

October 12, 1993

Dear Mr. Lamb:

Thank you so very much for C-Span! I am sure you must be the guiding light or genius behind it. I am one of the many thousands who silently echo all those grateful callers.

Monday and Friday mornings I try not to miss, also Book Notes on Sundays. Booknotes are so great because it is impossible to read all the good books and this gives us a glimpse of the author and a taste of the book's contents.

You may be interested in a book, published in August, by Joseph C. Harsch, "At the Hinge of History: A Reporter's Story", University of Georgia Press - \$29.95. It was reviewed in the Christian Science Monitor Oct. 6, by Nicholes Danilooff, Director of the School of Journalism, Boston.

I have not read it as yet (it's on order) but I grew up exposed to Mr. Harsch's splendid reporting for the Christian Science Monitor, which whet my interest in what was going on in the world -- those many years ago he was for me what C-Span is today!

Again, many thanks to you and your "elite" crew -- all great people!

Sincerely,

Enclosed is copy of review of Mr. Harsch's book.

Naples, Fl 33940

BOOKS

A Correspondent's Correspondent

By Nicholas Daniloff

FOR a journalist to write the brief history of an era is an exceedingly risky undertaking. For one thing, journalists usually have no secrets to reveal, having used their exclusives in scoops long ago. For another, journalists are professionally concerned with *what* happened today and what may develop tomorrow. They are voyeurs of the moment who rarely possess the vision of an age.

Joseph C. Harsch is an exception. He has put together a marvelous account of the revolution in world affairs over the last century, from the death of Queen Victoria and the disintegration of the British Empire to the end of the cold war. In short, "At the Hinge of History: A Reporter's Story" describes a world order that collapsed through the spasms of two global wars only to transform itself into something we cannot yet fully grasp.

Harsch is the correspondent's correspondent par excellence. Born at the beginning of the century, he acquired a solid historical education at Williams College in Williamstown, Mass., and Cambridge University, England. In his travels he gained fluency in French and German. He began his journalistic career with The Christian Science Monitor two weeks before the stock market crash of 1929 and retired in 1988, nearly six decades later. Throughout that span, he was known for his vast contacts, his canny intuition, his incisive analyses for the Monitor, and broadcasts for NBC and CBS.

Harsch notes that in 1905, the year of his birth in Toledo, Ohio, the world was dominated by a seemingly indestructible British Empire, but challenged increasingly by a rampant Germany. Indeed, the author would seem content to rename World War I and World War II the "First and Second German Wars." A possible outcome of this British-German rivalry, he says, might have been a European continent controlled today by Germany and an international system dominated by Britain. In this scheme, the United States might have remained a second-level regional power. That might have been if Hitler had not attacked Russia and bombed Britain, and if the Japanese had not attacked Pearl Harbor.

These events may seem far away today, but Harsch was there and brings them back alive.

The Middle East was one problem Harsch became acquainted

with early on. In 1939, he worked temporarily for a US-British committee in London that was developing plans for a Jewish homeland in Angola. Had the effort succeeded, it could have dramatically altered the Arab-Jewish conflict that has dragged on for decades. The author reproduces a little-known telegram from President Roosevelt backing the idea of resettling German and East European Jews in Africa. These plans were scuttled by the escalation of European hostilities.

"The dispossessed Arabs of Palestine are the ultimate victims of German anti-Semitism," Harsch writes. "Had there been no Holocaust the Jewish homeland today would be probably be in Angola, not Palestine. Angola was where they were wanted, where there was ample empty space, where the Jewish diaspora could have been accommodated

tack came on June 21-22, 1941.

Harsch left Berlin in January 1941 for Washington and Asia. He stopped at Honolulu. He recounts his meeting Dec. 6, 1941 — the eve of the Japanese attack — with Adm. Husband Kimmel, US Pacific commander. The admiral asserted that the Japanese were too intelligent to strike the US and open up a two-front war. Reassured, Harsch went off to bed, dozed through the attack in a cottage 12 miles away from Pearl Harbor; went swimming at sun-up, only to learn what had happened when a woman burst into the breakfast room shouting, "They are Japanese.... They shot at our car. I was driving my husband to his ship. The battleships are burning."

The author sees much of the cold-war years as the product of a somewhat misguided Western fear of Soviet-Chinese world domination. In the early days of the Sino-Soviet alliance, Harsch kept his eyes open for signs of tension between Moscow and Beijing. He believes he spotted the fissures by the end of the 1950s. Washington policymakers, however, discounted these frictions as wishful thinking until President Nixon began writing about them a decade later. In the meantime, the US fought China in Korea and committed the US to war in Vietnam, Harsch argues, more to contain China than to spread democracy.

Many personal vignettes enliven this historical analysis and give readers the texture of the times. As a young reporter, Harsch covered the Bonus March on Washington in 1932 and saw a US cavalryman, trying to control the crowd, slice off the ear of a demonstrator with his saber. Harsch also describes how he and a British officer cornered and arrested Nazi leader Albert Speer in May 1945 in the restroom of a "Mother Goose castle," deep in a German forest.

And what of the future? Harsch, who spent so much of his life traveling the world, says the US's biggest challenge probably lies at home. He concludes that America's toughest outside competition will come from Europe and China. "Whether the United States can regain enough economic momentum to keep up with them will depend much on whether the next American generation can improve the quality of life in America, meaning a more prosperous, healthier, and safer environment for its people."

■ Nicholas Daniloff is the director of the School of Journalism, Northeastern University, Boston.



**AT THE HINGE OF HISTORY:
A REPORTER'S STORY**

By Joseph C. Harsch
University of Georgia Press
267 pp., \$29.95

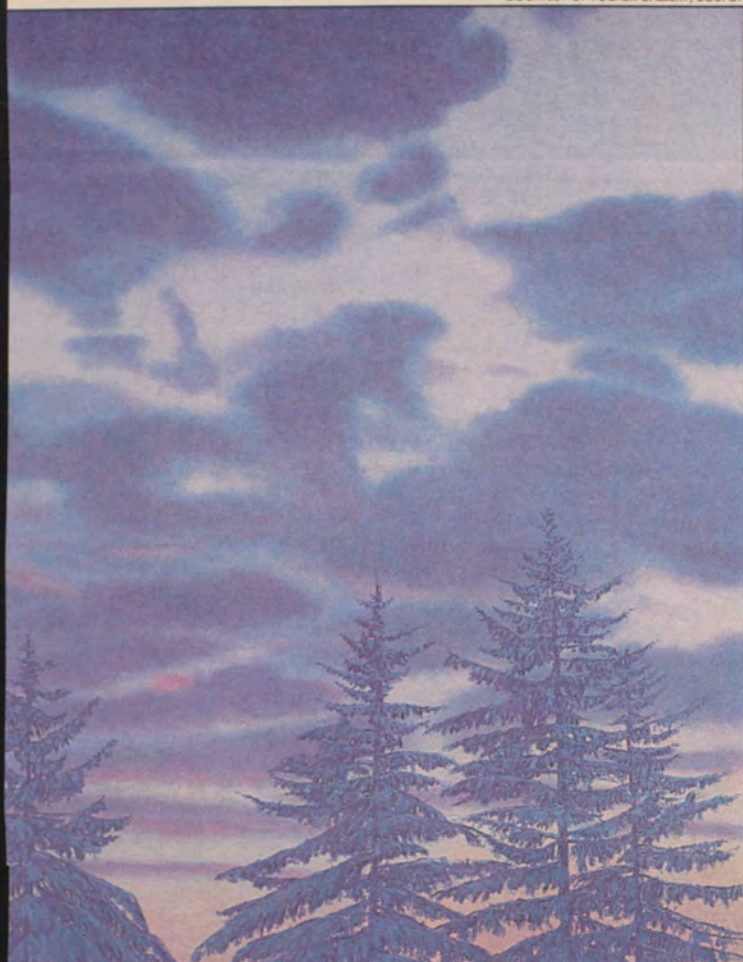
without displacing large numbers of long-term residents...."

Just weeks after Hitler invaded Poland on Sept. 1, 1939, Harsch set off for Rome and Berlin. He recalls the privileged position of American journalists in Nazi Germany, his recording of the simplest elements of daily life, including an analysis of death notices that led him to conclude the Nazis were using euthanasia to get rid of the insane and infirm.

More surprising, he reports an evening with the American and Soviet military attachés when these experts concluded in December 1940 that Hitler was moving troops eastward for an attack on Russia or Romania. If they attack Russia, quipped the Soviet diplomat, "das will kein Spaziergang sein" (it will not be a Sunday promenade). And yet Stalin was surprised when the at-

erate World in the Stillness

COURTESY OF PUCKER GALLERY, BOSTON



er, 37 by 41 1/4 in., by Jim Schantz.

appeared to move
e. A fellow cloud-
ed. The geese dis-
d over at me and
g trip, Hallie en-
early run over her

shoes by assuming statue-like poses and
admonishing me not to tend the fire or
even turn the pages of a book.

"You'll scare them," she hissed.

I still work, as a parent, on not being
defensive. But there are moments when
remaining passive is just too hard.

"I know," I hissed back a bit sternly,

topics.

Watching clouds hasn't taught me more
about clouds. I suspect this is also true of
my children. Rather, it's helped me to keep
still enough to see not only what is above
me but everything else around as well.

Melissa Madenski

ing Out and Really Seeing Things

it believe my eyes. It was nighttime at our
e. Something had woken me in the wee
d glanced through the side window of the
amazed, I looked again. A tree in full
n of September! And clearly visible by
een planted out there?

ced, I stepped noiselessly from my bed,
his phenomenon up close. Outside, the
on called once in the distance. But there
the blossoms, almost the size of sand dol-
at me.

d raised my hand to touch the phantom
fingers spread into white blooms! I drew
e, then reached out tentatively again. This
hed the edges of leaves, breathtaking in
hat was it! Softly, delightfully, the illusion
me.

enough, the moon was nowhere in sight.
at it was deftly hiding on the other side of
mehow, with lunar subtlety, its rays had

found an angle by which to reach the sapling without touching
anything else. The leaves, caught in such artful light, had
become transformed.

Moon blossoms.

Now I was ambivalent. While disappointed to lose the Sep-
tember blossoms, I smiled at this trick of the night that had drawn
me outside as a full believer.

My wife never stirred at my return. As I lay down again, I
rehearsed what I would tell her about the tree in the morning.
I could imagine the expression on her face. And I could hear
her making a distinction between observation and perception.
Would she remind me of the difference between the literalist in
us - who would pass off such an incident as a stupid mistake,
and the poet in us - who would recognize instead the elements
of epiphany?

Of course, those might not be her exact words, but I felt con-
fident she would come up with just the right emphasis. I only
regret that I had not woken her to share in the experience of
really seeing things.

Godfrey John