Peace With China? U.S. Decisions for Asia edited by Earl C. Ravenal

(Liveright; 248 pp.; $7.50/$2.95)

Peter Van Ness

From toasting Chou En-lai with *Maotai* in Peking, to mining the ports of Northern Vietnam, to negotiating crucial arms and trade agreements with the Soviets, Richard Nixon practices an activist diplomacy toward the Communist world. His words speak of peace but his actions often increase the conflict. Is there a benevolent substance to the rhetoric of the Nixon Doctrine and his election-year promises of a generation of peace? Or does all of the official talk and Presidential travel simply amount to a new public-relations effort to obscure the familiar reality of a worldwide American policy of intervention to contain communism?

When the Institute for Policy Studies held its conference on American foreign policy in September, 1970, the participants could not have foreseen the surprising series of Nixon-initiated future events. But in the discussions held during the meeting, which are reported in *Peace With China?* several participants mercilessly probed the core assumptions and fundamental principles of American defense policy, thereby providing an analytical base point from which to assess any subsequent policy initiatives from Washington.

Peace With China?—which is not really about China but about U.S. Asian policy in general—contains contributions from eighteen of the original conference participants, including a handful of academics but mostly former and present national security analysts for the Government (from State, Defense, RAND, etc.). The only prominent China specialist in the group, Franz Schurmann from Berkeley, plays a minor role—his longest statement comprises just four pages and is buried in the back of the book. Defense-specialist contributors include: Daniel Ellsberg, Leslie Gelb, Morton Halperin, Robert Osgood, Leon Sloss, Pierre Sprey, and the editor of the collection, Earl Ravenal.

Ravenal as editor sets the theme for the volume in his opening essay: "The basic question is whether the Nixon Doctrine is an honest policy that will fully fund the worldwide and Asian commitments it proposes to maintain, or whether it conceals a drift toward nuclear defense or an acceptance of greater risk of local defeat." His own answer is that while the Nixon Doctrine speaks of the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Asia and their replacement (via Asianization) by local military forces trained and supported by the United States, the fact is that Washington seeks to maintain the same level of international commitments. Diminishing American military manpower, according to Ravenal, actually increases rather than decreases the risk of conflict, and increases the likelihood of an ultimate American escalation to the use of nuclear weapons in a conflict situation.

In a similar vein, John Dower, a history professor at the University of Wisconsin and an editor of the *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, argues that containment and counterrevolution have been the principal objectives of post-World War II American policy in Asia; that these objectives remain unchanged under the Nixon Doctrine, which "is fundamentally a cost-conscious policy, aimed at maintaining a major U.S. role in Asia at less cost in both dollars and American lives"; and that it is a strategy in terms of which "the U.S. seeks to defend its ambitions in Asia through proxy armies and client regimes."

Other contributors focus on more specific aspects of American policy. Pierre Sprey, former Defense Department aide, spells out the implications that follow from adopting either of two alternative methods of defense management: the "buy what we need" approach of the McNamara days or the "fixed cost" system of 1954-1960. Neither approach is ideal, he argues, but on balance "fixed cost" is preferable if reinforced by a healthy skepticism regarding prevailing defense planning myths.

Daniel Ellsberg's paper, drawing on the internal government history of the Vietnam war, rejects the notion that American Presidents have been either misled by their advisors or by their illusions to try to achieve victory in Vietnam. On the contrary, he argues, each of the succession of Presidents faced with the Vietnam dilemma has chosen to continue the war for fear of the domestic political costs involved in being held responsible for an American defeat. Ellsberg's thesis is that the political damage inflicted by the Republicans on the Democratic Party as a result of the Truman Administration being tarred with the "loss of China" has been adopted as a lesson of history by subsequent party leaders, who believe that it would be political disaster to be charged with responsibility for the "loss of Indochina." The result has been year-to-year crisis-planning to forestall a defeat viewed by virtually all as inevitable.

Ellsberg concludes that "we have elected and have been led by presidents who, whatever the other reasons they may have had, were willing to kill large numbers of Asians, destroy Asian societies, imperil American society, and sacrifice large numbers of Americans from time to time, mainly for the reason that their party and they themselves would be in political trouble if they did not. That is a very serious charge. If it is true, and if our future presidents are like our past, then we face a future not of disengagement but of continued involvement and intervention, a future not of peace but of

greater war than we have seen in the past in Asia."

The last paper that I would like to mention, from among a collection which includes a number of thoughtful contributions, is Marcus Raskin's essay in which he responds to charges of "isolationism" leveled at critics of American policy, and calls for a new concept of internationalism. "The term isolationist has been used to describe, in short, anyone who fundamentally questions an inhuman, immoral, or imperial role of the United States in the world," asserts Raskin, while "internationalism" has served as a cover for American selfish state interest. He sees a proper internationalism emerging in transnational relationships among like-minded people across national boundaries and often in opposition to the governments which rule the individual countries. Raskin doubts the ability of national leaders to maintain the loyalty of deprived or exploited citizens, and he foresees the emergence of groups formed on the basis of common interests working internationally against the selfish interests of national élites.

The book also includes defenders of Administration policy, but they are in the minority. For example, Robert Osgood, formerly a member of Nixon's National Security Council staff and now at Johns Hopkins, and Leon Sloss of the State Department, attempt to clarify the meaning and implications of the Nixon Doctrine even while admitting that a good deal of ambiguity exists in its official interpretations; and Major Stanley Kanarowski, also a former NSC staff member, presents a rather thin analysis of the crucial question of nuclear weapons under the Nixon Doctrine. But the main thrust of the majority of the papers is critical. The consensus among the critics is that American foreign policy objectives have not changed under Nixon. They see some changes in methods, but the global commitments remain intact.

Each of the authors, no doubt, would want to revise his analysis somewhat in light of recent events. To me, Washington's maneuvers of the past twelve months indicate that in its adversary relationship with the non-capitalist world, the Administration is as vigorously involved in efforts to coopt communism as to contain it. Playing off barbarians against barbarians is supposed to have been a basic principle of traditional Chinese foreign relations, but clearly its most dedicated contemporary practitioners are the President and his national security advisor. Power politics and appeals to narrow self-interest have replaced ideological mission as the foundation of American policy, as Washington seeks to play Russia and China against each other, and both against the revolutionary movements of the Third World. In this sense, Richard Nixon has unquestionably learned the strategic lesson of the Sino-Soviet dispute, and is indeed implementing a policy that breaks with the American postwar tradition.

One wonders, however, whether hopes for a generation of peace can have any firmer foundation in a policy based on political cynicism than they long had in a policy based on ideological conflict.

Revolution & Cosmopolitanism: The Western Stage and the Chinese Stages by Joseph R. Levenson

(University of California; xxix + 64 pp.; $5.00)

Richard C. Kagan

In the fall of 1965 I attended an elaborate dinner for Fulbright scholars in the Republic of China. The ceremonious occasion presented an opportunity to meet not only government officials but others in the American (Western) community as well. A medical missionary, who served both foreigners and locals, began to interrogate me on the background of the Fulbrighters and other American students in Taiwan. When the conversation inevitably turned to the question of religion, he exclaimed: "Why is it that so many Jews are interested in China?" Joe Levenson's book and life give one sophisticated answer to this rudely expressed yet widely asked question.

Joseph Levenson's reasons for studying China were not the two that were commonplace in the 1940's and 1950's: (1) that it was exotic—its Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Mountain and Water paintings could be imported into the drab life of the West to create a new life style and provide a new object for entertainment; or (2) that China was the enemy and we must study it in order to know our adversary.

For Levenson, the virgin quality of the field of Chinese studies offered "big open spaces and the promise of a road that went the long way home." For him, China existed as a set of problems, similar to our own, and provided answers which could inform and sensitize us to our own problems. "On a psychological level there is a comparability between the Chinese and Jewish experience; both are parts outside the main line of Western historical tradition, the European tradition; both are being carried into cosmopolitanism."

All of Levenson's studies are privately inspired works of art which deal with the tension between provincialism (the Jew in Jewish tradition, the Han [Chinese] as Confucian) and cosmopolitanism (the rootless wandering Jew/Han). The tension is trans-historical, dipping into specific historical incidents only incidentally. Thus, the works of Levenson sparkle with citations from