

= Ralph Townsend =

Ralph Townsend (27 November 1900 ? 25 January 1976) was an American author , consul and political activist noted for his opposition to the entry of the United States into World War II . Townsend was born in North Carolina and educated in New York . He served in the foreign service as a consul stationed in Canada and China from 1931 to 1933 . Shortly after returning to the United States he came to prominence through his book *Ways That Are Dark : The Truth About China* , a harsh critique of Chinese culture which became a widely controversial bestseller . Townsend became a prominent advocate of non @-@ interventionism , and in the 1930s and 1940s was well known for his vocal opposition to the Roosevelt administration 's foreign policy from a pro @-@ Japanese and pro @-@ neutrality point of view .

Following the US entry into World War II Townsend was arrested for acting as a Japanese agent without registering under the Foreign Agents Registration Act . He pleaded guilty , admitting that he had accepted payments before the war from a propaganda organization funded by the Japanese government , but denying that he was a Japanese agent . He received a prison sentence and while serving was involved in the Great Sedition Trial . After the war Townsend moved to Fairfax , Virginia , where he died on 25 January 1976 . His writings continue to be influential in far @-@ right circles .

= = Early life , 1900 ? 33 = =

Ralph Townsend was born on 27 November 1900 in Raynham , North Carolina to " one of Robeson county 's oldest and most prominent families . " After graduating from Mount Hermon Preparatory School in Massachusetts , he attended Columbia University in New York City and in 1924 received his degree from Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism . He worked as a journalist in San Francisco for several years before returning to New York where he taught English at Columbia University from 1927 to 1930 . On 11 November 1930 he passed the foreign service test and was posted to Montreal , Canada , as vice @-@ consul on 20 December 1930 .

His second assignment was to Shanghai , where he officially served as vice @-@ consul between 10 December 1931 and 9 January 1932 , though a two @-@ month temporary detail kept him in the city long enough to witness the Shanghai Incident firsthand . After that he was stationed in Fuzhou up to his resignation from the service on 1 March 1933 .

= = Writing on Asian affairs , 1933 ? 37 = =

Townsend 's experiences in China formed the basis of his first book *Ways That Are Dark : The Truth About China* , the release of which on 10 November 1933 put Townsend in the spotlight both nationally and internationally . Billed as doing " for China what Katherine Mayo did for Mother India " , Townsend 's book included a controversial critique of Chinese society and culture . At a time when China was in the grip civil strife , Townsend believed that the source of its problems lay in fundamental defects in the ethics of its people , including above all their propensity for dishonesty , lack of fixed loyalties outside of their family group , and inability to cooperate effectively with one another , as well as their greed , physical cowardice , and lack of critical thinking skills . He concludes that the " outstanding characteristics " of the Chinese people " neither enable other peoples to deal satisfactorily with them , nor enable the Chinese to deal satisfactorily with themselves " and predicts no end to chaotic conditions within the country . He also favorably contrasts what he considers Japan 's sensible policies toward China with the naively " sentimental " ones adopted by the United States .

Ways That Are Dark became a bestseller and attracted vociferous reactions from both critics and supporters . Writing for *Current History* , E. Francis Brown praised the book as " a welcome antidote to much that has been written in recent years and some of its conclusions might be well pondered by those who shape America 's Far Eastern Policy , " but by contrast the prominent sinologist Owen Lattimore denounced the work as " a general indictment of a whole race " which lacked insight , relied on second @-@ hand accounts , and would " only convince people who are convinced

already . " The book itself was entangled in the political turmoil it discussed , being banned by the government of China but distributed free of charge by the government of Japan .

The Robesonian , a newspaper of Townsend 's native county , reported in February 1934 that he had " aroused more glowing praise and bitter abuse for his lectures and written comments on China than any other recent speaker and writer on Far East affairs . " Townsend moved from New York back to San Francisco in 1934 where he continued to write and give lectures on Asian issues as well as teaching classes at Stanford University and advertising for the San Joaquin Light and Power Corporation . Until 1941 he resided in a number of Californian cities near San Francisco .

In 1936 , Townsend published his second book , Asia Answers , in which he heaps praise on what he deems to be Japan 's thriving political , economic , and cultural model and its growing and positive influence in Asia . He attributes anti @-@ Japanese sentiment in the United States to pro @-@ communist " liberals " , above all the sensationalist newspaper editors and journalists who , he believes , despise Japan due to its status as the leading capitalist nation in Asia . He condemns liberals for having already wrecked the US economy , warns of a possible communist takeover of the United States , and ends by advocating that America resist anti @-@ Japanese warmongering and adopt a foreign policy of neutrality towards Asia .

Townsend predicted that Asia Answers might have a frosty reception from reviewers because of what he alleged to be the pro @-@ Soviet biases of the media , and indeed , the book received negative coverage in The China Weekly Review , The Times Literary Supplement , The Times of India , and The Living Age , the last of which deemed Asia Answers a work " suspiciously similar to press releases by the Tokyo Foreign Office " which would appeal to " none except avowed Fascists " . Among the book 's detractors was also Pearl S. Buck who described it as " so fraught with the prejudices and personality of the writer that it is impossible to criticize any of it without involving the author 's whole scheme . " On the other hand , the book was received more positively in Japan and in Manchukuo , where Sadatomo Koyama , a leader in the Manchuria Youth League , declared that " [Townsend 's] understanding of China is impeccable " and strongly promoted the work . In 1937 Townsend made a trip to Japan coinciding with the release of the book 's Japanese translation .

= = Advocate of non @-@ interventionism , 1937 ? 41 = =

After returning from Japan , Townsend , who described himself as a " conservative " , was highly active in writing articles , delivering lectures , and making radio broadcasts in support of the movement to keep the United States out of the conflicts in Asia and Europe . In explaining the reason for his participation in the pro @-@ neutrality movement , Townsend stated that while serving as a consul abroad he had " learned enough of the rottenness of international politics ... to wish to do my part of peace for this country . "

Claiming that publishers would no longer accept anti @-@ interventionist books , Townsend began self @-@ publishing pamphlets . Between 1938 and 1940 he wrote a series of pamphlets which were extremely popular and widely circulated among anti @-@ interventionists . Two of them , The High Cost of Hate and America Has No Enemies In Asia , had a circulation of at least 60 @,@ 000 copies , while another , There Is No Halfway Neutrality printed 30 @,@ 000 copies . The last pamphlet in the series , Seeking Foreign Trouble , attracted the attention of the German embassy in Washington DC which bought and distributed more than 500 copies of it .

In his pamphlets , Townsend speaks out against boycotting products from Japan , noting that America does considerably more trade with Japan than China and arguing that peaceful trade with Japan and Nazi Germany would serve the interests of American workers and consumers . He blames " red elements " within China for starting the Second Sino @-@ Japanese War , but praises Japan for the " humane " manner in which its armed forces have behaved in China , believing that it is only the Soviet Union and " a powerful minority " of pro @-@ communist Americans who are conspiring to push America to war with Japan . Townsend predicts that if the Chinese won their war with Japan , the result would be a communist takeover of China , but he dismisses the idea that Japan might launch an attack on the United States as " simply too idiotic to discuss . " On Europe he avers similarly that German conduct is largely a defensive reaction to British and French attempts to

" obliterate the Germans as an entity " .

Townsend became an active member of America First after its formation in 1940 , and was invited to speak at America First meetings on at least two occasions . Townsend , however , would appear as a private citizen when he came before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 8 February 1941 in opposition to the Lend @-@ Lease Act . In a widely publicized testimony , Townsend condemned the legislation as tantamount to " a war bill " that would " assign dictatorial powers to the President " and would " make America the unmistakable aggressor against nations which have not sought objectively to molest us . "

Townsend 's defense of Germany and Japan led him to be labelled as an " agent " and a " propagandist " by his opponents , charges which Townsend denied . His activism brought him to the attention of George Teeple Eggleston , editor of Scribner 's Commentator , an anti @-@ interventionist magazine based in Lake Geneva , Wisconsin , and in June 1941 Townsend accepted an offer to move to Lake Geneva to serve as a contributor to the magazine . Shortly after Townsend became an assistant editor of The Herald , a virulently anti @-@ Semitic weekly newspaper which the owners of Scribner 's Commentator launched that August .

= = Arrest and imprisonment , 1941 ? 44 = =

Townsend 's first run @-@ in with the law occurred on 25 November 1941 when federal prosecutors investigating German @-@ funded propaganda in the United States sought him to answer questions before a grand jury about Scribner 's Commentator . When he could not be found at his home in Lake Geneva a nationwide manhunt was launched , but three weeks later Townsend came forward willingly , claiming he had simply been on vacation in the southern United States and hadn 't known he was wanted by the government . On 15 December he stated that he had no knowledge about how Scribner 's Commentator was financed , but had strong confidence in the magazine 's owners who he knew to be " good Americans . " He added that although he had worked to prevent the outbreak of a conflict , he was now fully supportive of the US war effort . It emerged later that Nazi German agents had been surreptitiously bankrolling the magazine .

On 28 January 1942 , FBI agents arrived at Townsend 's home and arrested him for having acted as a Japanese agent without registering under the Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1938 . A federal investigation into Japanese propaganda which had begun in November 1941 discovered that Townsend had received payments from the Japanese Committee on Trade and Information , a Japanese propaganda organization which had existed between 1937 and 1940 . Though Townsend denied being a paid Japanese agent and claimed to be a victim of political persecution , he did admit to having accepting money from the Committee , stating that it was merely a payment in exchange for the bulk sale of his pamphlets . Even so , Townsend opted to plead guilty on 27 March and argued for a lenient sentence on the grounds that he was not aware that his acts were illegal . Townsend also solicited the support of anti @-@ interventionist politicians and he was sent favorable character references by both former Senator Rush D. Holt and his longtime friend Senator Gerald Nye , the latter of whom described Townsend as " a loyal and patriotic American citizen " . The presiding justice T. Alan Goldsborough was , however , unmoved , and deeming his crimes " repulsive , obscene and macabre " , Townsend was sentenced on 12 June to between 8 and 24 months in prison and was incarcerated in Washington DC .

= = = Defendant in the Great Sedition Trial = = =

Townsend became a defendant during his prison term in what would become known as the " Great Sedition Trial " . The trial arose from Roosevelt 's conviction , against advice from his Attorney @-@ General Francis Biddle , that the most vocal in defending Nazi Germany be tried for subversion . On 23 July 1942 Townsend and 27 other Americans were charged under the Smith Act and the Espionage Act with having participated in a German @-@ backed conspiracy to publish seditious literature seeking to undermine the morale of members of the United States military . The indictment cited the following statement of Townsend 's , which he had written in 1941 prior to US entry into the

war , as proof that he had committed sedition :

With a fifth of the earth 's people kept under their rule by force , [the British] bleat of fighting to liberate subject populations . Fighting now for the triumph of the bloodiest dictatorship ever known ? Soviet Russia ? they microphone to listening Americans their pious horror of dictatorships .

Townsend was arraigned on 20 August , but strongly questioned the view that his writings were subversive as well as the legal foundations of the charges . Along with the other defendants , Townsend was as before strongly defended by senators with anti @-@ interventionist sympathies , including Gerald Nye who said the defendants were no more guilty of sedition than he had been for speaking out against intervening in the war . In fact there were from the beginning many concerns even within the US government about the validity of the proceedings and their constitutionality as no clear evidence had yet been uncovered to demonstrate that the defendants were in collusion with Nazi Germany or with each other .

These problems lead to repeated delays in the formal opening of the trial and the indictment had to be laid down a second time on 4 January 1943 after the first had expired . More delays arose , however , and when the indictment was laid down for a third time on 3 January 1944 , Townsend 's name had been dropped from the list . Although Francis Biddle initially said that Townsend would still be subject to prosecution in the future , in the end no further actions were taken . By then Townsend had was bankrupted by legal costs and was deserted by most of his friends . Biddle himself later called the sedition case " a dreary farce " .

At the time The Washington Post reported that before the war Townsend had accepted money from an individual connected to German agents in in return for circulating anti @-@ British pamphlets . Despite all this Townsend still insisted that , " I was never anybody 's foreign agent . All I published was independently written and 100 per cent American " , a stance which he maintained for the remainder of his life .

= = Post @-@ war life , 1945 ? 76 = =

In the early @-@ 1950s Townsend moved to Fairfax , Virginia and by the time of his death was considered a " prominent resident " . He helped organize the Fairfax Chamber of Commerce , of which he was the executive director , and in this capacity played a leading role in lobbying the CIA to locate its headquarters in Virginia . He also worked in advance of conservation . In 1967 he appeared before the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs as a member of Defenders of Wildlife and between 1972 and 1976 served on that organization 's board of directors where he was known for " his insistence on sound financial management . "

Townsend maintained friendships with far @-@ right figures after the war , including Harry Elmer Barnes and Willis Carto , and for a time he worked as an editor and contributor to Carto 's anti @-@ Semitic magazine , The American Mercury , which introduced Townsend as " a former Foreign Service officer who made the mistake of fighting FDR 's war plans " . Townsend died in Fairfax on 25 January 1976 at the age of 75 .

= = Legacy and assessment = =

Historians have noted the stridency with which Townsend put forward his pro @-@ Japanese views before World War II . Justus Doenecke , for instance , described Townsend as " The most adamant and extreme of the voices in America defending Japanese policy . " Judith Papachristou concurs that " Few anti @-@ imperialists were as extreme as isolationist Ralph Townsend " , though Townsend himself rejected the " isolationist " label during his life , and instead called himself a " realist " and " Pro @-@ Peace " .

Townsend is still held in esteem by many members of the extreme right in the United States , and recently in Japan as well . After his death his widow Janet turned over his papers to Larry Humphreys , an Oklahoma multimillionaire and supporter of right @-@ wing militia and Christian Identity groups , who referred to Townsend as a man who " knew FDR was trying to entice Japan into attacking the United States , and FDR had him jailed " . Humphreys stored Townsend 's papers

in his so @-@ called " Heritage Library " , though today many of them are held by Barnes Review , an anti @-@ Semitic organization under the leadership of Townsend 's old friend Willis Carto . In 1997 , Barnes Review re @-@ published Ways That Are Dark : The Truth About China for the first time since World War II with a new foreword written by Carto , who praised Townsend as " a profound , genuinely courageous and painfully honest writer " . In 2004 a Japanese translation of the Barnes Review edition of Ways That Are Dark was released in Japan where it became a runaway success and quickly elevated Townsend to " hero " status among the Japanese far right .

The opinion of recent scholars on the quality of his writing have been mixed . Limin Chu , who analyzed his articles on China for the Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine , considered some of the claims as " either incredibly gullible or deliberately vicious " , while historian Justus Doenecke described his pamphlets as " crudely written " . In contrast , Peter O 'Connor , professor at Musashino University , found the same pamphlets " well @-@ argued and researched . "

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