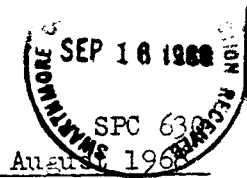


PEACE NEWS LETTER

Published for and by the Syracuse Peace Council
Alan B. Peabody, Editor \$1.00 per year



PAX AMERICANA

Many books on U.S. Foreign Policy have appeared in recent years. Some are highly technical, too difficult for the layman. Others are popular and fail to do justice to the complexities of policy formulation and execution. Ronald Steele's Pax Americana lies between the extremes. The author, a former Foreign Service Officer, offers a significant critique of U.S. policy around the globe which can be read with profit by members of the peace movement.

Steel contends that the United States "as the most powerful" and richest nation on earth "has intervened massively in the affairs of other nations." Her noble impulses and generous motives have not prevented "much of the world" from viewing her as "a great imperial power" with "an empire of nominally independent client states."

American idealism has been the impetus for overseas intervention. U.S. military power since World War II has made such intervention possible. For twenty-five years the U.S. has "been pursuing a foreign policy designed to promulgate American values." This is what the crusade against Communism has really involved. The nation's goals have been unlimited; its means have been limited. Statesmen have not always discerned "which actions have a direct relation to the nation's security, and which merely represent wish-fulfillment on an international scale."

The U.S. is "an imperial power" which believes it to be her role "to make the world a happier, more orderly place, one more nearly reflecting our own image." Persuaded "of the universal validity of our institutions and of our obligation to help those threatened by disorder, aggression and poverty," it has assumed the role of "protector of Europe, the guardian of Latin America, the protector of weak and dependent nations released from the bondage of colonialism."

The U.S. did not acquire its empire for profit. Rather, it was acquired because "we believe we have a responsibility to defend nations everywhere against communism." Unfortunately the U.S. confused "communism as a social doctrine with communism as a form of Soviet imperialism," assuming "that any advance of communist doctrine anywhere was an automatic gain for the Soviet Union."

Over a period of years the U.S. has been confronted with changes in both the communist bloc and the free world which have undercut the

"obsession with communism as an ideology." Consequently there has been a detente with the Soviet Union, but "the obsession ... has now switched its roost to Asia, and the specter of a global conspiracy directed from Moscow has been replaced by the specter of one directed from Peking. The focal point has changed: the obsession remains the same . . . "

Steel stresses the intellectual problem which underlies American foreign policy: the tenacious grip of an ideology versus a realistic appraisal of trends in the affairs of men and nations.

The dogma has lingered on because it alone can justify a good many of our current involvements. Without the belief that popularly inspired revolutions are likely to fall into the hands of communists, how justify the intervention in Santo Domingo? Without the assumption that any communist government in Asia must automatically be subservient to Peking and manipulated by her, how justify the war in Vietnam? Without the dogma, how could there be public support for the policies of military intervention being pursued by the administration? Such policies are reasonable only if we assume that there is a universal communist conspiracy and that all revolutions are masterminded by the same malevolent source -- formerly Moscow, and now Peking

The empirical evidence indicates that old alliances are being shattered and that new political constellations are growing. The hegemony of the two nuclear giants seems to be numbered. While "each remains committed to its ideology," neither can enforce it on the other without risking nuclear war. Hence "dialogue, compromise, and even agreement" have resulted.

As previously indicated, peaceful coexistence with the Soviet Union has not ended ideological conflict for the United States. Continents and enemies have been changed. "It is almost as though we were unable to view the world without demons -- as soon as one was put to rest, another immediately appeared."

Victims of our "self-imposed ignorance" and dogma concerning China's intentions toward us, we discover that the Chinese are victimized by their "insularity and rigidity." "The question of how to deal with China is the greatest foreign policy problem facing this country today..."

We seek our intervention in Asia as "divorced from national advantage," but

... to China's eyes, shaded by the spectacles of Marxist orthodoxy and of historical suspicion of the West, the United States is a threatening foe which nearly invaded Chinese territory in the Korean war, which uses her military power to prevent Formosa from being

returned to China, which has rimmed China with military bases from Pakistan to Japan, which has kept her out of the United Nations, which continues to participate in the Chinese civil war by supporting Chiang Kai-Shek, which is fighting a war with a communist ally on China's southern frontier, and which seeks to deny China her sphere of influence in Southeast Asia.

China, contrary to most American opinion, acknowledges that revolution cannot be exported. It has given its "ideological followers fair warning that they are on their own." While China applauds all revolutionary wars, it prudently abstains from participation. In reality it "conceals military caution behind verbal extravagance."

Presently U.S. policy in Asia "rests upon the belief that China can be contained through the maintenance of anti-communist states all along her frontiers." But mere anti-communism has not made strong men like Syngman Rhee, Chiang Kai-Shek, and Ngo Din Diem "valuable allies." Unable to command loyalty within their own countries, they depended upon the U.S. to keep them in power while the U.S. thought of them as "worthwhile allies." In Vietnam, "we were in the sorry position of trying to create a state where none had existed, find a leader where there was nothing but rival gangs, and hold the line against a communist-led army that had already won its war and was waiting to unify the country as had been promised at Geneva."

Recalling the American experience with a changing Europe, Steele questions: "if communism in Eastern Europe is not a threat to the West, why is communism a threat in Southeast Asia? . . . The communist nations of Asia, like those of Eastern Europe, are just as eager to guard their independence as are nations that are non-communist . . ."

The reason we are supporting dictatorships such as those in South Korea, Taiwan, and South Vietnam is not that they are 'freedom loving democracies' (which they are not), but that we think they are a barrier to Chinese expansion. But why not, by the same token, support North Korea and North Vietnam as well? If it is China we are worried about, we should be aiding whatever nations are best capable of resisting her . . .

It was Fidel Castro who "brought the cold war into the western hemisphere, and whatever else his revolution may have accomplished, it revolutionized Washington's attitude toward Latin America." Money began flowing into Latin America, but Latin Americans see beyond American verbal pieties "the raw boot and the unsheathed bayonet of American military power." Indeed, they have often experienced its application -- sometimes contrary to America's pledged word!

Steele concludes that the U.S. is not "emulated as the model toward which the less fortunate members of the family of nations should aspire." It is often an object of resentment and calumny because "American power, to a degree not fully conceived of even by the American people in whose name it is exercised, has been turned into an instrument for the pursuit of an American ideology." That ideology goes beyond "defense of the nation and its institutions" towards "the establishment of a world order on the American plan. It is this desire to translate American ideals into a universal political system that lies at the core of the current crisis in American diplomacy."

A revision of U.S. policy will include an effort "to determine which involvements are crucial to American security and which are peripheral." The United States must also learn that power - especially military - has limits. It must "allow the new nations to work out their own destiny as they see fit within their own frontiers" and this means that "disturbance within a nation, however distasteful we may find them, must be the concern of that nation alone and cannot be the excuse for a military intervention designed to impose a form of government favored by the intervening power.

Steele concludes "Having failed to bring the world democracy, we may now attempt the more realistic ambition of making it safe for diversity. America's worth to the world will be measured not by the solutions she seeks to impose on others, but by the degree to which she achieves her own ideals at home . . ."

Ronald Steele, Pax Americana, New York: The Viking Press, 1967.
(Paperback edition, \$1.85)

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