

Austin T. App, 1902-1984

By Keith Stimely

One of the titanic figures of postwar revisionist historiography, Professor Austin J. App, died of kidney failure on 4 May 1984. A well-established author and scholar of English literature at the outbreak of World War II, Dr. App was soon appalled at the human suffering and political disaster caused by that "unnecessary conflict," and for the next four decades he was in the very forefront of those courageous scholars who, often in the face of severe academic and press hostility, sought to determine the historical truth about the war, and to publicize that truth far and wide. His engaging and candid 1977 *Autobiography* was subtitled *Right to the End*. This he certainly was, right to the end. His career as historical scholar and publicist, as recounted in his memoir and manifest in his many publications, is in essence the story from its very beginnings of the fight for the historical truth about the European war of 1939-45, and for a postwar political justice predicated upon recognition of that truth.

Austin App was born on 24 May 1902 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the son of August App, an immigrant from Wuerttemberg, Germany, and Katharina Obermaier, originally from Niederpoering, Lower Bavaria. He spent most of his youth on the family farm outside Milwaukee, learning about the world through voracious reading and, equally important for an impressionable and intelligent young man, through close observation of the life of animals. A lesson he gleaned from his youth on the farm is worth repeating. After an anecdote about two large rival rock roosters, who continually fought each other -- and only each other -- for months on end, one finally succumbing to the other in bloody resolution, App remarked that this "taught me something about individuals and nations":

Why did they fight each other? Because one was less democratic than the other? Or because they did not understand each other? Or could not communicate? Did the final victor fight to make the world safe for democracy? Or to end all wars? Humbug and hypocrisy. They fought each other because of rivalry, because of power politics. That is the truth of it. In World War I the U.S. finally turned on Germany rather than Russia or England, because Germany was, not more wrong, but more strong. In World War II it turned on Hitler, not on Stalin, for the same reason. On every count Stalin was a barbarian, compared to Hitler. Any attempt to equate our intervention against the third Reich with crusadism or idealism is a calculated swindle against the people.

That bloody duel of these two mighty roosters also disqualified for me another myth in the relations of men and nations. It is a myth dear to Americans, namely, that persons and nations fight because they do not know each other well enough, because they do not speak the same language, they do not live contiguous enough. Utter hogwash. These two roosters were of the same breed, crowed the same way, had the same friends -- and fought each other to the death. So did the North and the South in the Civil War. We fought two wars against our English cousin -- same language, same customs; and two with our next nearest of kin, the Germans, whose language is a cognate of English, and

whom we knew and understood best of all peoples in the world after those of the British Isles. We were twice allies of the Russians, whom we do not understand at all and who are the least contiguous to us. If we have not yet fought Ireland, it is not because we understand the Irish, but because they have not yet challenged our supremacy of the sea! One could in fact be cynical and say human nature is intrinsically so inclined to evil that the better they know each other the more likely they are to fight -- and the more bitterly: civil wars are notoriously the most brutal. And since their premature liberation from colonialism, the Africans -- for example, in the Congo and in Nigeria -- have killed more fellow Africans in a few decades than the European Christian colonizers killed in several hundred years! Had the American government lived by the lesson of what the farmyard has taught me, both world wars would have been avoided -- and future generations would have been spared a lot of hypocritical balderdash inflicted on the world as history. (Autobiography, pp. 30, 32.)

After attending public and parochial schools, he entered St. Francis Seminary near Milwaukee, where he received a liberal classical education, graduating in 1921, and returning to the "Major Seminary" there to obtain his B.A. degree in 1923. He entered graduate school at the Catholic University, Washington D.C., receiving his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in English literature. His doctoral dissertation of 1929, *Lancelot in English Literature*, was published to critical acclaim and became a standard of the literature; it was republished in 1965 by Haskell House of New York, seeing wide use as a college text.

After a period of traveling widely in Central and Western Europe during the troublefraught first years of the Depression, Dr. App settled down to teaching posts at Catholic University, Basselin College and Sisters College. He wrote prolifically, his human-interest, literary, and religious articles and book reviews appearing in such publications as *Catholic Educational Review*, *Commonweal*, *Sign Magazine*, *Magnificat*, *Catholic World*, and the *Washington Post*. He co-founded the monthly literary review, *Best Sellers*. From 1934 to 1942 he taught at St. Thomas College, University of Scranton, in Scranton, Pennsylvania. He received the university's Faculty Gold Medal in 1939 as "outstanding educator of men."

Entering the U.S. Army in 1942, he served briefly in the Corps of Engineers before being released to work in private industry. After a period of teaching at Dominican College, St. Mary's of the Woods, in Columbus, Ohio, he secured a professorship at Incarnate Word College in San Antonio, Texas, where he taught from 1944 to 1948.

It was while in San Antonio, learning about the wreckage of Europe caused by the American-Soviet invasion and those two allies' obscene occupation policies, that Dr. App really began his "second career" as a contemporary historian and samizdat publisher of an age of calamity. All through the war he had, in fact -- and in spite of the danger, acute within a nation at war, of stern official disfavor -- kept up a steady barrage of letters to newspapers, magazines, and public figures, expressing his frank opinions about the origins of the war and the need for a negotiated peace with Germany. In the Spring of 1946, sickened by the Potsdam-sanctioned policy of mass expulsion of the Eastern Germans, and particularly shocked by the terrible atrocities visited upon

helpless German women in the East by the conquering Red hordes, App self-published his first pamphlet, the ten-page *Ravishing the Women of Conquered Europe*. Its success was immediate and unexpected; orders came in by the thousands, periodicals far and wide picked it up, it was translated into four languages -- all this with the "advertising" being almost solely by word-of-mouth. Additionally, invitations by the dozens came to App to speak in front of patriotic groups. There seemed to exist a genuine thirst on the part of a considerable segment of the American public for knowledge of a situation, exposure to a viewpoint, about which the mainline press, by-and-large, was keeping silent. In July 1946 he published the 24page *Slave-Laboring German Prisoners of War*, and at the end of the year collected 13 original and republished articles and speeches in the book *History's Most Terrifying Peace*, the first major work to bring to the attention of significant numbers of Americans the facts about the Carthaginian treatment being meted out to conquered Germany, by the West as well as the East. The book had to be reprinted only two months after the original press run.

Austin App had touched a nerve. In those dismal postwar years, an America punchdrunk with, and already beginning to feel dubious about, the massed "victory" whoops of the established media, badly needed a corrective balance. This lone scholar in San Antonio found himself supplying a goodly part of it, in his crusade on behalf of the "impolite truths" -- therefore very interesting ones -- about the real, morally and politically bankrupt, results of that war. So it was that Austin App supplemented, quite independently, the efforts of the group of scholars then clustered around historians Charles A. Beard and Harry Elmer Barnes, who were embarking on their own ambitious revisionist "program" to write the true history of the war. Whereas that effort, in its early stages, tended to focus on the diplomatic history of the war's origins, App's emphasis was -- and largely remained for thirty years -- on the unholy trinity of what might be called the "peace crimes" of the victors who had smashed Europe: the Morgenthau Plan for the utter despoilment and pastoralization of Germany (officially disclaimed but largely enacted for two years under the Joint Chiefs of Staff directive 1067); the Expulsions of the German-ethnics of Eastern Europe, and all the atrocities attendant to this massively inhumane action; the Deportations back to Stalinist "care" of the millions of anti-Communist Russians and East Europeans who had fought on the Germans' side. More than any other single man in America, Austin App as writer and speaker was responsible for bringing to the attention of his countrymen these three great crimes against Western civilization and elemental humanity. For this alone he will always be remembered.

App had actually touched more than one brand of nerve. Upon his path-breaking publication efforts, he became a favorite target of such loudmouthed smear-terrorists as Walter Winchell, George Seldes, Drew Pearson, the Anti-Defamation League, and assorted ADL front-groups like the Committee for the Prevention of World War III. ("World War III" being the imminent "next Nazi attempt at world conquest." This in 1946-47, of course.) He was smeared and hounded as an anti-semite, anti-American, and pro-Nazi. Commenting on one particularly vicious -- and wildly inaccurate -- propagandist diatribe against App, the eminent columnist Westbrook Pegler wrote:

Dr. App's writing which caused this explosion was a protest against the ravishment of German, Austrian, and Hungarian women by the conquering armies. The Society for the Prevention of World War III... does not appear to deny the truth of Doctor App's charge nor even to deplore the crimes alleged... However the anonymous powers who put out that issue of the Bulletin thought it well nigh seditious of Doctor App to reveal enmity toward Soviet Russia.

Brushing aside the epithets, and welcoming the support that came to him from many Americans, App continued both his revisionist activities and his academic career as professor of literature. In 1948 he accepted a professorship at LaSalle College, Philadelphia, where he remained until his retirement in 1968.

Throughout the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, Dr. App kept a schedule that would wear out less committed men. In addition to teaching, he continued to publish his own books and pamphlets on political/historical topics, and had several literary and human interest books published by other houses. He wrote more than a thousand articles, columns, and book reviews for such publications as Social Justice Review, Nord Amerika, the Philadelphia Gazette-Democrat, the Manchester (N.H.) Union Leader, the Cleveland Waechter und Anzeiger, Western Destiny, American Mercury, Common Sense, ABN Correspondence, Conservative Viewpoint, Amerika: The Ukrainian Catholic Daily, Ukrainian Quarterly, Deutsche-Amerikaner, Reason, Deutsche National- Zeitung, Nation Europa, and Voice of Americans of German Descent. He was National Chairman of the last-named publication's parent group, the Federation of American Citizens of German Descent, from 1960 to 1966, after which he was permanent National Honorary Chairman. He was also Chairman, for ten years, of the Pastorius Unit of the Steuben Society, Philadelphia, a longtime honorary member of the German-American National Congress (D.A.N.K.), and Chairman for several years of the Greater Philadelphia Captive Nations Committee.

Austin App never failed to champion, whenever and however he could, the cause of the millions of dispossessed Sudeten, Silesian, and other Eastern German expellees. In his frequent trips to Germany he spoke regularly at many of the giant Expellee mass rallies held yearly in Cologne, Munich, and elsewhere, becoming well-known to patriotic Germans as their principal, quite tireless, American friend and advocate. For his years of scholarship and public relations activity, he was awarded in 1975 the "European Freedom Prize" of 10,000-DM by the German Peoples' Union. The prize was presented in Munich by Dr. Gerhard Frey, editor of the Deutsche Nationalzeitung.

Dr. App was a member of the Editorial Advisory Committee of The Journal of Historical Review from its inception. His last major speech in America was "The Holocaust Put in Perspective," delivered at the first International Revisionist Conference sponsored by the Institute for Historical Review, held in Los Angeles over Labor Day, 1979. The speech was published in Vol. 1, No. 1 of the JHR (Spring 1980). In his last years Dr. App several times expressed his satisfaction at the fact that he was able to witness the contemporary worldwide explosion of accomplishment and interest in revisionist studies of all aspects of the Second World War. Those now engaged in this work owe him, as one of the handful of pioneers in a field where pioneering entailed

great risk and therefore great courage, their most heartfelt respect, admiration, and gratitude. He was a fighter and a champion in the cause of truth.

Austin J. App's Principal Revisionist Books And Pamphlets

Ravishing the Women of Conquered Europe. San Antonio: Author, 1946. (10pp.)

The Big Three Deportation Crime. San Antonio: Author, 1946. (4pp.)

Slave-Laboring German Prisoners of War. San Antonio: Author, 1946. (24pp.)

History's Most Terrifying Peace. San Antonio: Author, 1946, 1947; Takoma Park, Md.: Boniface Press, 1970. (110pp.)

Morgenthau Era Letters. Takoma Park, Md.: Boniface Press, 1966, 1974. (128pp.)

Red Genocide in a German Village. Takoma Park, Md.: Boniface Press, 1970, 1976. (6pp.)

The Bombing Atrocity of Dresden. Takoma Park, Md.: Boniface Press, 1970. (6pp.)

The Six Million Swindle. Takoma Park, Md.: Boniface Press, 1973, 1976. (40pp.)

A Straight Look at the Third Reich. Takoma Park, Md.: Boniface Press, 1974. (60pp.)

The Rooseveltian Concentration Camps for Japanese-Americans. Takoma Park, Md.: Boniface Press, 1974. (8pp.)

Anti-Semitism: A Phoney Bogey. Takoma Park, Md.: Boniface Press, 1974. (8pp.)

The Curse of Anglo-American Power Politics. Takoma Park, Md.: Boniface Press, 1974. (6pp.)

Footnote on President Ford's Visit to Auschwitz. Takoma Park, Md.: Boniface Press, 1975. (4pp.)

The Curse of Anti-Anti-Semitism. Takoma Park, Md.: Boniface Press, 1976. (66pp.)

Autobiography: German-American Voice for Truth and Justice. Takoma Park, Md.: Boniface Press, 1977. (308pp.)

"Holocaust": Sneak Attack on Christianity. Reedy, W. Va.: Liberty Bell, 1978. (8pp.)

Hitler-Himmler Order on Jews Uncovered. Reedy, W. Va.: Liberty Bell, 1978. (6pp.)

Soviet Murder of German POW's. Reedy, W. Va.: Liberty Bell, 1978. (8pp.)

Will the Ethnically Polish Pope John Paul II Promote Truth and Justice for the German Expellees? Takoma Park, Md.: Boniface Press, 1978. (4pp.)

Power and Propaganda in American Politics and Foreign Affairs. Reedy, W. Va.: Liberty Bell, 1978. (8pp.)

The Sudeten-German Tragedy. Takoma Park. Md.: Boniface Press, 1979. (84pp.)