

Strangers in the Night: Some Cold War Critics

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If George Wallace were to bump into Julian Bond on the street, it is *possible* that the two would get into a discussion of their mutual dissatisfaction with Nixon Administration policy. More probably, they would just keep on walking. In assembling an anthology of essays which seek to find a common reference point in the foreign policy criticism of such men as Henry Wallace, Robert Taft, Claude Pepper, and Walter Lippmann, Thomas G. Paterson has created an equally unlikely meeting of minds.

Cold War Critics: Alternatives to American Foreign Policy in the Truman Years, edited by Thomas G. Paterson. Quadrangle Books. 313 pp. \$10.00.

In his introduction, Paterson does point to certain areas of agreement among these men, notably a belief in the possibility of coexistence with Russia and opposition to further militarization of the cold war. He also points out that the basis of the disagreements and lack of cordiality that existed between some of these men was rooted in matters of domestic political policy and cultural background. "Robert A. Taft, 'Mr. Republican,' seldom agreed with his colleagues Claude Pepper of Florida and Glen Taylor of Idaho, for their liberalism challenged his conscious conservatism on domestic issues, and their often shrill language, excited oratorical performances, and acquaintances with blunt dissenters of the left offended the sedate legislator from Ohio."

Paterson's fundamental error, and the reason this volume lacks coherence as a work of historical and theoretical criticism, is his failure to point out the intimate relationship between foreign and domestic issues as perceived by a political actor, whether he be apologist or critic. The primary referent for such a figure *must* be the needs and goals of his own nation. In this sense all his policies are domestic, regardless of the locale in which the policy is acted out. His "foreign" policies will, in the main, reflect his assessment of domestic needs and of the most fruitful strategies for satisfying them. If men have widely

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divergent visions of the nation's interests, any convergence of viewpoints on matters of foreign policy is more easily attributable to a case of Bond-Wallaceism than to a subconscious but nonetheless consistent critique of Truman Administration foreign policy.

Taft and Lippmann, despite deep philosophical differences, shared a basically sanguine assessment of the condition of the American nation and therefore sought, through their foreign policy notions, to insure its continued stability at the smallest possible price and risk. Pepper, Wallace, and Taylor held a grimmer view. They felt that the deep inequalities and increasing regimentation of American life were being exacerbated by the Administration's rhetorical, military, and monetary commitment to a policy of doctrinaire and pan-global anti-communism.

The response of Lippmann and Pepper to the Truman Doctrine illustrates how opposition to a particular policy can reveal widely divergent interests and concerns. Lippmann's opposition stemmed not from unwillingness to defend Turkey (he did feel that Greece was strategically unimportant to U.S. security and therefore unworthy of such a commitment), but rather from the effects which he felt that Truman's messianic rhetoric would have upon the credulity of other nations, who would view the action as a simple defense of U.S. security.

Pepper *et al.* were much more concerned with the domestic repercussions of this hypocrisy. Above all, they feared the effects upon the quality of public discourse wrought by policies and statements which gave aid and succor to dictators and Nazi collaborators in the name of a crusade for democracy.

Lippmann sought the basis for a U.S.-Soviet accommodation in the concept of historically and geographically defined spheres of interest. The U.S. sphere was to include its neighbor, Latin America, and its old friend, Western Europe. The Soviets were to be pacified with control of the historic pathway of German and French aggression, Eastern Europe, including Finland and the Balkans. Lippmann felt that such mutual recognition would assuage the great powers' fear for their security and allow them to play a role of *primus entre pares* in their own regions.

The gravest flaw in Lippmann's schema was not its excessive pragmatism but its equation of reality with history and geography. Long-range saturation bombing in Europe and nuclear attack in Japan demon-

strated that control of one's neighbors was no longer a major element in remaining free from attack. Technology had replaced geography as the key strategic variable. It is to Lippmann's credit that he did not follow the cold-warrior temptation of equating Soviet policy and Marxist ideology. However, his denial of any significant influence of the former upon the latter took him on another flight into unreality. Ideas are real. We cannot understand America's preoccupation with the trappings of democracy in South Vietnam or Russia's expensive love affair with Fidel Castro without looking at the relationship of ideology to action. Both America and the Soviet Union have images of themselves based not only on the immensity of their capabilities and power but also on the persuasiveness of the mass ideologies that were crucial to the creation of their national characters. Their desire to influence the course of events in places far from their borders is, for better or worse, a result of deep-seated beliefs in the efficacy and moral superiority of their respective social and political systems. No theory of national interest can afford to ignore this ideological component.

Pepper *et al.* did not suffer from this predilection for intellectual anachronism. Rather, their desire to have their foreign policy notions conform to the ideals they were pursuing in the domestic sphere caused them to underestimate gravely the uncertainty and risk inherent in foreign affairs. Domestically it is possible, within limits, to ascertain the motives as well as the *modus operandi* of the other parties with whom one has to deal. In foreign relations, the problem becomes one of Intelligence. What did the Russians really want? What steps were they prepared to take to get it? Did their leaders mean what they said or say what they meant? None of these questions could be answered with any certainty by those with access to elaborate Intelligence reports, much less by a lone senator or journalist. In a threatening world, the safest course to take in guessing another's intentions is to assume the worst.

Such was the tack taken by the Administration. Any ambiguous information was interpreted in the light of the unquenchable Soviet urge for conquest and domination. This calculus could not long be relegated to events overseas. It soon came to play an important role in determining the public's reaction to events and personalities within the U.S., where better information and subtler criteria for its analysis were available.

Partly because they dreaded the domestic effects of the devil theory of Soviet intentions, and partly because they viewed communism as only one of many distasteful foreign ideologies at work in the world, Pepper *et al.* chose to base their notion of Soviet intentions on her fear of domination by the West. The Munich Pact and Churchill and Roosevelt's duplicitous delay in opening up a Second Front are ample justification for such fears. However, even if such

fears are well-founded, and even if they do represent the underlying rationale for Soviet policy, what likelihood is there that any policy short of total victory would assuage those fears? Fear is the motive force for many of the grossest forms of cruel and irrational behavior both among men and nations and is, of all feelings, the hardest to eradicate.

The shortcomings of the foreign policy perspectives mentioned so far, the factual errors of "realism," the logical fallacy inherent in the "Soviet fear" theory, and the self-fulfilling doom of the "devil theory," all bear witness to the need for considering other viewpoints. A more promising one is presented by the single remaining critic treated in this volume, James Paul Warburg. Instead of fashioning his notions around a single static view of Soviet intentions, Warburg treats those intentions as subject to modification by intelligent policy. He sought to arrive at formulations that would further U.S. interests without exciting Soviet fears. He appears to mean that even if we suspect the worst about Russian motives, in areas where our security is not at stake we should act *as if* their motives were pure. In the hopes that it would improve the Soviet opinion of U.S. intentions, he advocated the continuation of Lend-Lease and the extension of other forms of monetary assistance to the Soviets. He opposed Soviet and Allied plans for the pastoralization of Germany because he saw that a solvent Germany was critical to the well-being of the rest of Western Europe. At the same time, he opposed the remilitarization and granting of sovereignty to West Germany, for he felt that such steps would be considered by Soviet leaders to pose unacceptable risks to their security.

In his book *The United States in the Postwar World*, Warburg tells of an interview he had with the late Czechoslovakian Foreign Minister, Jan Masaryk. Masaryk explained that Czechoslovakia's refusal to accept Marshall Plan aid was not due to direct Soviet pressure, but rather to the bombastic utterances by U.S. officials, which equated acceptance of aid with outright defection from the Soviet orbit, a stance which the Czechs could ill afford to adopt.

This story, true or not, illustrates the greatest weakness of the Truman era foreign policy. Because they felt that the public would only support foreign policy ventures when cloaked in the threat of worldwide Communist domination, such a threat was invoked as the justification for all foreign policy and much domestic policy, regardless of the realities involved and unmindful of the effect that such a rationale would have on the chances for the venture to succeed.

It is to the undying credit of most of the men discussed in this volume that whatever logical or ideological blinders they happened to be wearing, they did recognize that such a posturing on the part of the most powerful nation on earth could only lead to greater world tension and increased domestic repression.