ran a small bookshop out of her home in London's Chelsea neighborhood and hosted a book party for the book's release. Kennedy's theory was as direct as his title: that Bruno Richard Hauptmann, the German carpenter executed for the kidnapping and murder of the Lindbergh

child, had been framed; that the prosecution's case rested on tainted testimony, manufactured or mishandled evidence, and a public hunger for closure; that the ladder evidence, the handwriting testimony, the ransom money, and the official treatment of Hauptmann's alibi all deserved radical re-examination; and that the atmosphere surrounding the case had been closer to a civic demand for sacrifice than to a sober search for truth. Kennedy did not solve the mystery by identifying the real kidnapper beyond doubt. His contribution was different and, in some ways, more unsettling: he made it intellectually respectable to doubt the official finality of Hauptmann's guilt and to ask whether the crime of the century had ended in a judicial answer too convenient to be true.

Around the same period, a Lindbergh connection emerged from the world of aerospace itself. Around 1991, E. Pendleton James—Pen James to those who knew him, the veteran executive recruiter who had served in the Nixon White House as Deputy Special Assistant to the President for White House Personnel, responsible for finding leading figures for presidential appointments, and who later performed a comparable, even more visible role for Ronald Reagan as director of presidential personnel during the transition and then Assistant to the President for Presidential Personnel—recruited me to write speeches for Malcolm R. Currie, then chairman of the Hughes Corporation. James belonged to that small fraternity of men who understood power through appointments: who was ready, who could be trusted, who could be moved into position before others even knew a position was open. That he should have been the one to bring me to Currie was therefore fitting. Currie was no ordinary corporate figure. Trained as a physicist and aeronautical engineer at Berkeley, he had joined Hughes Aircraft in 1954, risen through its research laboratories and advanced electronics programs, headed major work in radar, lasers, missile systems, satellite communications, and defense electronics, served in

Washington as Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering and national armaments director, and later returned to Hughes as chairman and chief executive officer. He belonged to that postwar fraternity of engineers, defense planners, and aerospace executives for whom technology, national security, aviation, and space were parts of one continuous enterprise. He had also been a close friend of Lindbergh's, and he possessed a store of stories of his own—stories that placed Lindbergh not in legend or controversy, but among men who thought in systems, machines, weapons, routes, and the future of flight. Much of the background I eventually acquired on Lindbergh's involvement with missile systems, Vanguard, and NASA-era space work came through Currie, whose own career at Hughes and in the Defense Department overlapped almost exactly with the technical world toward which Lindbergh had long been drawn.

The overlap was precise enough to matter. Currie's professional life spanned guided missiles, airborne radar, satellite communications, defense electronics, and the bureaucratic machinery linking military research to space policy; Lindbergh's notebooks, by contrast, repeatedly return to Goddard, Peenemünde, Vanguard, Cape Kennedy, missile testing, and the uneasy passage from aviation into astronautics. Currie, therefore, gave me more than anecdotes. He supplied a technical and institutional map against which Lindbergh's scattered references could be checked—where they fit the known evolution of postwar aerospace, where they sounded like memory refracted through secrecy, and where the notebooks seemed to carry Lindbergh beyond the public realm.

Near Currie and Hughes was another witness from the same fraternity of flight, though of a more flamboyant kind: Robert A. "Bob" Hoover. Hoover was one of those aviators whose reputation among pilots exceeded even his public fame—a wartime fighter pilot,

escaped prisoner of war, test pilot, air-show master, and the man Jimmy Doolittle famously called the greatest stick-and-rudder pilot who ever lived. He had known Lindbergh not as an abstraction but as "Slim," the wary, reclusive elder who sometimes moved through aviation circles almost in disguise. Hoover remembered meeting Lindbergh after an air show in Europe, when a man calling himself Mr. Schwartz approached him to discuss the future of jet aviation; only later did Hoover realize that the quiet stranger was Lindbergh himself. The friendship grew from there. Hoover would pick him up when he came to Los Angeles, talk with him about airplanes, pilots, and the changing character of flight, and see in him not the embattled public figure of the prewar years but the older pilot still measuring the world by machines, routes, airfields, weather, and nerve.

That relationship produced one of the most beautiful symbolic convergences in aviation history. In 1969, when Hoover was president of the Society of Experimental Test Pilots, he helped bring Lindbergh to the society's annual banquet at the Beverly Hilton, held just after the Apollo 11 astronauts had returned from quarantine. Neil Armstrong, himself a test pilot before he was an astronaut, was being honored in the immediate aftermath of the moon landing. Hoover understood what such a room could mean if Lindbergh were present: the man who had first crossed the Atlantic alone and the man who had first walked on the moon, seated within the same fellowship of experimental pilots. Lindbergh had long resisted public occasions of that kind, but Hoover persuaded him to come. At the banquet, Lindbergh and Armstrong received special honors from the Society of Experimental Test Pilots, and for a moment, the line from 1927 to 1969—Atlantic to moon, fabric-and-wire audacity to Saturn V—became visible not as metaphor but as living company. Hoover's importance to my inquiry lay partly there. He showed that Lindbergh's late life did not belong only to controversy, secrecy, or exile. Among

pilots, especially test pilots, he remained one of the craft's founding presences, a man whose achievement could still command reverence from those who had carried flight to its next impossible frontier.

After that impossible frontier had been made visible in one room, another witness led me back from the moon to the darker origins of German rocketry. This was Olga Ley, the widow of Willy Ley, whom I interviewed at her home at 14th Street and 8th Avenue in Manhattan in 1988. Her late husband had been close to the first generation of German rocket enthusiasts before that enthusiasm passed into military hands.

Willy Ley was born in Berlin, trained in the sciences, and, as a young man, drawn to Hermann Oberth's vision of spaceflight. He became an early member and principal public voice of the Verein für Raumschiffahrt, the German Society for Space Travel, writing for Die Rakete, popularizing the mathematics and romance of rockets, and moving among the men whose experiments at the Raketenflugplatz in Berlin would later feed, through darker channels, into Kummersdorf, Peenemünde, and the V-2. He knew the cast before history had hardened them into victors, fugitives, or defendants: Oberth, Rudolf Nebel, Klaus Riedel, Wernher von Braun, and the other gifted amateurs and engineers who had begun with lunar dreams and were overtaken by the Reich's appetite for weapons.

Ley's own experience gave the story its peculiar authority. He had seen the German rocket movement before it wore uniforms, when it still belonged to enthusiasts, writers, physicists, mechanics, and dreamers arguing over propellants and guidance in makeshift settings. He had also watched, with increasing alarm, as the Army drew the work toward Kummersdorf, the proving ground outside Berlin where military rocketry began to acquire discipline, secrecy, and purpose. In Olga Ley's recollection, Willy had once seen a boy there whose face

struck him so forcefully that he could not dismiss it. The child, she said, resembled the photographs he had seen of Charles Lindbergh Jr.—not in some vague sentimental way, but with enough particularity to trouble him. Ley did not know what he had seen. He was cautious by temperament and trained by science to distrust melodrama. Yet he knew enough about the traffic between amateur rocketry, Army sponsorship, and the new political power in Germany to understand that a child appearing in such a place, if the resemblance were real, could not be treated as an innocent coincidence.

Mrs. Ley told me that her husband later reached out to Lindbergh and arranged a meeting with him at the National Democratic Club in New York, at Thirty-Seventh Street and Madison Avenue. The setting itself had an almost perverse appropriateness: an old political clubhouse, respectable, clubby, discreet, standing at the corner of public life and private influence. There, according to her account, Willy Ley told Lindbergh what he had seen and what he feared it might mean. Until then, Lindbergh could still imagine the Germans' approaches to him as ambiguous, even helpful: hints, messages, contacts, and intermediaries that seemed to suggest knowledge of the child's fate and perhaps some future restoration. Ley's report altered the moral geometry. If the boy at Kummersdorf truly resembled the lost child, then the Germans were not merely men who might help Lindbergh find his son. They might be the men who had taken him, hidden him, and used him to gain leverage over Lindbergh.

That was the terrible awakening Olga Ley described: not a solution to the kidnapping, not proof in any courtroom sense, but the moment when assistance and culpability began to exchange faces. Through Willy Ley, the rocket story and the kidnapping story converged. Kummersdorf ceased to be merely a name in the prehistory of Peenemünde and, in Lindbergh's private imagination, became one

more chamber in the hidden architecture of his grief. From that point forward, the German rocket pioneers no longer appeared to him only as heralds of the space age. They also belonged to the darker possibility that the same state which mastered the future of flight had first mastered the uses of a father's grief and uncertainty.

From Olga Ley, the trail passed, almost by inversion, to Jim Newton. Ley had brought me to Lindbergh by way of Kummersdorf, German rocketry, and the possibility that political crime had hidden itself within technological destiny. Newton belonged to another order of witness altogether. He did not stand at the edge of conspiracy, intelligence, or military secrecy. He stood nearer the household, the dock, the dinner table, the boat. Yet that made him no less important. If Ley's recollection suggested what fear and suspicion had done to Lindbergh, Newton's recollections promised something different: the texture of the man in ordinary companionship, where guardedness relaxed just enough for character to show through.

I had read Newton's **Uncommon Friends**, his warm and observant memoir of life among Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, Harvey Firestone, Alexis Carrel, and Charles Lindbergh—a book drawn from diaries, recollections, and correspondence, written by a man whose friendships with those figures began when he was still very young and working on the development of Edison Park in Fort Myers, Florida. What made the book useful to me was not only its access to famous men but also its tone: Newton wrote as someone admitted to their informal hours, when greatness relaxed into habit, talk, dinners, errands, enthusiasms, and private loyalties.

After reading it, I found Newton and spoke with him by phone. He was generous at once—courtly, direct, and still attuned to old friendships—and before the conversation ended, he invited me to visit him in Fort Myers Beach. The invitation mattered because Newton

was not merely a reader of Lindbergh's legend or a custodian of anecdotes about celebrated men. He had known the Lindberghs on a small scale of ordinary companionship, especially on the water, where talk loosens and reputations become less formal.

He spoke of sailing trips with Charles and Anne Lindbergh along the Florida coast and through the Gulf waters, where distances are measured as much by weather and tide as by miles. In that setting, Lindbergh became, for Newton, less the bronze figure of aviation history than a practical sailor and exacting companion: attentive to wind, gear, currents, and silence; content, at least for intervals, to let the boat and the horizon do what public life never could. Newton's place in that world had begun even earlier, through Edison Park and the Edison household itself. He told me how he had come to know Mrs. Edison and, in due course, how he introduced Lindbergh to her, thereby linking the aviator to yet another surviving chamber of that older Florida fellowship of inventors, industrialists, experimenters, and restless men of action. In the notebooks, Newton's name had seemed at first only one more clue. After I spoke with him, it became a doorway into the sociable, nautical, and domestic side of Lindbergh's later life.

Newton also offered me another, less companionable view of Lindbergh's years in Ford's orbit. Henry Ford had been almost a father figure to Lindbergh—older, formidable, mechanically visionary, suspicious of war, and drawn to the same dream of technological mastery without political entanglement. During the war, Lindbergh worked for Ford at Willow Run, where the company undertook the immense task of building the B-24 Liberator bomber, the very machine that turned Ford's mass-production genius toward the air war. The irony was severe. Both Ford and Lindbergh had opposed American entry into the war; both had been honored by Hitler's Germany with

the Order of the German Eagle; and now both found themselves connected to one of the most consequential bomber programs in the Allied arsenal. Newton said that Lindbergh's admiration for Ford did not prevent unease. As delays, production problems, and managerial confusion mounted, Lindbergh began to wonder whether Ford's reluctance to produce the bombers was deeper than age, pacifism, or industrial difficulty—whether the old man, unable in conscience to embrace the war fully, was in some sense sabotaging the work he had agreed to perform. I do not know whether Lindbergh ever meant the word literally, and Willow Run would eventually become a monument to American production. But the suspicion mattered because it revealed the emotional contradiction of the relationship: Lindbergh found in Ford a surrogate father and a mechanical hero, yet also a mirror of his own divided will, a man asked to build instruments of victory for a war he had never wanted.

From Ford's factory world, the path turns, unexpectedly yet naturally, back to the laboratory. Ford showed Lindbergh the dream of machinery scaled for industry and war; another witness, whom I had known since boyhood through my friendship with Cleland Landolt, would show me the earlier chamber where Lindbergh had first joined mechanical imagination to biology. Before Willow Run and the B-24, before the moral contradiction of building instruments for a war he had resisted, there had been the Rockefeller Institute, Alexis Carrel, and the strange glass apparatus through which Lindbergh tried to make life answer to engineering.

That witness was Dr. Allison Landolt, Cleland Landolt's father. I had known him as long as I had known Cleland. When I was growing up, I was a frequent visitor to the Landolt family home on Forest Avenue in Rye, so Allison was not an abstract authority encountered late in life but a familiar figure in the landscape of childhood. Cleland,

his brother Peter, and I all had chemistry sets then, and we spent many hours conducting experiments together with the fervor of boys who believed a basement table might become a laboratory if only the right reagents could be found. Often, the local hobby shop could not supply the chemicals we needed, and Dr. Landolt would somehow obtain them for us. We never knew whether he got them from the medical school where he worked or from his own father, a chemical engineer; to us, it hardly mattered. Dr. Landolt was a hero and benefactor, the adult who made the world of experiment seem larger, more serious, and more wonderfully available than it otherwise would have been.

Dr. Landolt was a physician and psychiatrist, a professor of psychiatry at Cornell Medical School, and one of those medically trained men of the older school whose scientific formation began before psychiatry had fully separated from neurology, physiology, and laboratory medicine. He told me that as a Princeton undergraduate, he had won an internship at the Rockefeller Institute, where he worked briefly with Dr. Alexis Carrel and with Lindbergh himself as the two men struggled to bring their perfusion pump to working order. The public record describes the collaboration plainly enough: Carrel, already famous for vascular surgery, tissue culture, transplantation experiments, and the 1912 Nobel Prize, had long been trying to keep organs alive outside the body; Lindbergh, the celebrated pilot and gifted mechanic, entered the laboratory after becoming interested in a mechanical way to sustain circulation, and helped devise the hand-blown glass apparatus that could perfuse an organ with a sterile, blood-like fluid. Rockefeller accounts later described the pump as a machine that mimicked circulation and helped demonstrate that life could be sustained by mechanical means, opening the way to heart-lung machines and later organ transplants.

Dr. Landolt's recollection mattered because it supplied what the public accounts could not: the atmosphere in the room. He remembered Carrel as a figure of almost priestly severity—small, exacting, inward, and accustomed to command not by volume but by intellectual pressure. Lindbergh, by contrast, entered as the mechanical adept: tall, silent, precise, patient with glass, valves, pressure, sterility, and failure. The dynamic between them was peculiar because neither man was easily subordinate. Carrel was the Nobel master, a surgeon-philosopher whose imagination ranged from blood vessels and organs to civilization, heredity, hierarchy, and the fate of man. Lindbergh was the famous layman, not medically trained, yet too technically gifted and too disciplined to be treated as a mere assistant. In the laboratory, they seemed to meet in a third country where biology, machinery, and metaphysics overlapped.

At lunch, Landolt said, the technical problem often opened into something larger. Carrel would speak of tissues, organs, vitality, degeneration, and the possibility that modern civilization was violating biological laws it barely understood. Lindbergh listened with the concentrated stillness people often mistook for emptiness or coldness, but Landolt thought the words entered deeply. The pump itself became more than an instrument. It was a symbol of their shared temptation: the belief that life might be purified, prolonged, regulated, perhaps even redeemed, if only its hidden mechanism could be understood. That was the dangerous grandeur of the Carrel-Lindbergh relationship. It joined Lindbergh's clean mechanical imagination to Carrel's darker biological and civilizational speculations, and it gave the aviator a language in which machines, organs, race, vitality, and destiny could begin to seem parts of one system.

Carrel's influence on Lindbergh was therefore not merely technical. In those Rockefeller conversations, Landolt suggested, one

could hear the first spoken form of ideas pressed between the covers of **Man, the Unknown**, Carrel's 1935 attempt to synthesize physiology, psychology, civilization, degeneration, discipline, hierarchy, and the remaking of man. The book would later become notorious for its eugenic and authoritarian implications, but in the laboratory, its arguments had not yet hardened into doctrine. They circulated as questions, warnings, aphorisms, and lunchtime speculations: What had modern machinery done to the human organism? Could civilization be redesigned according to biological law? Were intelligence, vitality, and moral strength measurable properties rather than democratic abstractions? Lindbergh absorbed those questions in the presence of a man he admired not only as a scientist but also as a seer. Carrel gave him a philosophical vocabulary for instincts Lindbergh already possessed—the belief that machines revealed truth more cleanly than politics, that life obeyed hidden laws, and that modern civilization might be judged by whether it preserved or degraded the biological stream from which human greatness arose.

These recollections brought me back to what the notebooks had been teaching all along: Lindbergh was best understood not by isolating him but by tracing the circles in which he moved. Each witness supplied a distinct atmosphere. Schlesinger brought Roosevelt's political world; Flynn brought the intimate anxieties of men near that world; Currie brought the aerospace and defense establishment, where missiles, satellites, Vanguard, and NASA-era rocketry joined Lindbergh's old fascination with flight to the emerging logic of space; Lundberg brought the table talk of power, journalism, and suspicion. Jim Newton brought something quieter but indispensable: the domestic and companionable Lindbergh of boats, dinners, Florida friendships, Edison's old circle, and the Ford household—the Lindbergh who could appear as a sailor, guest, friend, and neighbor, even as the contradictions of Ford, Willow Run, and the

B-24 revealed how deeply machinery, loyalty, antiwar feeling, and moral unease were tangled in him. Landolt, in turn, carried the story still farther back, into the laboratory origins of Lindbergh's mechanical imagination and the philosophical influence of Alexis Carrel.

By then, several years had passed since I first met William Jovanovich and shared with him the meager findings I had managed to extract from the notebooks—findings he later drew on to shape Lindbergh's posthumous **Autobiography of Values**, published in 1978 with Judith A. Schiff as coeditor. That book was no ordinary memoir, certainly no mere reprise of **The Spirit of St. Louis**. Drawn from nearly three thousand pages of drafts Lindbergh had left behind, it was assembled less as a chronological narrative than as a testament of principles: a self-portrait organized around the values he believed had governed his life—flight, discipline, wilderness, technology, race, heredity, war, and what he liked to call the "life stream" itself. Its strengths were unmistakable: the prose could still rise, in passages on aviation and the natural world, to that tensile clarity which had always made Lindbergh a better writer than many of his biographers. Yet the book also exposed, often more nakedly than anything published in his lifetime, the philosophical cast of mind that had long drawn him toward Alexis Carrel—the attraction to hierarchy, to biological destiny, to the suspicion that modern civilization had purchased comfort at the price of vitality. What had begun in my hands as a cryptanalytic puzzle had thus already entered, however obliquely, the published afterlife of Lindbergh's final self-accounting.

Jovanovich, for his part, urged me to keep trying to pry the lid off Lindbergh's secret notebooks. I was never paid for the work, nor did I ask to be. The challenge itself was enough to hold me, even as frustration steadily rose and the locked portions of the text seemed, at times, to retreat the harder I pressed against them.

To make further progress, I began turning away from ordinary pencil-and-paper cryptanalysis toward more explicitly mathematical methods. I made frequency counts, tracked recurring clusters, tested probable words against shifting alphabets, and looked for signs of transposition or periodic structure. At times, I treated a page almost as one treats a theorem or a coded sequence in number theory: searching for invariants, modular regularities, hidden symmetries, and those small numerical betrayals by which an apparently opaque system sometimes reveals the law of its own construction. Most such efforts failed. But failure, in work of that kind, is rarely barren; it narrows the field, eliminates false beauties, and teaches one where the real resistance lies.

One thing I uncovered was growing evidence in the notebooks that Lindbergh had come to believe Rudolf Hess was somehow behind the kidnapping. I investigated that possibility on my own and, once again, through my friend Jack Bergen—a retired full-bird colonel, West Point graduate, former Army Ranger, and later the speechwriter for Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger at the Pentagon, where he learned more than most men ever do about the Army's hidden back channels. Jack's place in that world was not merely bureaucratic. In the Reagan years, he stood close to the language of strategic defense itself, the atmosphere from which emerged the famous March 23, 1983, address in which President Ronald Reagan announced what would become the Strategic Defense Initiative, soon known everywhere as "Star Wars." Through Jack, I was able to track down Lieutenant Colonel Eugene K. Bird, the American commandant at Spandau Prison in Berlin, where Hess, by then the last remaining inmate, was being held in a solitude so prolonged that it had become almost allegorical. Bird was not an incidental custodian. Born in Lambert, Montana, he entered the United States Army in 1944, served in Europe against the Axis powers, and remained part of the American

military presence in postwar Germany. In 1964, he was appointed the United States commandant of Spandau Allied Prison, the four-power institution created after Nuremberg to hold the senior Nazi prisoners who had escaped execution. By late 1966, after Albert Speer and Baldur von Schirach were released, Hess was alone there, and Bird's official responsibility had narrowed into something historically peculiar: the supervision of a single prisoner whose silence, memories, and possible secrets continued to trouble governments long after the Third Reich had disappeared.

Over years of confinement, Bird and Hess spent hundreds of hours in conversation, and Bird came to believe that Hess's account of his 1941 flight to Scotland deserved preservation, if only because no one else was likely to hear it at such length or under such intimate circumstances. Their collaboration on a manuscript became the great scandal of Bird's career. When his superiors at the United States Mission in Berlin learned of the project in 1971, he was interrogated, placed under house arrest, and forced out of the Spandau command; the episode effectively ended his Army career. His book, published in London in 1974 as The Loneliest Man in the World, later appeared under other titles and made Bird one of the few Americans to have extracted from Hess a sustained private account of his imprisonment, his flight, and his self-justifying mythology. After Spandau, Bird remained in Germany, at times campaigned for Hess's release from what had become virtual solitary confinement, and continued to speak as a man who believed that the official handling of Hess had concealed as much as it revealed. Whether his recollections would confirm anything in Lindbergh's suspicions, I could not know, but he seemed one of the very few men alive who had stood close enough to Hess's later life to make the question worth asking.

Jack had helped me find Bird's name and position him within reach, but it was Don Penny who closed the human distance and made the interview possible. Penny was one of the gifted backstage craftsmen of modern presidential speechwriting: a writer for President Gerald Ford, a veteran of Washington's political language trade, and later a figure associated with some of the best-remembered presidential humor of the Reagan years. He was also a close friend of Eugene Bird's, and that friendship mattered more than any formal credential. Penny belonged to that curious fraternity of political craftsmen whose best lines survive even when their authors recede from view. He was credited in accounts of presidential humor, including All the President's Wits, with helping shape Ronald Reagan's celebrated answer during the 1984 debate with Walter Mondale, when Reagan defused the issue of age by saying he would not, for political purposes, exploit his opponent's "youth and inexperience." The line became one of the most memorable moments of the campaign, reported at the time as turning the age issue to Reagan's advantage and later recalled as the exchange Mondale himself considered fatal. Penny's value to me lay not simply in the anecdote but in the access his friendship made possible: Jack supplied the lead; Penny knew Bird well enough to help turn that lead into an interview. Between them, the path to Bird shifted from public-record pursuit to personal trust.

Bird told me that Lindbergh had visited Hess during one of Hess's hospitalizations, after a bleeding ulcer had taken him out of Spandau and into the British Military Hospital in Berlin. Under the ordinary prison regime, Hess's access to visitors was tightly restricted, and for many years he refused such visits on principle; but Bird said the rules could be relaxed when Hess was under hospital care, provided the four-power authorities consented. That, at least, was my understanding of how such a meeting became possible—outside the prison walls, in

a medical setting where the rigid ceremonial of Spandau briefly yielded to other considerations.

Another detail about Hess was revealing. When he came down in Scotland in May 1941, he told the British he had come to see the Duke of Hamilton—Douglas Douglas-Hamilton, the Scottish aristocrat and aviator whom Hess believed could open a path to negotiation. Hamilton was no obscure nobleman. Before the war, as the Marquess of Clydesdale, he had won international fame as the first man to fly over Mount Everest during the perilous high-altitude expedition of 1933. To Lindbergh, who measured men instinctively by feats of flight, that detail mattered. It bound Hess's strange peace mission not merely to politics and intrigue but to another of those quasi-mythic aviators whose prestige reached beyond ordinary public life.

But according to the notebooks, Hess later told Lindbergh that the Hamilton story was not the full truth. Hamilton's function, as Hess described it, was chiefly operational: to ensure that he could pass through the Duke's sector without being blown out of the sky. The man Hess said he had really hoped to reach was Baron William de Ropp, a Baltic German intermediary with deep access to the English upper class and to the loose aristocratic-political circle later known as the Cliveden Set—the name applied to the group around the Astors' great house at Cliveden, associated in the 1930s with influence, appeasement, and privileged back-channel talk. Lindbergh himself, in the years before the war, had moved close enough to that world of titled hosts, transatlantic grandees, and anti-interventionist conversation that Hess may well have assumed he would recognize the name at once.

According to the notebooks, Hess was surprisingly forthright in explaining the motive for the kidnapping and why, in his own mind, it had seemed necessary. The rationale, as Lindbergh rendered it, drew

on Otto Rank's **The Myth of the Birth of the Hero**, that strange and influential psychoanalytic study in which the births of legendary figures—Sargon, Moses, Oedipus, Perseus, Romulus, even Jesus—are shown to follow a recurring pattern. The child is born not into obscurity but under signs of distinction: royal or otherwise elevated parentage, difficulties or prohibitions surrounding conception, and then a warning before or during pregnancy—an oracle, a dream, a prophecy, an omen—that the newborn will threaten the established order, usually embodied in the father. From there comes the attempt to avert destiny: the child is marked out, exposed, surrendered to water, hidden away, or delivered into the hands of strangers, only later to return under another name and claim the greatness already prefigured at birth. What gave this old pattern its hold on Hess, if the notebooks are to be believed, was the notion that destiny announces itself not only through lineage but also through signs in the heavens—celestial configurations, astrological portents, the sense that the arrival of an extraordinary child may coincide with some visible disturbance or conjunction above. In that interpretive world, removing such a child from the ordinary domestic order was not a crime. It became, in the perverted logic of myth, a necessary act of transfer: the heroic infant must be severed from the family so that the larger design written into his birth can unfold elsewhere and under other guardians.

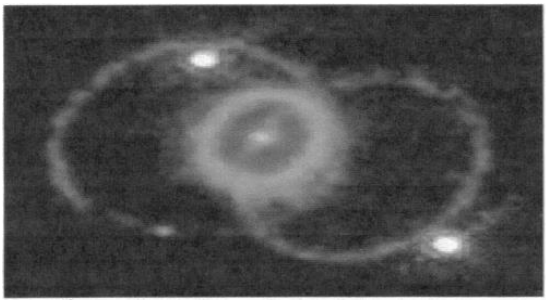
Worth asking, too, is whether Hess's kidnap scheme had anything to do with his peace mission. His flight to Scotland itself had been timed, according to later accounts, under astrological advice, with the full moon and a favorable planetary configuration lending the mission the air of a celestial appointment rather than an ordinary political gamble. That detail matters because Hess's imagination seems to have occupied the borderland where aviation, astrology, myth, and technical futurism could reinforce one another.

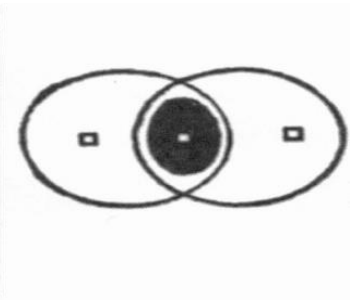
Lindbergh's secret notebooks make clear that he saw Rudolf Hess as a man overtaken by Karl Haushofer's geopolitical mysticism. Hess treated Haushofer's doctrines not as academic speculation but as destiny: the belief that Germany was rising as an air empire, mastering the skies as Britain had mastered the seas. In the notebooks, Lindbergh wrote that Hess interpreted aviation as the new instrument of world order, and that this fixation led him to imagine that Lindbergh — the American symbol of air power — could be compelled into Germany's orbit. The notebooks describe Hess's delusional conviction that abducting Lindbergh's child would force the aviator to speak for Germany's future, aligning American prestige with Haushofer's vision of an air-dominated Reich. When that fantasy collapsed, Hess redirected the same ideological fervor toward Britain. Lindbergh noted that Hess flew to Scotland believing that the "air empire" must negotiate directly with the "sea empire," carrying Haushofer's diagrams as if they were diplomatic credentials. In Lindbergh's private assessment, preserved only in the notebooks, Hess was not driven by malice but by theory — a man who mistook a professor's abstractions for destiny. Hess even envisioned Lindbergh's son as Germany's first astronaut.

Bird supplied one small but unforgettable confirmation of his lunar obsession: Hess, he said, had papered his cell with photographs of the moon obtained from Wernher von Braun, turning the last chamber of Spandau into a private observatory of longing. The German rocket movement had begun in just such a region, with lunar fantasies and moon-voyage dreams preceding the military discipline of Kummersdorf and Peenemünde; in the Reich's wider culture of occult and pseudo-scientific speculation, the moon was not merely an astronomical body but a sign, a destination, and a source of symbolic force. If Lindbergh's notebooks are right, Hess's fascination with rocket travel itself may have been hidden inside the supposed mythic

motive for taking the child. The kidnapped son of the world's most famous aviator could be imagined, in that deranged symbolic economy, not only as a hero-child severed from his household, but as an offering to the next age of flight—the age in which rockets, lunar probes, and celestial destiny would replace the Atlantic crossing as the supreme emblem of human ascent.

What fixed Lindbergh's attention, according to these pages, was the ransom-note sign itself: not merely its theatrical oddity, but its form. The documented signature on the notes consisted of two interlocking blue circles, with a red center where they crossed, and three holes punched through the paper as an identifying mark. In the notebooks, Lindbergh treated this device not as an arbitrary flourish but as a near facsimile of a celestial configuration that, he believed, had appeared in the sky on the night of the summer solstice in 1930—the night of his son's birth, June 22. To later eyes, the same geometry can seem uncannily akin to other cosmic images as well: eclipses and conjunctions, stellar rings and shock fronts, even the ringed remnant of Supernova 1987A, whose Hubble photographs revealed glowing, apparently intersecting rings around the site of the explosion. What matters is that Lindbergh read the sign as a message in astronomical code: a diagrammatic hint that the child had been marked from birth, and that the kidnappers meant him to understand the crime not only as extortion but as an act carried out under the sign of a destiny written in the heavens.





It was after following the notebooks into that region—where private grief shaded into symbolic thinking and history itself seemed to have been rewritten in the heavens—that I found myself turning for guidance to men whose lives had been spent not in myth but in intelligence, operations, and the hidden traffic of states. Two such figures, Bill Koplowitz and Richard Helms, would help me test whether any part of Lindbergh's darker counter-history touched ground beyond the page.

I came to know Bill Koplowitz through my years at Citibank. He had spent nearly thirty years in the CIA as an operations officer—part of the first generation of Jews hired by the Agency—before joining Citicorp as Director of International Global Public Affairs. Bill had known Lindbergh in Germany in the immediate aftermath of the surrender, when Lindbergh was attached to the U.S. Naval Technical Mission in Europe. He also spoke to me about one of the stranger passages Jack Schwartz and I had managed to decode from the notebooks: Lindbergh's reference to the 1947 Roswell incident. Bill said that, in the darker reaches of intelligence lore, the so-called flying saucers were sometimes explained not as extraterrestrial craft but as disc-shaped machines associated with German wartime design, carried westward through Soviet hands and used in a calculated attempt to provoke American panic on the order of Orson Welles's 1938 broadcast, *War of the Worlds*. The child-sized bodies recovered, he

added, were not space aliens at all but deformed human occupants—children with hydrocephalus, whose enlarged heads and altered proportions appeared extraterrestrial to frightened observers. I do not offer this as settled history. I record it as Bill's explanation of a notebook passage so bizarre that, once deciphered and read, it was difficult to forget.

Through Bill Koplowitz, I learned that he and Lindbergh had both been at Nordhausen in the immediate aftermath of the war as part of that same technical hunt. Nordhausen was not a casual stop. After the RAF raid on Peenemünde, V-2 production had been driven underground into the Mittelwerk complex beneath the Kohnstein Mountain near Nordhausen, where V-2 rockets, V-1 flying bombs, and other weapons were assembled in tunnels by prisoners from the Mittelbau-Dora concentration-camp system. The main V-2 assembly line lay inside that underground factory, and postwar accounts describe the American rush to remove rocket parts, papers, and personnel before the area passed into the Soviet zone. The human cost was inseparable from the technical prize: the Dora-Mittelbau system drew tens of thousands of prisoners into construction and production, and many thousands died of starvation, disease, exhaustion, beatings, executions, and evacuation marches. It was there, Koplowitz said, that Lindbergh learned of a former Nazi supply officer named Nimwegen, who had served at Peenemünde and later at Nordhausen as his kidnapped son's guardian. But by the time Lindbergh and Koplowitz were on the ground, Nimwegen had disappeared in the fog of the surrender.

The name returned, unexpectedly, at Spandau a few months later. Lindbergh describes going there not as an investigator but on a domestic errand of occupation life: he wanted papers for Valeska, his secretary and translator, so that she would not be press-ganged into

rubble-clearing work or have to fear that her home would be commandeered by American GIs.

At Spandau, he encountered Norman Schwarzkopf Sr., who was then serving as Berlin Provost Marshal, or provost general—the senior American military police authority responsible for order, custody, discipline, and policing arrangements in the occupied city. The role put Schwarzkopf Sr. in the perfect position to encounter prisoners moving through the occupation system, and the meeting startled Lindbergh for another reason as well: Schwarzkopf Sr. had earlier headed the investigation into the kidnapping as superintendent of the New Jersey State Police.

The larger shock came when Schwarzkopf showed him a prisoner in his custody: Nimwegen, arrested after the war for black-market dealing. On the surface, Nimwegen was one more operator in the debris economy of occupied Berlin. In Lindbergh's eyes, and apparently in Schwarzkopf's comment, he became something far more charged, because Schwarzkopf remarked how closely Nimwegen resembled Isidore Fisch—the elusive German-born furrier whom Hauptmann claimed had left him the ransom money before returning to Germany and dying, and whose conveniently absent figure became one of the most troubling shadows in the official case.

After Nimwegen's arrest, according to Lindbergh's account, the resemblance ceased to be merely suggestive. Lindbergh interrogated him, and Nimwegen freely admitted that he had played the Fisch role: the supposed intermediary through whom suspicion and ransom money could be directed toward Hauptmann while the deeper authorship of the kidnapping remained hidden. He also explained, in Lindbergh's rendering, the role Violet Sharp had played in the affair. Her guilty knowledge, Lindbergh believed, had become unbearable; during the kidnapping investigation, faced with the prospect of another

police interrogation, she took her own life rather than endure further questioning or reveal what she knew. Nimwegen's most important clarification concerned Hess. He identified Rudolf Hess as the hidden eminence behind the kidnapping, the figure who had stood above the operation while men like Nimwegen served ancillary purposes. Nimwegen's function, as Lindbergh understood it, was not to direct the crime but to complete its misdirection: to make Hauptmann appear to be the criminal center of a plot whose true source lay elsewhere.

Through Bill Koplowitz, I later came to know Richard Helms, and between them, my sense of Lindbergh widened beyond the notebooks alone. Helms, the former Director of Central Intelligence, had Lindbergh stories of his own. Before the war and long before the CIA, he had been a young United Press correspondent in Berlin, later remembered in Agency biographical accounts as having covered the 1936 Olympics there and interviewed Hitler after a Nuremberg rally. Helms once showed me a photograph from Berlin in which Lindbergh and Truman Smith, the U.S. military attaché in Berlin, were seated together in the back of an open touring car, with Helms himself, very young at the time, visible in the background. He also spoke of Smith's remarkable access in Germany. Smith, as the historical record makes clear, had earlier used his connection to Ernst "Putzi" Hanfstaengl to secure for himself an interview with Hitler, becoming the first American to do so. Such recollections did not merely ornament the story. They placed Lindbergh within a milieu of military attachés, correspondents, intermediaries, and intelligence-minded observers in which access itself was a form of power. Between Koplowitz and Helms there emerged a portrait of Lindbergh that could not be reduced to the solitary hero of 1927 or to the public controversialist of the prewar years. He appeared instead as a figure repeatedly drawn into circles where information was prized precisely because it was not public, and where silence was not merely temperament but discipline.

Those conversations with Helms did more than enlarge the cast of my inquiry. They reminded me that Lindbergh had moved for years in worlds where secrecy was not ornament but operating principle—among intelligence men, military attachés, diplomatic intermediaries, and others for whom concealment was less a vice than a duty. Once one had seen him in that company, the notebooks no longer looked like a private eccentricity. They began to appear as part of a larger discipline of hidden communication, half personal and half historical, through which memory, fear, and strategy had all been made to pass. To understand what Lindbergh had done on the page, one had first to recall what long traditions of secret writing had made possible.

Rounding out these insights were discussions with my former boss at RCA, Tom Ross, who had helped write one of the first major books on the Agency, *The Invisible Government*, with David Wise, and had followed it with other volumes in the same shadowed vein, including *The U-2 Affair* and *The Espionage Establishment*. Ross knew the intelligence world not merely as a journalist looking in from the curb but as a man who had spent years tracing its institutional habits, bureaucratic feints, and covert genealogies. Where Koplowitz and Helms, for reasons of temperament or training, might leave certain corners in shadow, Tom could often supply the missing texture: the name omitted, the backstory unstated, the procedural logic by which an operation that looked accidental from the outside revealed itself as entirely characteristic from within.

Tom also provided vital information on one of the more perplexing portions of the notebooks: Lindbergh's sub rosa activities with Jim Thompson in Thailand and Malaysia, and with Tom Harrisson in the Philippines and Indonesia. According to this strand of the account, after a White House dinner, Lindbergh met privately with President Kennedy, who suggested his involvement with Thompson, a CIA

operative in Thailand operating under the cover of a silk producer. That connection led, in Lindbergh's telling, to several hair-raising adventures during the Vietnam War, when he joined in efforts against insurgencies in northern Thailand, the Cameron Highlands, and parts of Mindanao in the Philippines. Lindbergh's public role as a conservationist supplied useful cover for these excursions, allowing journeys presented as natural history or preservation expeditions to carry a second, hidden purpose.

Edgar Needham's experience belonged to the same unsettling pattern, and his accusation did not arise in the abstract. Needham had traveled with Lindbergh as a journalist for *Esquire*, accompanying him on a journey to visit several primitive tribes for the piece that appeared in the March 1971 issue as "Travels with Charlie." What began, at least outwardly, as one of those postwar travel-and-observation assignments in which anthropology, celebrity, and literary journalism comfortably overlapped soon struck Needham as something more curious. Lindbergh moved too easily through difficult country, seemed to know too much about routes, local intermediaries, and political tensions, and carried himself with the controlled watchfulness of a man whose attention was divided between the ostensible subject of the expedition and some second, unstated purpose. The tribal visits, Needham later suggested, had the appearance of reportage and conservation, but the trip's real logic seemed to lie elsewhere: in contacts made, questions asked, and silences carefully preserved. By the end of the journey, Needham had formed the suspicion he would eventually put to Lindbergh directly—that he was serving, in effect if not in title, as a CIA operative under the respectable cloak of ethnographic inquiry and conservation. Needham did not put the matter delicately. Lindbergh's reaction, as Needham recalled it, was neither confession nor outright denial. He stiffened, went very still, and answered with the chilly precision of a man who regarded the question itself as an intrusion into

forbidden territory. What he finally said was evasive but memorable: that a citizen could sometimes serve his country without ever belonging to an agency, and that useful work did not become less honorable because it could not be acknowledged. Needham took the answer as confirmation of a kind, though not the kind that could ever be quoted as proof.

It was around this point that chance again intervened. The Robert de Ropp who was about to enter my story was none other than the son of Baron William de Ropp, the Baltic German intermediary Hess had named to Lindbergh as the man he intended to meet during his peace mission in 1941. I met him wholly by accident at my uncle's home, without at first suspecting that this quiet, searching man belonged by blood to one of the more shadowed figures already moving through Lindbergh's counter-history. When I asked him about that world, de Ropp confirmed that Lindbergh had indeed associated with his father and with others in the circle later called the Cliveden Set.

The phrase referred less to a formal organization than to the influential aristocratic and political company gathered in the 1930s around Cliveden, the Astors' great country house in Buckinghamshire. Among the figures moving near that world was Sir Oswald Mosley, the leader of the British Union of Fascists, whose attempted march through the heavily Jewish East End of London was stopped at the Battle of Cable Street in 1936. De Ropp's confirmation mattered because it moved the Cliveden connection out of the notebooks' shadowy implication and into living recollection.

De Ropp had trained as a biochemist and had worked on cancer, mental illness, and behavior-altering drugs at Lederle Laboratories before withdrawing from laboratory life to a ranch in the remote Glen Ellen country of Sonoma County, where my uncle had retired. There, he established a small learning community oriented toward the

disciplines of body, mind, and spirit, with a strongly back-to-the-land, organic-gardening cast. His books *Drugs and the Mind* and *The Master Game* treated altered consciousness not as bohemian ornament but as a discipline to be understood soberly and practiced, if at all, with care.

When I met him, he told me he was gathering material for a biography of Alexis Carrel. He had also met with Lindbergh on that errand, who he said, was an ideal witness, because the two men had done more than collaborate on the glass perfusion pump. They had formed something closer to a discipleship, with Lindbergh in the role of mechanical adept and Carrel that of the severe master-intelligence whose influence reached beyond surgery into questions of civilization, hierarchy, and the future of man.

Dr.de Ropp had visited Lindbergh at Scott's Cove in the hope of gathering material on Carrel, but the visit yielded something richer and more unexpected: he learned even more about Lindbergh himself, about the discipline, secrecy, biological imagination, and inward severity that Carrel had helped intensify. Much of what de Ropp shared with me came from that encounter, and it helped me see the Carrel relationship not merely as a collaboration in medical engineering, but as one of the deep formative chambers of Lindbergh's mind.

De Ropp encountered Lindbergh a second time in a setting that could hardly have been more different, yet that revealed another side of the same man. During the 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill, when crude from Union Oil's offshore Platform A fouled the Channel and blackened beaches along the coast, volunteers and scientists struggled to rescue oiled seabirds and marine animals. Thousands of birds died, along with fish, seals, dolphins, and other creatures, and emergency treatment stations were improvised for the tarred survivors. De Ropp told me that he and Lindbergh found themselves drawn into that work, trying to save birds and marine animals whose bodies had been made

helpless by oil. For de Ropp, the encounter completed a strange arc. At Scott's Cove, he had seen Lindbergh as Carrel's witness, absorbed in biology, discipline, and the hidden mechanics of life; at Santa Barbara, he saw the same biological seriousness translated into action, no longer in the laboratory or in metaphysical speculation, but on a fouled shore among damaged creatures that had to be handled, cleaned, warmed, and, if possible, kept alive.

The Santa Barbara spill was not a departure from de Ropp's California setting but one of its defining public shocks. It showed, with brutal clarity, what the state's romance of coastline, wilderness, experiment, and escape had always risked becoming when modern industry pressed too hard against the natural world. From that fouled shore, the line of association led me back north to the more settled California world in which I had first encountered de Ropp.

His Glen Ellen life had its own genealogy. Glen Ellen was not Big Sur, but in the imaginative geography of postwar California the two places belonged to a related migration: the movement of writers, seekers, refugees from academic and commercial life, and half-monastic experimenters toward the wooded margins of the state. Henry Miller's Big Sur had already become part of that myth—a proof, or at least a persuasive rumor, that a man could step outside ordinary success, cultivate obscurity, and found a life around consciousness, discipline, art, and refusal. De Ropp's ranch belonged to the same moral universe.

De Ropp's accidental guidance had led me into two adjoining chambers of Lindbergh's world: Cliveden, through Baron de Ropp's connection to Hess and the appeasement circles of the English upper class, and Carrel, through his own projected biography of the surgeon-philosopher who had shaped Lindbergh so deeply.

My uncle told me, almost in passing, that Robert de Ropp's kayak had overturned in the Pacific. The words drifted across the room with the quiet finality of a door closing, and for a moment I simply sat there, feeling the weight of all the questions I had meant to ask him—questions about discipline, about consciousness, about the strange, bright edge of human possibility he spent his life exploring.

They rose in me like startled birds: unfinished inquiries, half-formed conversations, the kind of questions one saves for later because one assumes there will always be a later. I realized, with a kind of slow, inward astonishment, that the ocean had taken not only the man but the chance to understand him more fully.

And yet the loss did more than leave me with those startled-bird questions beating against the inside of my mind; it altered the very trajectory of what followed and changed its character. Until then, the inquiry had moved through military prisons, intelligence men, rocket sites, and the long afterlife of the kidnapping itself.

What came next arrived by a more ordinary route, though in this story ordinary routes had a way of opening onto unexpected chambers: the world of corporate public affairs. I had been invited to a presentation at the giant public relations firm, Burson Marsteller, where my old friend Jim Cunningham was a managing director.

As head of the East-West Alliance, I had often shepherded delegations of Chinese officials through the emblematic corridors of American industry—past the bronze doors of the New York Stock Exchange, where the trading floor seemed to pulse with its own weather system, and out across the vast humming expanse of the Niagara Power Plant, whose turbines offered a kind of industrial counterpoint to the officials' quiet, appraising conversations. These visits were never merely ceremonial; they were small diplomatic

crossings, moments in which two economic cultures tried to understand one another through the tangible machinery of national power. I had worked closely with Jim Cunningham on many of these endeavors, and over the years we had developed the kind of professional shorthand that comes only from shared undertakings.

By 2003, China's public-relations landscape was changing at a speed that startled even seasoned observers. Burson-Marsteller—already one of the most active Western firms in the Chinese mainland—managed crises for multinational clients, coordinated government relations, and helped foreign companies navigate the bureaucratic and cultural complexities of market entry. The Chinese PR industry was expanding double-digit percentages annually, with more than 2,000 firms operating across the mainland, and Burson was positioned at the center of that growth.

In this context, Jim asked me to attend a presentation on Burson's activities in China. He said it with the same understated seriousness he used when something mattered. The implication was clear: the work we had been doing—those delegations, those carefully curated encounters between Chinese officials and American institutions—was now part of a larger, more intricate architecture of communication and influence. Burson's China operations were no longer peripheral; they were becoming a strategic pillar of how global companies, governments, and public institutions spoke to one another across the Pacific. Jim wanted me to see that architecture for myself, to understand how our earlier efforts fit into the widening frame.

At that presentation, Jim introduced me to Chris Komissarjevsky, Burson's chief executive officer. When I mentioned that I had seen the Komisarjevsky name in Lindbergh's notebooks, Chris immediately supplied the missing human connection: he had been a grammar-

school classmate of Reeve Lindbergh's, and his mother, Ernestine Stodelle, had been a very close friend of Anne Morrow Lindbergh.

Stodelle belonged to the intimate artistic circle around Anne—one of the dancers, writers, and cultivated friends through whom Anne's private life extended beyond the public Lindbergh legend. Chris was not merely an incidental figure in the story. He was the son of Theodore Komisarjevsky and Ernestine Stodelle, and thus carried into the Lindbergh circle a family name already heavy with Russian theatrical history.

The Komisarjevskys were not a minor theatrical family. Theodore—born Fyodor Fyodorovich Komissarzhevsky—was the son of Fyodor Petrovich Komissarzhevsky, a celebrated tenor of the Imperial Opera in Saint Petersburg, a teacher of voice and stagecraft, and one of the figures through whom Russian opera passed into modern theatrical consciousness. Among Fyodor Petrovich's pupils was the young Konstantin Stanislavsky, who had first hoped to become a singer before becoming the great theorist and reformer of acting. Theodore's elder half-sister, Vera Komissarzhevskaya, was herself one of the most admired actresses of the Russian stage, celebrated for her emotional intensity and later remembered as a bridge between the old imperial theatre and the experimental energies that helped transform Russian drama before the Revolution. Theodore inherited that atmosphere almost as a birthright. Trained partly as an architect, he turned to the stage, directed in his sister's theatre, founded studios and companies of his own, worked in Moscow before the Revolution, and after emigration carried Russian ideas of ensemble, design, atmosphere, and disciplined rehearsal into London, where his productions of Chekhov and Shakespeare made him one of the more vivid European theatrical figures of his generation.

Seen against that background, Stodelle's importance was not merely social. A dancer, teacher, and writer on dance, she had married into a lineage in which performance was treated as vocation, discipline, and almost metaphysical inheritance. Through her and through Chris's recollection, the notebooks' stray name acquired another living context, joining Lindbergh's family world not only to Anne's circle of art, friendship, and cultivated seriousness, but also to one of the great theatrical families of Russia.

The recollections Chris Komisarjevsky offered of a childhood lived at the edge of the Lindbergh world were eye-opening. The distant, almost mythic outlines of the family became human again—fallible, tender, complicated—and I found myself relying on his vantage point the way one relies on a lantern in a dim corridor. What he remembered, and the quiet way he remembered it, opened doors I could not have opened alone.

In that same year, 2003, two disclosures changed the scale of my Lindbergh inquiry almost overnight. One was Becky Bacha's *New York Times* article about Nazi shadows behind the kidnapping, including the template that seemed to implicate German or Nazi channels. The other was the separate report that Lindbergh had fathered children in Germany. Soon after those stories began circulating, I heard from Michael Schneider, Hilda Prussein's grandson.

Hilda used to brag about Michael's virtuosity as a saxophonist, with the proprietary delight of a grandmother who believed talent should be announced before modesty could interfere. She spoke of his music as though it were not merely skill but temperament: quick, inventive, disciplined, and unmistakably his own. I knew Michael in another capacity, as a New York City news cameraman and videographer who had worked in and around the city's television-news

world, including ABC News in New York and other local news operations. He had, in fact, been the man behind the camera when Josh Howell—later the chief executive of Carl Byoir—sat behind the anchor's desk at ABC News in New York. By the time he contacted me about the Lindbergh stories, Michael had followed the notebooks' adventures for years through his grandmother's steady reports.

Because Michael had learned of Lindbergh's secret wives and of the Nazi links to the kidnapping incrementally, through what Hilda had told him over the years about the material I was uncovering in the notebooks, the public announcements did not strike him as wholly new. But when the news finally broke, accompanied by renewed attention to the Nazi material reported in the press, he posted on the website Cronaca what Hilda had told him about my role in deciphering the notebooks. Without my knowing it, he described my efforts and included my name and email address. The effect was immediate: I was suddenly swamped by telephone calls and emails from curious Lindbergh watchers eager to know more.

Among those who reached me was John Nance, who had accompanied Lindbergh to the Philippines and later wrote *The Gentle Tasaday: A Stone Age People in the Philippine Rain Forest*, published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich with a foreword by Charles A. Lindbergh. Nance's book recounted the 1971 encounter with the Tasaday of Mindanao, a small forest people of the Lake Sebu region who were then presented to the world as an astonishing anthropological survival: cave-dwellers living in the highland rain forest, using stone and wooden tools, subsisting on wild yams, palm pith, fruits, grubs, tadpoles, frogs, fish, and crabs, and possessing, according to the early reports, no weapons, no agriculture, and no vocabulary of war. Their first public image was almost Edenic. They seemed to arrive not merely from another place, but from another age.

That image was inseparable from the politics and spectacle of the early 1970s. Manuel Elizalde, head of PANAMIN, the Philippine agency for national minorities under Ferdinand Marcos, controlled access to the Tasaday and helped turn them into an international sensation. Journalists, photographers, anthropologists, celebrities, conservationists, and curiosity-seekers were drawn toward the story. *National Geographic* gave the Tasaday immense visibility, and the contrast between helicopter arrival and forest seclusion—the Stone Age meeting the space age—became part of the myth almost at once. Lindbergh's interest was therefore unsurprising. The Tasaday seemed to stand at the exact crossing where several of his late preoccupations met: primitive survival, endangered landscapes, anthropology, and the moral question of whether contact with modern civilization protects or destroys what it discovers.

The story later became far more troubled. After Marcos's fall, visitors returned to the area and found people wearing ordinary clothing and using modern tools, and critics charged that the original "Stone Age" presentation had been staged or exaggerated for political and publicity purposes. Others defended the Tasaday as a real indigenous community whose isolation had been misunderstood, romanticized, or manipulated by outsiders. Linguistic evidence suggested a distinct Tasaday speech related to neighboring Manobo languages, while later assessments left the matter suspended between authenticity and construction. The most responsible conclusion seemed to me neither simple belief nor simple debunking: the Tasaday were real people, but the image made of them in the 1970s belonged as much to media hunger, Marcos-era politics, and Western longing for untouched origins as to anthropology itself.

Lindbergh mentions the Tasaday in the notebooks, but Nance gave me what the notebooks could not: the texture of the expedition itself.

He described the first encounters, the role of helicopters and official intermediaries, the awkward collision between rainforest seclusion and modern publicity, and the complicated question of protection once the Tasaday had been made visible to the outside world. From him, I learned that Lindbergh's Philippine journeys were not simply picturesque conservation episodes. They belonged to a larger postwar drama in which tribal encounter, environmental concern, media fascination, and political management were inseparably mixed.

Another of the many callers who reached me after Schneider's Cronaca posting was a woman named Carol Hyman, a close friend of Reeve Lindbergh. Her name did not resonate with me at the time, but I later learned that she had helped edit *Against Wind and Tide*, the final collection of Anne Morrow Lindbergh's letters and journals, left unpublished at Anne's death and eventually brought into print with Reeve's introduction. The book gathers writings from 1947 to 1986, carrying Anne from the aftermath of the war through the long middle and late years of marriage, motherhood, authorship, bereavement, aging, and spiritual reckoning.

It is a wonderful book and wonderfully edited: not merely a salvage operation from papers left behind, but a work of tact, proportion, and listening. Anne's late diaries are luminous because they do not simplify her. They preserve the woman who wrote *Gift from the Sea*, still capable of distilling ordinary experience into meditative clarity, but they also admit the more difficult Anne: lonely, jealous, spiritually hungry, sometimes bewildered by Charles's absences, sometimes strengthened by solitude, always trying to turn experience into meaning. The editorial achievement lies in allowing those voices to coexist without flattening them into a single moral or domestic lesson.

Against Wind and Tide is especially powerful because it completes the arc begun in the earlier published diaries. The youthful aviator, bride, and witness to catastrophe becomes, by the end, a writer looking back across nearly a century with an intelligence sharpened by sorrow rather than diminished by it. The entries move from household detail to metaphysical pressure with extraordinary ease: children, illness, war, politics, literary work, consolation letters, conversations with famous friends, and the slow labor of making peace with time. The editing has the rare virtue of restraint. It gives the reader enough context to follow the life, enough continuity to feel its weather, and enough silence to sense what could not be said outright.

That was why Hyman's call came to seem more significant in retrospect. At first, she was only one more voice drawn toward the Lindbergh story by Schneider's unexpected public posting. Later, I understood that she stood near another form of hidden record: Anne's own late testimony, edited with such patience and delicacy that it became not gossip, not vindication, and not confession in any crude sense, but a final self-portrait assembled from fragments. In a story already crowded with coded notebooks, withheld archives, and private witness, *Against Wind and Tide* offered a different counterpoint: the voice of Anne Lindbergh preserved not by cipher, but by literary judgment, filial care, and editorial grace.

Over the course of many years, my inquiry had widened into people, households, institutions, and rumor; now it had to turn back to the page, where the notebooks required two pursuits at once: outward toward memory and corroboration, inward toward the machinery of concealment.

Seen in that double light, the first notebooks yielded to relatively elementary forms of concealment: simple substitutions, shifted alphabets, transparent disguises of the sort an intelligent amateur

might adopt in haste. But the method did not remain stable. As the sequence continued, the encryptions grew denser, more various, and markedly less forgiving. Lindbergh seemed to delight in changing systems just as one began to understand the previous one, as though constancy itself were a danger.

By the fourth and fifth notebooks, he had moved into more intricate substitutions in which a single letter might assume several masks and certain names or recurring terms appeared to be hidden behind special signs. This produced the peculiar sensation that the text was forever rearranging its own surface. One could not simply crack it once and proceed. One had to keep adjusting, keep mistrusting, keep learning the preferences of a mind determined not to leave a single clear trail.

At times, Lindbergh complicated matters further by nesting one device inside another—abbreviations hidden inside substitutions, names fractured into partial anagrams, clues that appeared to promise closure only to open into a second enclosure behind the first. Reading such pages was like entering a corridor lined with doors, each unlocked only to reveal another locked room.

Some portions were written in archaic German shorthand so compressed and specialized that I could not manage them on my own. I searched New York for someone who could still read that vanishing script and eventually found help from a German émigré, Bea Overst, long retired from the law firm Weil, Gotshall and Manges. Her training belonged to an older Europe. Without that intervention, several passages would have remained sealed to me, not by theory but by penmanship and time.

The most consequential sections, however, seemed to be written in a far stranger script: a hybrid field of Roman and Greek letters, occult-

looking symbols, and private marks whose logic would not yield. It resembled less a practical diary hand than the ritual debris of some forgotten order. Whether Lindbergh had borrowed the system whole, adapted it from older sources, or learned it through one of the European channels that later entered his life, I could not then determine. I knew only that these pages resisted every ordinary attack.

That resistance altered the timetable of everything. The book I thought I might write about logic and cryptography receded into postponement, then into something like exile. Years passed, and the more recalcitrant sections yielded only in fragments despite repeated assaults, fresh eyes, and the growing power of machines. By the mid-1990s, I had accumulated enough partial openings to glimpse the shape of the locked chamber, but not yet enough to throw it fully open. Until then, the notebooks remained divided between what I could read and what I could only circle warily, like a sealed wing in a deserted house.

When the scripts finally began to yield, the victory proved incomplete: plain language did not always produce plain reference. A recovered sentence might still withhold its actors, and the closer I came to Lindbergh's meaning, the more I found myself entering the social world arranged behind the disguises.

Those disguises were not limited to the script. Lindbergh also obscured persons, places, and relationships through aliases, altered spellings, scrambled initials, and private substitutions intelligible only within the notebook world itself. A name would appear in one form in a margin, another in the body of the text, and a third under numerical disguise. Even after the sentence was read, the referent might remain hidden.

Image clearly mattered to him, and these disguises helped him cast a protective shadow over anything that threatened it. He feared

scandal, feared collision between compartments of life that he had spent years keeping separate, and so even where the notebooks seem confessional, they remain strategically incomplete. One is shown enough to feel the pressure of disclosure, but not always enough to fully dissolve the mask.

To further obscure the people around him, he would scramble names, exchange one letter for another according to private habits, substitute foreign characters, and occasionally reduce a word to a numerical residue whose meaning depended on a separate chain of inference. Such methods can sound baroque when summarized. On the page, they were worse: they made interpretation feel less like reading than like an anatomical reconstruction from scattered bones.

Following those masks backward, I began to suspect that Lindbergh’s habits of disguise had origins older than fame, politics, or catastrophe. What I had first treated as a technique now looked more like an inheritance: a family language learned early, under pressure, and never fully abandoned.

Once a significant portion had been brought back into plain language, I came upon a passage that felt less like explanation than self-indictment. Lindbergh wrote that his mother had accustomed him early to secret writing, encoding letters during the collapse of family relations and later sending him messages in concealed form when he was away. In time, he said, the habit became his own. Why keep such notebooks at all, if they had to be hidden? Because he could not help it. The act of recording preceded the act of concealment; secrecy was not the purpose of the writing, only its condition.

From that confession, the notebooks turn toward the wound that appears to organize everything that follows: aviation, fame, and the kidnapping of Lindbergh’s son. Whether or not every later inference

can be sustained, the catastrophe clearly became the fixed center of his retrospective imagination. Around it, memory gathered symbols, suspicions, fragments of later knowledge, and attempts—some lucid, some fevered—to force the event into meaning.

The kidnapping was not, in his account, a grief that diminished with time. It remained active, recurring, interpretive—a disaster that seemed to cast explanatory shadows over everything that came after. Again and again, he returned to one detail as though it contained a key the investigation had failed to turn: the strange device drawn upon the ransom notes, a mark at once theatrical and obscure, too deliberate to dismiss and too enigmatic to absorb into ordinary police logic.

The trail, therefore, narrowed to the small sign that had haunted the kidnapping from the beginning. To investigators, it was an identifying mark. To Lindbergh, it became something more troubling: a symbol whose oddity seemed to ask for another language of interpretation. If the crime had wounded him in history, the emblem wounded him in meaning. In 1977, Alonzo Church—a former Princeton neighbor of the Lindberghs and one of the century's great logicians—spoke to me about his own early curiosity about that emblem. To Church, the mark was clear. It was a drawing of something he had seen through the telescope at Halstead Observatory on the summer solstice of 1930, the very day Charles Lindbergh Jr. was born. Lindbergh saw it too, Church said, and so did Corliss Lamont, who later reported the episode to me from his own memory of that strange astronomical night. Whether the mark survives as evidence, symbol, or grief’s terrible act of recognition is another question. But for Church it was not merely an odd identifying device on a ransom note. It was a sign copied from the heavens.

Church said that several interpretations were entertained. At first, the figure could be taken for something almost mathematical:

intersecting forms, a diagrammatic overlap, the sort of sign a formal mind instinctively tries to reduce to structure. But Jung, according to Church, was drawn elsewhere. He treated the mark not as a logical diagram but as an archaic sign—a charged image, perhaps even a rune or wonder-sign, carrying less information than psychic force. He was said to have connected it, however speculatively, with older Germanic symbolic traditions and with celestial or portent-like imagery that would have seemed wildly irrelevant to the police and yet entirely natural within his own symbolic universe.

For all its improbability, that line of thought exerted a strange fascination. Jung's symbolic method did not first ask who had written the note or how it had traveled. It asked what imaginative pattern the sign belonged to, what older narrative it might unconsciously echo. Such an approach was bound to irritate investigators and grief-stricken parents alike. Yet it offered something the official inquiry could not: the possibility that the emblem was not a random ornament but part of a mythic vocabulary the crime itself had unconsciously imitated.

The mythic pattern most relevant here was the one Jung's circle knew well from Otto Rank and related studies of the hero legend: the child marked out by signs, born under a portent, set apart from ordinary domestic life, and violently separated from the parents so that destiny—sacred, political, or catastrophic—may take hold.

In the myth of the hero's birth, the child's arrival is often heralded by a significant celestial event or heavenly sign; the most familiar Christian example is the Star of Bethlehem, which announces the birth of Jesus to those able to read the sky. Rank's pattern gathers many such heroic births into one symbolic family: Sargon exposed in a basket, Moses hidden among the reeds and drawn from the water, Oedipus abandoned because of an oracle, Perseus set adrift with his mother, Romulus and Remus cast out before founding Rome, and Arthur

surrounded by secrecy, prophecy, and disputed parentage. To invoke such material in connection with an actual kidnapping was, understandably, infuriating to anyone concerned with evidence. It risked turning a crime into allegory. And yet Lindbergh seems never to have forgotten that someone, for some reason, had chosen to place upon the note a sign that begged to be read as more than mere handwriting.

Whether Carl Jung was illuminating anything real or merely imposing an archetype upon trauma is impossible to say. What matters for this narrative is that the symbol opened, for Lindbergh and for at least some of those around him, a second interpretive track running beside the official one: not the hunt for a culprit alone, but the suspicion that the kidnapping had been staged within a field of meanings larger than the police were prepared to recognize. From that symbolic reading, the notebooks proceed into darker territory.

Nor did the idea remain confined to the notebooks. Some suspicions travel without ever becoming facts, passing through conversation, rumor, scholarship, and literary friendship until they acquire a second life in the imagination. In New York circles especially, where private information often moved by indirection, the Lindbergh material seemed capable of such transmission.

There had been other books, more narrowly focused, that imagined variants of the same possibility. Andrew Coburn's **Birthright** speculated that the kidnapped Lindbergh child had survived and grown up in another family, while John Vernon's **Lindbergh's Son** turned the question of hidden identity into a darker, more labyrinthine fiction. But it was Philip Roth's **The Plot Against America** that made the big splash. In Roth's novel, Lindbergh's public stance is shadowed by the suggestion of private coercion. I do not cite Roth as evidence. A novelist's invention proves nothing. Yet the resemblance was

unsettling enough to remind me how tenaciously certain suspicions had entered the cultural imagination, attaching themselves to Lindbergh like a second, unofficial biography.

Roth's book, in other words, did not arrive from the ether. Jack Schwartz shared many of these emerging findings not only with me but with his sister Judith as well. In 1983, Judith Schwartz Dunford married Alfred Kazin, the distinguished literary critic and memoirist, author of **On Native Grounds** and **A Walker in the City,** and one of the defining New York intellectuals of his generation. Kazin carried his own small cache of Lindbergh stories, relics from his long collaboration at the *New Republic* with John Chamberlin, the writer who moved in Lindbergh's inner circle and whose household—Ernestine Stodelle and her son, Chris Komisarjevsky—formed a quiet annex to that world.

Among Kazin's close literary friends was Philip Roth. Sometime in the mid-1990s, over dinner at a Chinese restaurant on the Upper West Side, Kazin mentioned Roth's interest in the Lindbergh material and asked whether I would object if Philip used some of what Jack and I had uncovered in fiction. I did not object. I volunteered my own experience with Schlesinger at the Hyde Park library, where we searched for traces of Roosevelt's dinner with Charles and Anne Lindbergh, and Roth later drew on Schlesinger's writings about the period as inspiration for the novel. Public accounts of **The Plot Against America** say that Roth's central counterfactual began when, while reading Arthur Schlesinger Jr.'s autobiography, he came upon a sentence noting that some Republican isolationists had wanted to run Lindbergh for president in 1940, and he wrote in the margin, "What if they had?"

When the novel appeared, I admired its imaginative force while feeling, not without regret, that its portrait of Lindbergh followed a darker line than the one the notebooks had led me to trace.

My friend, the author Earl Shorris, indulged a private theory of literary leakage—that some rumor of the notebooks' contents had traveled through New York conversation, through critics and friends, until it resurfaced years later as fiction. Shorris's editor, Starling Lawrence, expressed a similar view. I clarified matters when I told them of my meetings with Kazin and later with Roth at his apartment on West 79th Street and over lunch with both men at Barney Greengrass's restaurant.

What mattered more was the fact of convergence: different minds, moving in different genres, circling the same dark possibility that the public narrative of Lindbergh's politics concealed some coercive pressure never fully named.

Yet literary convergence is not testimony. A novelist may turn uncertainty into design, but in the hidden record, the darker possibility appears not as invention but as conviction borne under strain. Lindbergh repeatedly suggests that the accepted story of his son's death concealed a more complex sequence of events, entangled with wartime intelligence, German power, and coercive pressure directed at him and Anne. I cannot present those suggestions as verified history. I can only report the force with which they appear in the notebooks.

When I told my friend and fellow speechwriter Joseph Persico what I had told Philip Roth about my Schlesinger encounter at Hyde Park, Joe said he had heard similar stories. He had served as Nelson Rockefeller's principal speechwriter and later became one of the most accomplished narrative historians of his generation, author of widely admired works such as **Piercing the Reich, Nuremberg: Infamy on**

Trial, Roosevelt's Secret War, Eleventh Month, Eleventh Day, Eleventh Hour, and the Rockefeller memoir and biography that helped define the public record of that family. As we shared stories at Romeo Salta's in New York City or at his home in Guilderland, New York, Joe said he too had encountered versions of the Astor-Donovan story: that Vincent Astor's private intercepts and William J. "Wild Bill" Donovan's independent intelligence channels had produced the same terrifying possibility, namely that German agents had kidnapped Lindbergh's son and that the child's fate had become a form of pressure on Charles and Anne. Joe then added another, even more specific rumor from his own research. While working on **Piercing the Reich**, he had come across stories that Lindbergh's son had been held at Peenemünde and that Lindbergh had once tried to go and retrieve him. Jack Schwartz had found that same astonishing nugget in the notebooks, though we both had assumed it to be no more than Lindbergh's fantasy. Suddenly, I had corroboration—not proof, certainly, but corroboration—from a first-rate historian who had encountered a version of the same rumor entirely apart from the notebooks. Joe also told me that, while researching the Pacific war, he had independently run across the claim that the Australian cryptographer Eric Nave had decrypted a Japanese intercept and sent word through British channels before Pearl Harbor, only to have that warning go unheeded. Lindbergh reported the same thing in his notebooks, having met Nave in General MacArthur's headquarters in Brisbane, Australia, during his wartime passage through the Pacific.

That setting mattered. In 1944, Lindbergh had gone to the South Pacific as a civilian technical representative, first in connection with the Corsair and then with the P-38, teaching pilots how to stretch range through fuel management and flying combat missions himself in the islands around New Guinea, New Britain, New Ireland, and the wider Southwest Pacific theater. Though officially outside uniform

command, he entered the practical world of MacArthur's war: Brisbane headquarters, forward airstrips, fighter groups, long over-water missions, and the dangerous arithmetic of fuel, distance, and Japanese air power.

Here again, I did not take the convergence as settled history. But the fact that Joe, working from wholly separate materials, had stumbled onto claims that closely resembled material in the notebooks gave me pause. It suggested that not everything Lindbergh had written off in cipher as impossible belonged simply to the theater of a grieving or overdriven mind.

Joe's interest soon led to another approach. His agent, Clyde Taylor, telephoned, hoping the notebooks might be turned into a book. The idea was tempting but premature. At that point, I had decrypted only about seventy of the 332 notebooks, far too few to reduce the material to narrative form responsibly. The mass of what remained unread was not incidental background; it was the body of the thing itself. Until much more of it had yielded, any book would have been less an account of Lindbergh's hidden record than a conjecture built around its first openings.

Taylor's call forced the question I had been avoiding: when did deciphered fragments become a book? Not yet. I had enough to see that the notebooks were moving beyond the kidnapping as a police case toward Hess, Peenemünde, back-channel intelligence, and Lindbergh's hope that the official story of his son's fate was not final. But I did not yet have enough to write responsibly.

The notebooks repeatedly return to the child's fate. Lindbergh advances an alternative reconstruction of the crime, one that diverges sharply from the official prosecution of Hauptmann and reconsiders several peripheral figures who have long troubled readers of the case.

I present this as Lindbergh's reconstruction, not as an established fact. Among the figures he reexamines are Isidor Fisch and Violet Sharp, names that have lingered at the edges of the record like fragments from a story never fully told. He also mentions his former caretaker, Charlie Schippell; Gustav Guellich, the spy who spirited Goddard's research to Peenemunde; and John Knoll, whose fingerprints appeared on a package buried in the backyard of a woman in Summit, New Jersey, containing nearly a third of the ransom money. The woman, he added, was married to a successful surgeon and had hired a gardener to plant trees and rose bushes; the money was found quite by accident, and thanks to J. Edgar Hoover, none of this made the newspapers.

Years later, the discovery of a German-language note in the New Jersey State Police archive gave this Summit detail a peculiar external echo. Reported in 2003 after archivist Mark Falzini found it on a wooden board stored among old case materials, the penciled note, in German, stated that its writer had been one of the kidnappers, not Bruno Richard Hauptmann, and added that some of the ransom money had been buried in Summit. More disturbing still, the holes in the board were said to align with the distinctive three-hole pattern punched into the ransom notes, suggesting that the board may have served as the template for the kidnapper's signature mark. I do not treat the note as proof; confessions and false leads filled whole cabinets in the Lindbergh case. But its conjunction of German language, Summit, buried ransom money, and the physical pattern of the ransom-note holes makes it difficult to dismiss as ordinary crank correspondence. Schippel, Guellich, Knoll, and Nimwegen (masquerading as Fisch) all belonged to the Friends of the New Germany, the organization Hess established and directed from Hamburg in the years before Hitler's rise to power.

In Lindbergh's version, however, Hess stood behind the kidnapping not as a distant ideological inspiration but as the man who oversaw it through the Friends of New Germany, the American pro-Nazi organization whose groundwork had been laid to forge ties between German immigrants and the Nazi movement in Berlin. What the public record shows as a chain of immigrant nationalist and pro-Hitler associations, Lindbergh's notebook recasts as an operational channel through which Hess could reach German-American intermediaries while remaining hidden behind ordinary ethnic, political, and fraternal forms.

In Lindbergh's account, Fisch becomes less of a shadowy accessory and more of a hidden organizer, while Hauptmann appears as the man history found convenient to isolate. The prose here is cold, exacting, and notably less mythic than the passages on symbols and archetypes. It has the quality of a private brief assembled long after the trial, not to persuade a court but to persuade the self that the world one has endured still possesses some intelligible shape. Sharp's suicide, which belongs to the historical record, acquires in the notebooks a less sinister weight. Lindbergh says she was Gustav Guellich's girlfriend.

These passages gain their force not because they resolve the case beyond dispute, but because they are written under the pressure of someone who believed resolution had at last become imaginable. Lindbergh's gift for exact detail, remembered conversation, and mechanical circumstance gives even his most doubtful reconstructions a disturbing vitality. If journalism is a first draft of history, these notebooks aspire to something stranger: a late private testimony offered against the settled shape of public memory. After enough pages had accumulated and been decrypted, they seemed less like private notes than like evidence set aside for a future hearing.

In that light, I found it suggestive that every notebook bore, in its own cipher, the same title: **Anecdota.** The word does not mean anecdotes but unpublished works, and it carries the ghost of Procopius's posthumous **Secret History,** or **Anecdota**, the scandalous counter-history of the reign of Emperor Justinian and Empress Theodora. Procopius had written official histories of Justinian's wars and buildings, but in the Secret History he preserved the hidden version: Justinian as cruel, corrupt, and almost demonic; Theodora as ruthless and sexually notorious; and the imperial court as a world of fraud, tyranny, greed, and moral degradation. It was a history that could not safely be published while its subjects lived. Whether Lindbergh had Procopius consciously in mind, I cannot know. But the analogy is difficult to resist. These notebooks, too, seem less a replacement for history than an argument conducted in its margins—a private supplement to the official record, composed for some later age when what could not be said openly might at last be read.

The secret notebooks clarify some incidents and merely touch on others, but even the briefest entries tend to loom in the mind. Lindbergh, one feels, understood that publication during his lifetime would have stripped the gloss from more than one reputation, including his own. The notebooks move among confession, memorandum, remembered dialogue, engineering notation, private gossip, self-rebuke, and sudden flashes of moral reflection. They reveal a man still struggling to understand the cost of his choices and the uses to which history had put them.

Punctuation, too, carries character. Capitals flare where emotion overtakes discipline; exclamation points and question marks do the work calmer prose would assign to tone. Such habits may seem minor, but in a private record, they matter. They preserve pressure. At times, Lindbergh appears to fear he is saying too much; at other times, he

writes as though posterity, not privacy, were his true audience. He wanted, above all, to be understood before he was judged. Whether that hope was reasonable is another matter.

The more coherent the notebooks became, the more dangerous they were to read too trustingly. Decipherment had not delivered certainty; it had delivered responsibility. I now had to decide what kind of truth these pages could claim, and Jovanovich, who had known Lindbergh and understood the perils of posthumous revelation, had felt that burden before I did.

When I first reported my findings to Jovanovich, he met them with a smile that did not hide his discomfort. He admired the notebooks' narrative force but quickly pointed out apparent errors, anachronisms, misspellings, omissions, and passages he regarded as invention. His skepticism was not frivolous. Any responsible reader would have felt it. Yet I could not dismiss the pages so easily, because their layered revisions and confessional pressure were unlike the contrivances of an idle hoax. The problem was not that the notebooks felt false. It was that they felt true in ways the documentary record could not absorb.

He showed me pages overwritten once, twice, and sometimes three times, as if later knowledge had compelled Lindbergh to revisit an earlier account and press it closer to what he now believed had happened. To Jovanovich, these revisions were evidence that the notebooks could not be trusted without reservation. To me, they suggested something more complicated: not fraud, but memory under correction, a witness arguing with his own first draft.

Had I found even one entry that rang wholly false, I might have withdrawn from the project. But again and again, the notebooks produced the kind of detail that fabrication rarely sustains for long: remembered textures, oblique observations, mechanical exactitudes,

the casual asymmetries of lived experience. Even where hindsight had visibly entered the prose, the underlying witness remained steady. The addenda did not erase the earlier voice. They argued with it.

Later conversations with people close to the publishing history only deepened the uncertainty. I came to understand that Jovanovich had worried Lindbergh might have kept more than one written record: one prepared for publication, another reserved for himself. Whether that suspicion was justified, I cannot prove. But the possibility helped explain the tension that seemed to haunt every discussion of the notebooks—the sense that the official archive, however vast, might still not contain the whole man.

That tension—between force and doubt, testimony and distortion, memory and record—became the governing condition of the undertaking. Recorded history and remembered experience rarely coincide perfectly. Biographers like Scott Berg and Leonard Mosley, bound to the surviving record, are often forced into caution, summary, and the consoling sequence of known facts; private notebooks preserve hesitation, obsession, afterthought, distortion, and insight. The first question, then, was why such pages mattered at all. I could neither surrender Lindbergh’s pages to credulity nor dismiss them as fantasy. They had to be read in the unstable middle ground where much human truth lives: not fully verifiable, not wholly discardable, revised by fear, and preserved because silence had finally become impossible.

Some people write in secret to preserve a self that public life has distorted. Others write to contain contradictions that cannot be admitted elsewhere. Still others write for posterity's tribunal, hoping that some future reader may prove more patient than their contemporaries. Lindbergh may have written for all these reasons. What seems clear is that, for him, silence was never the same as peace.

The second question was how to shape such material without pretending it had already arrived fully formed. The notebooks fall somewhere between memoir, confession, and counter-history. They are selective, emphatic, occasionally evasive, and often fragmentary. Lindbergh seems intent on preserving his role in events while remaining strangely reluctant to make himself the explicit subject of judgment. What survives, therefore, is less a complete autobiography than a self-portrait glimpsed in broken reflective surfaces.

Because the notebooks frequently break off, double back, or assume knowledge the reader does not possess, I sometimes had to supply continuity from outside sources: conversations, archival traces, corroborating memoirs, technical histories, and recollections of people who had stood near the events. I have done so as sparingly as possible. My aim was not to drown Lindbergh's voice in annotation but to make his compressed and often elliptical record intelligible enough to be read as narrative.

In that work, I was not entirely alone. Researchers, archivally minded friends, and a few men whose knowledge had been sharpened by long professional contact with intelligence or law-enforcement cultures helped me test names, dates, motives, and the plausibility of certain hidden connections. Their assistance did not eliminate ambiguity. It merely narrowed the field of ambiguity and made it more honest. I am particularly grateful for the insights of retired FBI special agent Ken Goldsmith and Stewart Early, who pored through Lindbergh's voluminous FBI file to find correspondence with events described in the notebooks.

I owe deep gratitude as well to my long-standing friend Stanley Love, a New York socialite, philanthropist, collector, and authority on Asian art, who had served as president of the West Point Club of New York City. A West Point graduate who began collecting Oriental art

while serving with the Eighth Army in occupied Japan, Stanley went on to build a world-renowned collection; he founded the Japan Society Gallery in New York and made important gifts to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and other institutions. Stanley and I shared a deep interest in all things Asian, and I came to develop a fascination with Lindbergh and the Lindbergh kidnapping. Stanley introduced me to Norman Schwarzkopf Jr., at a time when Schwarzkopf was not yet the man the world would come to know through Desert Storm. Our meetings took place in Stanley's palatial penthouse apartment at Park Avenue and Seventy-Second Street, a setting of old New York ease, Asian art, philanthropy, and military memory, where Schwarzkopf spoke with astonishing command of the Lindbergh kidnapping investigation his father had headed as superintendent of the New Jersey State Police. He seemed to possess a near-encyclopedic grasp of the case—its personalities, evidence, quarrels, and unresolved tensions—and he also confirmed the later meeting at Spandau Prison between Lindbergh and his father, where Nimwegen was discovered to be the same man as Isidore Fisch. Through him, the official investigation ceased to be merely an archive and became, for me, a living inheritance carried by the son of the man who had stood at its center.

The original kidnapping investigation was fouled up in many ways from the start, not for lack of attention but for too much of it, and for the competing claims of local, state, federal, private, and political actors. The Hopewell police were first notified; the report was then passed to the New Jersey State Police, which formally assumed charge; the FBI soon became involved through Hoover's growing federal apparatus; and a governor's conference at Trenton brought together prosecuting officials, police authorities, and government representatives, while private investigators, underworld intermediaries, friends of Lindbergh, and various unofficial emissaries

crowded the field. Even Lindbergh's friend William J. "Wild Bill" Donovan, then a famous war hero and Republican candidate for governor of New York, appeared at the edge of the case, eager to help and already displaying the instinct for intelligence work that would later define him. The result was not a clean chain of command but a confusion of overlapping operations, each with its own authority, ambition, and method, so that evidence, rumor, public pressure, and personal intervention were entangled almost from the first night.

One clarification is necessary regarding Lindbergh's dealings with the FBI. I have used a single composite figure, Tom Ballantyne, to represent the recurring FBI presence around Lindbergh. I made that choice for narrative clarity, not for invention.

Ballantyne consolidates the accounts of more than two dozen FBI special agents who appear to have interacted with Lindbergh over the years. Treating each agent separately would have slowed the account to a catalog of overlapping interviews, memoranda, inquiries, and official courtesies.

Among the real agents whose functions Ballantyne partly gathers, one stood out sharply: Leon G. Turrou, the multilingual FBI special agent who worked on the Lindbergh kidnapping investigation before becoming famous for exposing the 1938 Nazi spy ring in America. I later spoke with Turrou's son, a veterinarian, about some of his father's interactions with Lindbergh. He knew much about the family history but was unaware of the claim that a fingerprint in the nursery belonged to the Nazi agent Gustav Guellich. Whether that identification can be sustained is another matter, but the contrast itself is important: the FBI was already becoming a national forensic institution, while the New Jersey State Police, though officially in charge, did not command the same technical apparatus. The New Jersey State Police had maintained that the nursery had been wiped clean of fingerprints, but the FBI later

claimed to have recovered a latent print there—an exception that, if accurate, made the supposed sterility of the crime scene more troubling rather than less.

The final question is how the reader should approach the “facts” presented in the notebooks. Some portions are confused, improbable, or plainly distorted by retrospection. I have not tried to smooth over that difficulty. To do so would falsify the document's very texture. I ask the reader neither credulity nor reflexive dismissal, but a willingness to remain within uncertainty long enough for its pattern to emerge.

This is neither a novel nor a conventional biography. It is best understood as an interpretation of a hidden self-portrait—an attempt to render, in continuous form, a body of material never intended for easy public consumption. I have arranged events, merged certain secondary functions, and shifted between time frames when doing so made the underlying drama more legible. Yet the governing ambition has remained the same throughout: not to invent a more interesting Lindbergh, but to confront the difficult one the notebooks propose.

I do not believe a reader owes automatic belief to hidden papers simply because they were hidden, nor do I believe secrecy invalidates any truth they may contain. The conditions that made these notebooks difficult to trust are inseparable from those that made them necessary. A life lived in compartments leaves a fractured record. One follows that record where one can, not in full command of its destination, but in the hope that a pattern may emerge where sequence does not. Lindbergh remained, to the end, a divided figure: a man drawn to greatness and repeatedly burdened by the uses to which greatness was put.

His stature in the modern imagination owes something to triumph and something to ordeal, but even more to their uneasy fusion. Lindbergh and Anne entered public life at a moment when celebrity was becoming a new form of destiny: not merely attention, but symbolic possession by strangers. Presidents, inventors, industrialists, propagandists, explorers, mystics, and men of war gathered around them. Moving through such company and remaining legible to oneself would have been difficult for anyone. The notebooks suggest how often Lindbergh failed at that task and how relentlessly he tried again.

How much remains to be discovered about any life once thought settled? In Lindbergh's case, more than one might expect, but discovery is not the same as vindication. The notebooks do not absolve him, nor do they reduce neatly to scandal. What they offer instead is strain: the force of a mind trying, late and imperfectly, to impose order on an existence that had outrun ordinary explanation.

Page follows page in an effort not merely to remember but to understand. At times, the prose seems to advance by persistence alone, as though meaning might finally yield if pursued long enough. What emerges is not serenity but a harsher lucidity: a man less interested in innocence than in accuracy, less eager to excuse himself than to set down the shape of what he believed had happened. Even then, concealment never wholly leaves him. Truth, in these notebooks, is never naked. It arrives clothed in revision.

From the beginning, the problem of order was unavoidable. The notebooks do not unfold with the calm architecture of a finished memoir. They disrupt chronology, revisit scenes from new angles, and allow later knowledge to intrude on earlier pages. I have therefore arranged this book with a beginning, a middle, and an end—not because life obeyed that order, but because narrative must sometimes supply the clarity that experience refuses. If the result occasionally

approaches the cadence of a novel, that is because continuity had to be made audible. The underlying material, however, remains stubbornly real.

Repeatedly, the notebooks return to a single implied plea: that the life preserved in official biographies was not the life as it had been lived from the inside. Whatever one finally concludes about Lindbergh's interpretations, he plainly believed that hidden pressures—not all of them political, not all of them private—had governed more of his conduct than the public ever understood. These pages were his attempt, however belated, to leave behind a version of events less orderly than legend and more troubling than reputation.

After long immersion in these notebooks, I no longer saw only the emblematic figure fixed in photographs and public memory. Instead, I saw a human being refracted through secrecy, talent, fear, discipline, appetite, and grief—a man enlarged by history and misshapen by it. There is more here than diary-keeping, because Lindbergh was more than any single public role could contain. Pilot, engineer, inventor, writer, strategist, husband, father, wanderer, conservationist, symbol: the notebooks move restlessly among these selves without fully reconciling them.

Knowing Corliss Lamont, Philip Johnson, Lawrence Dennis, Wayne Cole, Florence Banks, Alfred Kazin, Ludovic Kennedy, Malcolm Currie, Bob Hoover, Olga Ley, Jim Newton, Allison Landolt, Chris Komissarjevsky, Robert de Ropp, Tom Ross, Bill Koplowitz, Richard Helms, John Nance, and others helped me see beyond the ciphers. So did the more episodic witnesses and guides who had entered the story along the way: Lundberg with his old memory of Lindbergh and American power; Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and Dick Flynn at Hyde Park; David Kuryk, Henry Ehrlich, Chris Evans, Carl Courant, James Wardwell, Jack Bergen, Don Penny, Eugene Bird, Joseph

Persico, and the many friends, mathematicians, speechwriters, editors, and intermediaries who had tested one fragment or opened one door. The notebooks were not a concealment for its own sake but the record of a life lived in compartments.

If these pages sometimes sound less like harmony than counterpoint, it may be because they were written under the pressure of contradiction. Yet even in contradiction, they carry a kind of music: the hard music of a mind trying to tell the truth as it can bear to tell it. They do not carry us beyond uncertainty; they carry us deeper into it. But uncertainty, honestly inhabited, may be closer to history than certainty too quickly won. That is the spirit in which the chapters that follow should be read.

Yet even after decades of work, the most resistant portions of the notebooks still had not yielded. Jack Schwartz died in 2009, and with his death I felt, for a time, that they might never be fully decrypted. Jack had brought to the problem a rare combination of mathematical force, computational imagination, and tenacity; if he had not broken the last chambers open, I wondered who could. The work had already outlasted more than one of the minds enlisted against it, and the locked passages seemed almost to have acquired a history of their own.

Around 2011, my cousin Jim Weil told me about a team in Sweden working with colleagues in Los Angeles on a cipher that sounded uncannily like the one that had defeated us. We had never called our problem the Copiale cipher. To us, it had always been the Oculist cipher, because the recovered fragments and the script's imagery seemed to point to an order obsessed with sight, initiation, and secret knowledge. The name the world would come to know the other manuscript by arose more prosaically: the bound volume contained only a few unencrypted words, among them the inscription "Copiales 3," and that surviving label gave the cipher its public name.

The effort that followed became one of the more remarkable modern episodes in historical cryptanalysis. The manuscript in question was a 105-page German text, about 75,000 characters long, written in a bewildering mixture of abstract signs, Roman letters, and Greek characters, and bound in green-and-gold brocade paper. Its decipherment was presented in June 2011 at a meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics in Portland by Kevin Knight of the University of Southern California, working with Beáta Megyesi and Christiane Schaefer of Uppsala University. Public accounts followed that October, when the University of Southern California announced that the so-called Copiale Cipher had been broken.

What made the project so compelling to me was not merely its subject but its method. In effect, two teams joined across distance: the Swedish scholars who had tracked the manuscript, transcribed it, and understood its historical context, and the Los Angeles computational group around Knight, which brought to the problem tools developed for statistical machine translation. At first, they went down the exact sort of blind alley that had tempted us: they assumed the Roman and Greek letters carried the message and treated the strange symbols as ornament or complication. That hypothesis failed. After testing many possible languages, they realized that the visible letters were largely nulls, inserted to mislead the reader, while the abstract symbols carried the real text. Lindbergh made the corresponding problem even more perverse: in his notebooks, the Greek and Roman letters could not simply be dismissed as nulls, because he had encrypted them too, folding one layer of concealment inside another.

From there, the solution emerged from a combination of intuition, transcription, machine-assisted pattern recognition, and German-language statistics. The cipher proved to be homophonic: several signs

could represent the same plaintext letter, while others stood for syllables, words, or spaces. The decoded text did not reveal military secrecy or diplomatic intrigue; instead, it uncovered the rituals of an eighteenth-century German secret society, the Oculists, who used sight, blindness, eyeglasses, and symbolic eye operations as metaphors for initiation and knowledge. The Copiale breakthrough did not solve Lindbergh's notebooks for me, and I do not wish to overstate the connection. But it changed the moral atmosphere of the problem. After Jack's death, I had begun to think the locked portions might remain locked forever. The Copiale work made that fatalism harder to sustain.

That said, Knight and his colleagues had done the hard work. They had shown how a script that looked theatrical, ornamental, and nearly irrational could be subjected to disciplined analysis, and their solution gave me a way to return to Lindbergh's pages with new confidence. Once the machinery of concealment became more intelligible, I could render much of the notebook material into prose. But that created a different problem. The prose that emerged was often awkward, compressed, elliptical, and largely unpublishable in its raw form. Lindbergh had used the cipher not to compose literature but to record incidents he did not wish to share with anyone—encounters, suspicions, embarrassments, memories, and private reckonings that belonged less to public narrative than to the sealed chambers of a compartmentalized life. Making them readable required not invention but transformation: the difficult passage from decrypted residue to continuous prose.

By 2015, I had something closer to a rough draft than to a finished manuscript. The notebooks had been compiled into a continuous form, but they had not yet become a book. Much still had to be shaped, checked, ordered, and judged. At that point, I felt the obligation to turn back toward its origin. If I could find Jovanovich—or some surviving

channel to him—I thought I should return the original notebooks, along with my transcription of the glyphs that deciphered the system.

But Bill Jovanovich had died in 2001. The channel to him, if it still existed at all, now had to go through his son, Peter. I eventually tracked Peter not only to Rye, New York, but to Milton Point, where I had grown up.

There, across from Milton Harbor, he had built a large house with a pool, and from his front porch we could look out over the water where I had once sailed with my brother and my father, often with Ira Millstein, my father's attorney and closest friend. In those days, Ira had to keep his yacht at the public marina because the yacht and country clubs in Rye were still restricted.

From Peter's porch, the harbor spread out with all its layered associations: the anchorage below Milton Point, the American Yacht Club on Scotch Caps, the junior sailing waters where Commander Tripp had taught us, and the racecourses where the club's long competitive tradition continued through spring and fall regattas, junior events, women's championships, distance races, one-design races, and the old summer patterns of Long Island Sound sailing.

The rear of Peter's property was no less nostalgic: it bordered the playing fields of the Milton School, where I had attended as a boy alongside Cleland Landolt. The discovery startled me, bringing the whole story back to ground I knew intimately.

Rye was the hometown I shared with Cleland Landolt and his brother Peter, Peter Jovanovich's classmate at Princeton. It was the milieu where I learned to sail at the American Yacht Club under the skilled tutelage of Commander Tripp—the very man I would later learn was Reeve Lindbergh's father-in-law. What had begun in

Jovanovich's office as a cryptographic commission had, by a long circuit of notebooks, witnesses, and coincidences, come back to the harbor, school fields, and boyhood waters of my own life.

Peter Jovanovich may have started this odyssey, but he had no idea where it would lead. In 1974, he had simply been helping me find a path to Hilda Prussein, and Hilda, in turn, became the hinge on which everything swung. Through her, I hoped to reach Bill Jovanovich, the publisher of the book George Boolos, and I wanted to write about logic and cryptology. That was all. Fate, as it turned out, had other plans. When I finally came back to Peter four decades later with the 332 notebooks and my imperfect transcription, he was completely in the dark. He did not know about the notebooks, did not know about the strange commission his father had placed in my hands, and did not know about the forty-year quest to bring Lindbergh's hidden record to light.

That made his response all the more generous. Peter was a wonderful man—open, civic-minded, courteous without being evasive, and possessing the kind of practical decency that makes trust feel natural. He listened carefully, asked the right questions, and did not pretend to understand more than he did. He showed no theatrical astonishment, no impulse to turn the story into property or performance. He received it as one receives an unexpected inheritance: with seriousness, restraint, and a sense that the obligation mattered even before its full meaning was known.

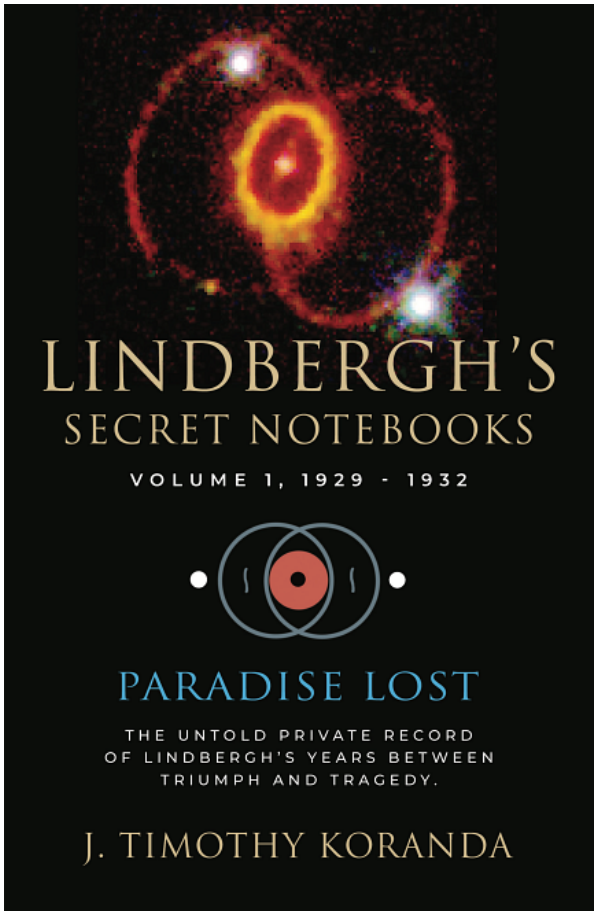
After giving the notebooks to Peter, I cleaned out my rooms and retired to California, carrying only my notes. The notebooks had returned to the Jovanovich orbit, but their burden had not left me. In writing these volumes, I did not rely solely on the notebooks. I brought a lifetime's accumulated knowledge of Charles Lindbergh—what I had read, heard, pursued, doubted, and tested over decades—and

filtered it through the encrypted record he had left behind. The notebooks supplied the plot points, the hidden pressures, and the deeper revelations missing from the public record and from the reminiscences of those who had known him. They did not replace biography; they altered its center of gravity.

I wanted to write a book with Lindbergh as its narrator, and in it I would try to merge the public Lindbergh with the private Lindbergh he had long struggled to hide from the world. The public Lindbergh had been preserved in photographs, headlines, speeches, honors, accusations, and legend. The private Lindbergh survived more obscurely—in ciphers, fragments, evasions, memories, and the awkward residue of incidents he had never wished to share. My task was to bring those two figures into the same field of vision without pretending they could be simplified. If the notebooks had forced me to confront the inward Lindbergh, the book would have to let that inward voice speak alongside the emblematic one, with all its discipline, grandeur, secrecy, and unease.

Had the subject been anyone other than Lindbergh, I do not think the story would have sustained me for fifty years. What held me was not scandal, nor even mystery, but the extraordinary reach of the man himself. He was not only the young pilot who crossed the Atlantic alone and reshaped the imagination of flight; he was a mechanic of genius, an airmail pilot hardened by weather and night, a designer of routes and aircraft practice, a writer of unusual clarity, an ally of Robert Goddard when rocketry still looked like a dreamer’s eccentricity, and the co-creator with Alexis Carrel of the glass perfusion pump that helped open the way toward modern organ preservation and transplant surgery. In later life, he became a conservationist, drawn with equal seriousness to endangered species, threatened landscapes, and the moral problem of balancing technology

with life. I have always thought him wonderful, not because he was simple, safe, or easily admirable, but because he was so magnificently difficult: disciplined, restless, exacting, brave, secretive, visionary, wounded, and almost unbearably alive to the cost of modern power. If this book succeeds at all, I hope it brings out those dimensions of his character—the grandeur and the evasions, the tenderness hidden beneath reserve, the mechanical purity, the moral confusion, and the fierce desire, never wholly extinguished, to make his life mean something larger than the legend that had imprisoned him.



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