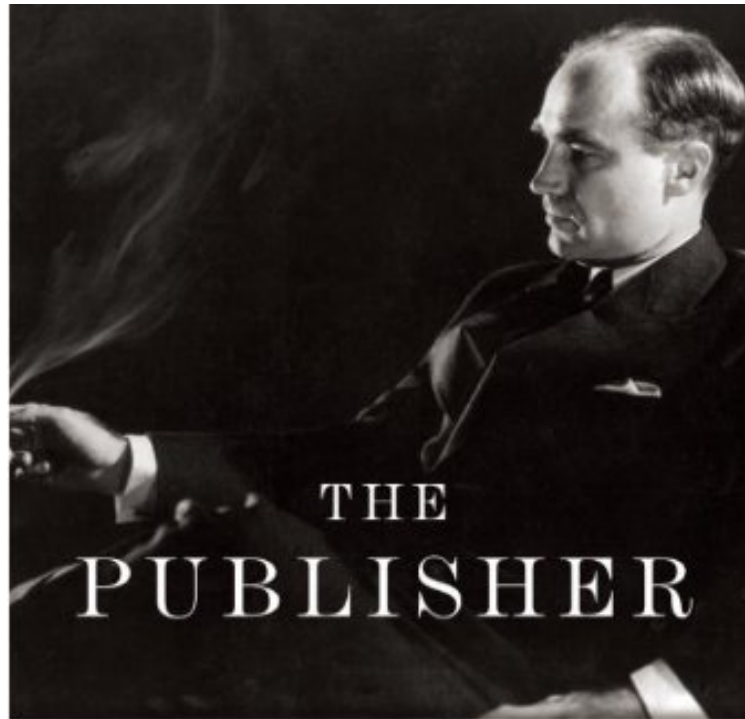


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HENRY LUCE
AND HIS AMERICAN CENTURY

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6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Biography As it Should Be WrittenBy James Barton PhelpsThis is biography as it should be: - the story of an important American written beautifully, objectively and with interest understanding and sympathy by one of America's leading historians. To those readers to whom Henry R. Luce and Time, Life, Fortune and Sports Illustrated were not part of daily life in the twentieth century this superb biography may come off as interesting history. However, to those of us to whom these magazines were weekly reading during those times it's a trip into the past. The Great Depression, World War II, the Truman years, Eisenhower, the Rise of the

Middle Class, The American Century, the "Loss" of China, The Vietnam War and its aftermath were all reported by and pictured in these magazines through the mind and eye of their publisher - Henry R. Luce (1898-1967), the ambitious, bright, driven son of Presbyterian Missionaries in China who, although a bit of a prig and never comfortable with himself, brought his view of the American experience to the American people through the pages of these publications which were his - and his alone - with a missionary zeal and a brilliance unmatched in the media world by any one before or since. Alan Brinkley has beautifully and accurately recounted these years and Henry Luce's experience for us in this absolutely stunning and very readable biography where we get to know Luce who at 23 was already a skilled writer and was fathering Time along with his school chum Britton Hadden. Then we follow his career, his personal life with its many disappointments (including a disastrous and lengthy marriage to a dysfunctional and slightly goofy Clare Booth Luce) and his business life, his huge success, his enormous influence and his immense wealth. And at the end you have to wonder. If you were in Luce's shoes and having lived his life as he did would you say that it had been worth it? I felt sorry for him. But read the book. That's worth it.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. The Founder By lb136 Diligent, intelligent, insecure, overachieving media tycoon Henry R. Luce, known best as the co-founder of TIME and founder of LIFE and FORTUNE, was one of the looming figures of his era--the mid-20th century. A controversial magazine king in an era when magazines were king, he is, nearly 45 years after his death, now a fit subject for historians. And by Columbia history professor Joel Brinkley, he is well served. Prof. Brinkley tells his story well. He skillfully segues from the personal--Luce's childhood in China, and his youth at Hotchkiss and Yale--to the political as Luce becomes ever more powerful and famous. Three sections of the book (there are no dull ones) are especially sharp: the first is the author's depiction of Luce's collaboration with his frenemy Brit Hadden to found TIME. We of course know he succeeded, but the author builds up quite a bit of suspense nevertheless, as at the beginning the two young men are desperately short of funds. The second sequence of note would be the tale of Luce's struggle to launch LIFE, which paradoxically almost failed because of its success--advertisers had paid for a far smaller circulation than the magazine achieved. And the third deals with Luce's denial that one of his idols, Nationalist Chinese dictator Chiang Kai-shek, could possibly lose his civil war with Mao Zedong. Prof. Brinkley notes that even after Chiang had fled with his remaining forces to Formosa (as Taiwan was then known) Luce was advocating that the Korean War be used as a springboard for his return to the mainland. Luce was involved with many controversies in his day (e.g., Whittaker Chambers, who would accuse Alger Hiss of spying worked for TIME); he loved to give unsolicited advice to the great (advice that frequently went heeded); and he was often accused, especially by the left, of slanting his publications to reflect his opinions. (In the author's telling, Luce's TIME played a major role in the creation of Wendell Willkie's 1940 presidential candidacy.) To more than some extent this was true. But as Prof. Brinkley notes in the epilogue, Luce's "most important legacy remains his role in the creation of new forms of information and communications at a moment in history when media were rapidly expanding. His magazines were always the most important of his achievements." But, ironically, the professor then goes on to note that "while his company survives still . . . little remains of the goals and principles he established for it." Notes and asides: Surely a movie can and hopefully will be made of Luce's life, with this book serving as the source material. One would hope the lead role would go to a cinemactor who could instill the role with the proper level of intelligent pomposity.

18 of 21 people found the following review helpful. On Time By Christian Schlect A book almost as much on the famous set of magazines (Time, Fortune, Life, and SI) created by Henry Luce as on the man himself. Anyone interested in the history of American publishing should buy and read it. Alan Brinkley has written a straightforward biography in clear but unexceptional prose. The material is often interesting because Mr. Luce, his times (the Depression, World War II, the rise of American world power), and his political causes (anti-communism, China, freedom) are interesting. At times, however, the book veers too much into detailing the blasted love episodes of this great, if personally flawed, publisher: essentially--who now cares? While wrong on some things, Mr. Luce was right on many things, including being early to the threat of both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. And he had the courage to trumpet his well-founded international political fears, which served to annoy many a New York City liberal. Above all, Henry Luce created a commercial magazine empire from scratch: a feat that is unlikely ever to be duplicated.

Acclaimed historian Alan Brinkley gives us a sharply realized portrait of Henry Luce, arguably the most important publisher of the twentieth century. As the founder of Time, Fortune, and Life magazines, Luce changed the way we consume news and the way we understand our world. Born the son of missionaries, Henry Luce spent his childhood in rural China, yet he glimpsed a milieu of power altogether different at Hotchkiss and later at Yale. While working at a Baltimore newspaper, he and Brit Hadden conceived the idea of Time: a "news-magazine" that would condense the week's events in a format accessible to increasingly busy members of the middle class. They launched it in 1923, and young Luce quickly became a publishing titan. In 1936, after Tim's unexpected success--and Hadden's early death--Luce published the first issue of Life, to which millions soon subscribed. Brinkley shows how Luce reinvented the magazine industry in just a decade. The appeal of Life seemingly cut across the lines of race, class, and gender. Luce himself wielded influence hitherto unknown among journalists. By the early 1940s, he had come to see his magazines as vehicles to advocate for America's involvement in the

escalating international crisis, in the process popularizing the phrase "World War II." In spite of Luce's great success, happiness eluded him. His second marriage—to the glamorous playwright, politician, and diplomat Clare Booth—was a shambles. Luce spent his later years in isolation, consumed at times with conspiracy theories and peculiar vendettas. The Publisher tells a great American story of spectacular achievement—yet it never loses sight of the public and private costs at which that achievement came. From the Hardcover edition.