

The USA in World Affairs

A.E.Campbell

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THE USA IN WORLD AFFAIRS

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THE USA IN WORLD AFFAIRS

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VOLUME III

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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

We know the past from the records that it has left to the present. The records left by each nation, or people, are in some way distinctive of its own characteristics. The first and simplest way of approaching these things is to look for them out of doors. In Europe, almost every town, and innumerable villages, contain buildings that give their own accounts of changing styles in architecture, which reflect the changing social history; in the countryside, the patterns of fields, their colour and size tell stories about the uses people make of the land, and these uses often reach hundreds of years into the past. Much of the American landscape is broader than that of Western Europe, less cluttered with small divisions and frequent contrasts. American scenery is very much less burdened with ancient monuments; there are no Gothic cathedrals, no ancient churches or ruined castles. America's great civic monuments are the skyscrapers, which originated in Chicago in the late nineteenth century. But fine city buildings have often been destroyed to make way for new ones expected to make more money, or serve new purposes.

We know the past also from written records. These are the chief resource of the historian. Part of his professional business is to know where to find them, for they are widely scattered in official record offices, historical societies and private and university collections. In the United States, where each state has its own government, responsible for its own records, they have always been more widely dispersed than in centralized countries like England or France (which also do, in fact, have many valuable local collections). The American past has been interpreted to successive generations mainly by historians, using these and other types of records, but writing on specific themes; although various useful guides have been produced to help the research worker, obvious difficulties stand in the way of the student who wants to discover the sources for himself.

The present series makes a beginning at remedying these

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difficulties. It is arranged in themes rather than by straightforward chronology. In each volume, an editor who is a recognized expert in the field takes up and develops a special theme of major historical importance. Each volume is short, easy to handle, and introductory. The documents are carefully selected, not merely to illustrate, but to help to explain the significance of these various themes in American history, and the particular ways in which they have developed. Each editor has made his own decisions about the choice of material, the way in which it is arranged, and about the introductory and explanatory passages which set the documents in their place. For this reason the volumes will differ from each other as the editors develop their own methods of organization; different subjects require different treatments and each volume will have a certain style of its own. However, they all conform to the general plan which, we hope, will make them useful to students. The documents themselves are intended to do the main body of the work in this series, but in each case the editor provides an introduction and notes of explanation on the documents.

Since the end of the nineteenth century, the United States has been transformed into a world power, whose cares and responsibilities reach into, and affect, almost every corner of the globe. The enormous extent of the subject is matched by the extraordinary variety of the problems and interests involved. Professor Campbell has arranged the documents in this volume in a chronological sequence rather than trying to separate them by subject. This arrangement, as he explains, directs attention to the changing circumstances in which American statesmen had to work rather than to a more systematic approach or treatment which may, however, be misleading.

In recent years, the issues of foreign policy, and the fears associated with the needs and dangers with which it deals, have dominated our lives to such an extent that they have entered our ordinary thoughts through the language we use. The same is equally true of the language of strategy and the weapons of attack and defence. A surprisingly large number of everyday expressions reflect the terminology developed in the discussion of international relations since the Second

PREFACE

World War. Mr. John Foster Dulles, who served as Secretary of State during most of President Eisenhower's two terms of office, once declared that he sought safety by going to the brink of war. A world that was understandably jittery about the dangers involved, very quickly hit on the derisive word 'brinkmanship', which has stuck. In the same period, the Chinese Communists, who controlled the whole mainland of China, began to threaten two tiny islands, Quemoy and Matsu. When we speak of Britain to-day as an 'offshore island' we are using a term that became current in that minor Far Eastern crisis, the significance being precisely that the islands were relatively unimportant compared with the mainland powers that were quarrelling about them.

The word 'escalation' refers to the dangers of nuclear war. Until the making of the partial Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty in 1963, the dread of a nuclear outcome hung over the frequently menacing animosities between the great powers. In a crisis, such as those over Berlin in 1960–1961, or over Cuba in October 1962, every step was filled with dangers of an order that the world had never known before. Any move that actually made nuclear, as opposed to conventional, forms of conflict more likely to happen was said to 'escalate' the crisis. 'Escalation' meant increased danger of nuclear war. But very soon it passed into such common use that its original connotation was largely forgotten. The American armed forces and foreign services have been adept at using bland words for ugly things. Weapons of immense destructive power are said to be 'sophisticated'; the war in Vietnam brought in a familiar crop of euphemistic expressions. There has probably never been a period in which strategy, foreign affairs and weapons entered so fully into everyday speech; readers can check this observation, if they wish, by keeping an eye open for them when they read the newspapers or listen to the news.

Professor Campbell has very wisely chosen to keep the whole of his period in a carefully balanced perspective. One of the most dangerous temptations in dealing with recent events is to subordinate the past to the present. But as time passes, perspectives quickly change, and recent events frequently recede in importance. The steady manner in which

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Professor Campbell has kept the whole period in view will serve the student as a better and longer insight than an approach geared to the immediate but ever-changing present.

J. R. Pole

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this collection of documents is to introduce students and others to the main outlines of American foreign policy in the twentieth century. With the briefest of headnotes the documents have been left to speak for themselves. There is no substitute for a close study of texts; and, about the older of these documents at least, historians have differed so widely that it may well be helpful for the student to come to them without instruction as to what they were once thought to imply.

That argument is most valid where the documents are most authoritative and, as far as possible, authority has been the chief criterion of selection. Treaties and other international agreements have a more secure standing than any other source. Almost equally valuable is legislation, when not too elaborate and technical for inclusion in such a collection as this—the 'Neutrality Act' of 1939, for example, was omitted on that ground. Resolutions of one, or both, Houses of Congress; formal representations from one government to another; presidential statements to Congress or to an international audience; all these have a weight which less formal or more political statements, even by Presidents, do not have. It is in the nature of politicians that they constantly make statements which, a few weeks later, they would gladly forget, and do forget. Their opponents remind them, of course, but that does a politician little harm. By contrast with such ephemeral stuff, public documents have been carefully drafted. A government has some commitment to stand by them, if the cost is not too high. A statesman who would cheerfully abandon the statement he made last week would find it more embarrassing to disavow a public paper. Moreover, because public papers are carefully drafted, they have at least a negative value. Propositions which we might reasonably expect to find in them but do not, are lacking because they have been consi-

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dered and rejected. Such documents are the highest common factor of diplomacy. Risks have been eliminated so far as the authors could foresee the risks.

Concentration on public documents, whatever its merits, has certain disadvantages. Most obviously, it deprives the student of the debate on foreign policy which has been continuing in the United States, as in other countries. The domestic opponents of official policy remain unheard, and so do the arguments with which Presidents and their supporters have tried to defend their policies and win over their critics. It would take a different volume, and a much larger one, to do justice to that debate. In a volume of this size—in which, after all, some public documents must be included—any supporting material would have to be so heavily selective as to be more misleading than helpful. But even if space allowed a more comprehensive selection of argument and counter-argument, much interpretation would still be needed. Public documents need equal interpretation, but of a different sort. They are given their form by long-established and long-lasting conventions as to how such papers should be written. The interpretation they require is detailed textual criticism, rather than knowledge of, or feeling for, a period. Of the two exercises the first is much the easier and more certain for the beginner.

Inevitably, much has been omitted. In particular the crises of the Eisenhower years and the early 1960's—over Berlin, the offshore islands of China, or Cuba—find little space. No one politically conscious at that time will doubt that they were real crises, or fail to recall the feeling that the third world war was imminent; but because, in the event, the crises were surmounted by inaction rather than by action, the formal record is lacking. It seems likely, for example, that the Soviet Union will not again attempt to place missiles on Cuba, and certain that, if she did, the United States would oppose the attempt with confidence bolstered by her earlier successful resistance, but there is no formal agreement to which appeal could be made.

One exception may be allowed. American foreign pol-

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icy is peculiarly the responsibility of the President himself. In foreign policy it is hard to prevent him from doing what he thinks necessary, and almost impossible to force him to do what he thinks undesirable. For that reason, if for no other, the voices of the Presidents should be heard, and the most active Presidents of the century are represented by statements which, while of some importance, are characteristic as well.

The arrangement of the documents is straightforwardly chronological. Any other arrangement has the disadvantage that attractive and plausible categories conflict with each other—regional categories such as Latin America or the Far East, for example, with thematic categories such as the abandonment of isolationism or the impact of the atomic bomb. Yet chronology has more positive virtues than mere convenience or simplicity. The date of any document is, after all, the first and most important fact the historian wants to know about it. To order these documents chronologically may serve to remind us that American statesmen were preoccupied now with one problem, now with another, and that they were responsive to changes in the world with which they had to deal. The point may seem too obvious to be worth making, but many students of American foreign policy—Americans not least among them—have approached that policy as if it followed lines laid down by American tradition, and stumbled into realism only by accident, more usually attempting to force the world into an American mould which it does not in fact fit.

One example much used by such critics is the alleged attempt of President Wilson to remake the world after the First World War, and the revulsion—seen as hardly more realistic—with which Americans withdrew into isolation as they became disillusioned. Another example is the ideological hostility to Communism after the Second World War, which led Americans to misread alike, the intentions of Russia, so creating the Cold War in Europe, and of China, so prolonging it in the East. Even the critics who draw on such examples, however, commonly regard them as untypical. They see American policy as dis-

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credible because unrealistic and so ineffective, and they blame American traditions, but those same traditions must somehow account for periods of indifference and inactivity.

American policy during the two world wars has been comparatively neglected in this volume, and deliberately so, but without any intention of calling in question the importance of the conflicts, or of American participation in them. Without that participation the result of both wars, and the history of the world, would have been very different. In such a different world the later policy of the United States would also have been different. It must be allowed, therefore, that American policy as we know it has been determined, hardly less than that of other Powers, by the two great wars of the century. Nevertheless, it is also true that in each war American statesmen were not merely unsuccessful in attaining the results for which they hoped, but misread the future to a degree which has seemed to some of their critics to demonstrate either that individuals in power were lacking in realism, vision and judgment, or that their errors reflected weaknesses in the society which they represented. A false notion of international order, reflecting a false notion of internal order, brought its inevitable penalty of failure.

To discuss these propositions at length here is impossible. It is arguable, however, that American statesmen differed not at all from the statesmen of other nations, whatever their political complexion. During the wars, short-term considerations inevitably took precedence over longer-term plans, and the longer-term plans were distorted by the short. But beyond that it was a characteristic of both wars that performance in the war, and the outcome of the war, were not closely related to the course of events afterwards. American statesmen showed as much realism as any in abandoning their wartime assessments and purposes when the course of events seemed to suggest that they were unrealistic. In doing so they naturally defended their new courses of action, as they had defended their old, by reference to established principles of American policy. When princi-