

# BOOK REVIEWS

*The Third World War: A Future History.* By General Sir John Hackett and others, London: Sidgwick and Jackson, Limited, 1978, pp. 368, £ 7.95.

Reviewed by GEOFFREY KEMP

According to the legend, two or three years ago Britain's distinguished soldier-scholar, General Sir John Hackett, was approached by Sidgwick and Jackson, Ltd. to see if he would be interested in writing a futuristic book about World War III. The publishers were motivated to make such a request in view of the sustained boom in the sales of war literature, especially studies dealing with the Second World War. Sir John eventually agreed to the project and assembled a team of renowned military colleagues (including Brigadier Kenneth Hunt, former visiting professor to The Fletcher School) who subsequently collaborated in writing what is now a best-selling book.

The fact that the topic was considered worthy of major interest and that the book has done so well reflects upon the intrinsic importance of the subject and the style and content of the Hackett study. The strong sales suggest that the Western public is increasingly concerned about the

growth of Soviet military power and that military conflict with the Warsaw Pact is no figment of the imagination of the military-industrial complex. Times have changed from the days of the late 1960s and early 1970s when such subjects were considered distasteful and irrelevant. It is now appreciated that over the last decade there has been a sustained growth in Soviet military power. The West has witnessed a more assertive Soviet foreign policy, including the use of surrogates such as Cuba, Soviet military support for regimes such as those in Uganda and Ethiopia, which are perceived to have geopolitical importance for Soviet grand strategy, and continued Soviet support for Vietnam, now perhaps the most militaristic and racist country in the world. The result of these trends has been to sober Western attitudes to the point where public pressures for increased defense expenditures exceed the demands for a reduction in military budgets.

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*The Third World War* is an elaboration of this new theme in Western foreign policy. Professionals, both inside and outside of government, increasingly believe that a war with the Soviet Union could occur in the next ten years if Soviet military power peaks while its social and economic fabric remains backward and the Western countries equivocate on major rearmament programs. Furthermore, growing Western dependence on overseas resources, especially Middle East oil, has made the global nature and nonnuclear elements of the conflict with the Soviet Union more important than ever. This is not to imply that nuclear weapons no longer serve an important function in the East-West balance. Indeed, the backdrop of any major conflict with the Soviet Union must include an understanding of the ultimate horror of nuclear war. It is on this point and several others that the Hackett book is so good.

The authors go to great pains to draw out a realistic future political picture which assumes that by the year 1984 the Soviet system is in trouble. Its leaders believe there are gains to be made by using Soviet military power but not the nuclear attack out-of-the-blue that worries some Western writers. In the book's scenario, uprisings in Poland and the frustration of Soviet foreign policy in various parts of the world combine to make the Soviets feel increasingly insecure. In addition, the Western countries begin to rearm seriously. Time seems to be running out for the

Soviet system, and it is in this context that the Soviets embark on a series of covert and overt acts culminating with the invasion of Yugoslavia following the death of Tito and the deliberate provocation of insurgencies in the Middle East and Africa. These provide the precursor for World War III which, in the book, begins in August 1985.

The initial chapters describing the world setting in the 1980s and the descriptions of the early battles of World War III are the most persuasive in the book. Since the primary authors are all British, there is a tendency to focus, somewhat exclusively, on the North Atlantic theater and the Central and Northern Fronts of Europe as the key arena of the global war. Briefly stated, what happens is that the Soviet Union launches a full-scale attack in central Europe hoping to reach the Rhine in nine days. The attack is blunted owing to sturdy defensive operations by the Allied forces. Equally important, and to the surprise of the Soviet Union, France, now under the leadership of a Popular Front, opts to side with NATO and commits its forces for the Western cause. The conflict involves minor operations in the Middle East and Africa, but few military activities occur in the Far East. Israel, ironically, sits out the war while Iran (still under the Shah when the book was written) engages in conflict with a newly vitalized United Arab Republic led by a resurgent pro-Soviet Egypt. In Southern Africa the black confrontation states, with Soviet blessing and assistance,

attack South Africa in an attempt to defeat the white regime. The sections dealing with the Middle East and Africa are far less credible than the rest of the study and would not stand up under careful examination either in the political or military context even if the untimely demise of the Shah had not occurred. In any global confrontation in the Persian Gulf, Soviet forces would quickly occupy northern Iran, posing an acute dilemma for the Western powers as to whether to send forces to the Middle East or to focus on the North Atlantic theater.

Understandably, it is on the Central Front, Northern Europe and the North Atlantic that the authors display their skill, imagination and, above all else, professional knowledge of the manner in which the ground, air and sea war might be fought. The Russian advance is blunted primarily because of superior Western command, control and communications, superior electronic warfare, reorganized Western infantry tactics and deployments, and the extensive use of anti-tank weapons against Soviet armor, especially their vulnerable armored personnel carriers. The Soviets fail to achieve the breakthrough and American reinforcements arrive in time, though at great cost, helped by the successful air defense of Britain and France's decision to permit the use of its ports, thus providing defense in depth for the logistical pipeline from the United States. The battle of the Atlantic is severe but enough reinforcements and equip-

ment get through to hold the front.

The Soviets are now faced with a stalemate in Europe and increasing signs of unrest and turmoil in the satellite countries, especially Poland. At this point, the Soviet leadership embarks on an extremist course and decides to launch one nuclear weapon against the British city of Birmingham in an attempt to divide the Alliance and force the United States to negotiate a settlement rather than face Armageddon. The chapter describing the nuclear strike against Birmingham is well researched and very plausible in a macabre way. After this point, however, the book as a whole degenerates into a rather rapid and not altogether plausible conclusion. The Americans and British respond to the Birmingham attack with a nuclear strike on Minsk signalling to the Soviet leadership that this is only a limited attack and there will be no follow-up unless the Soviets escalate. The fear of general nuclear conflagration encourages several Soviet republics and the East European countries to rebel against the Soviet leadership. The Soviet empire collapses, the war ends, and in the postwar environment two major power centers emerge: the United States and the new Sino-Japanese co-prosperity sphere.

The happy ending in the book results from the scenario that the authors developed, which assumes that as of 1977-1978 the leaders and the public of the Western countries began to accept that Western defense preparedness must be increased. The authors demonstrate this by including in

the book appendices which show how, between 1977-1985, several European countries, especially Britain, improved their defense capability substantially. (At the time of this writing — late 1979 — Hackett's prediction appears to be realistic; defense spending in Western Europe and the United States is increasing and will probably accelerate in the years ahead.)

The book concludes with some salutary lessons for the Europeans expressed in the form of a memorandum written by one of the younger, more flamboyant, American generals known as "young blood and guts," who distinguished himself in the 1985 war. The general felt: "Henceforth, we should let Europe and Africa stew in their own tribal wars. It will not be worth the death of a single American soldier to prevent them, especially as (a) the Birmingham and Minsk bombs have shown that the whole world is not contaminated by single N-blasts, and (b) it will be possible for China-Japan and the United States to quarantine smaller countries' N-wars from afar by saying that any country which launches an N-weapon will immediately have a neutron bomb from us homed in by missile to its president's palace." The point made is that at the end of World War II there were two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, with Europe sandwiched in between, thereby enjoying considerable leverage over world events. However, if the Soviet Union collapses as a viable communist socie-

ty, Europe would no longer play such a critical role and a new geopolitical map would emerge.

How realistic is all this? The best parts of the book are those that deal with the political and military situation before the war and the campaign in Europe once the war has begun. For this reason alone, the book is worth careful reading, even for professionals. The inevitable biases and prejudices of the authors and their failure to deal successfully with the global impact of a NATO-Warsaw Pact war are offset by their military competence and writing skill. The most important message of the book is that there can be no substitute for checking Soviet military power other than a firm and committed effort to build up Western military capabilities. But this does not go far enough. In the absence of such an effort, the Soviet Union might not even have to invade Western Europe to achieve its political objectives. It could, in the opinion of the reviewer, checkmate Western power in other parts of the world, especially the Persian Gulf and the Middle East, without firing a shot at NATO forces. For it is the divisiveness of the West on economic matters that may prove to be a catalyst for disaster in the next ten years as well as traditional antagonisms between East and West.

Thus, in addition to shoring up Western military capabilities, a more coordinated Western policy on broader strategic and economic issues transcending NATO is essential. And if one thinks beyond 1985, it will be

necessary to pay much more attention to the future military roles of Japan and China within the context of Western interests. It is conceivable that successful arms control regulations and a new spirit of detente may make the Hackett perspective outdated by the

1980s. However, the evidence so far supports the pessimism of the authors who do not believe the Soviets are ten feet tall but, rather, that the Soviet vulnerabilities and weaknesses will increase their reliance on military power at a time of indecision in the West.

*Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State.* By Daniel Yergin, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1977, pp. 526, \$15.00.

Reviewed by STEVEN E. MILLER

Writing about a historical period on which there already exists a vast literature, Daniel Yergin has managed to produce a provocative book in which he seeks to explain the ideological underpinnings of the Cold War. *Shattered Peace* (recently published in paperback) is not, as the book cover claims, the definitive study of the Cold War, for it is less a history of events than a history of ideas and perceptions. Yergin focuses on the impact of events on the perceptions of American policymakers, fitting incidents that have previously received book-length treatment concisely into his description of how Americans viewed the world and how those views

influenced American reaction to subsequent foreign policy problems.

The essence of Mr. Yergin's argument is that there existed within the American government at the end of World War II two contending interpretations of Soviet behavior in international politics. One approach, labelled the "Riga axioms" by Yergin, after the Latvian capital where many of America's Soviet specialists received training, held that the Soviet Union was an ideologically motivated, world-revolutionary state committed irrevocably to world mastery. As such, it was not a fit partner in normal diplomatic intercourse; coexistence was virtually impossible.

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The Riga approach had deep historical roots within American politics, dating to the antipathy of most Americans to the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, and was the predominant U.S. view of the U.S.S.R. throughout the interwar years. In particular, it was the strong belief of most of the Soviet experts trained in this period by the State Department, and of most of their colleagues in the State Department as well, that this was the true nature of the Soviet State.

Opposed to the Riga axioms was a school of thought that developed during the wartime alliance with the U.S.S.R., and was centered around President Franklin Roosevelt and his coterie of advisors. The "Yalta axioms," as this approach is called by Yergin, assumed that the Soviet Union was simply a powerful but traditional state with whom one could negotiate, compromise, resolve problems and reach settlements; FDR had great confidence in his ability to "handle" Stalin and the Russians. While partisans of the Riga school chafed (the head of the Russian section of the State Department, Loy Henderson, became so frustrated with American policy that in 1943 he asked to be transferred to a different section), the conduct of American diplomacy during the war and planning for the postwar era was predicated on the Yalta assumption that the Soviet Union would continue to be a partner of the United States within the "Grand Alliance."

*Shattered Peace* is the story of the triumph of the Riga axioms over the

Yalta axioms as the dominant perception of the Soviet Union within the U.S. government. Yergin begins with the Yalta Conference of February 1945, the high point of the Yalta approach, and takes the story through the Berlin Blockade of 1948. The blockade, Yergin argues, "crystallized" the anticommunist consensus within the United States as a feature of both domestic and foreign affairs.

The Riga approach had won its victory long before that however. After the death of FDR, American views of the U.S.S.R. rapidly began to shift. Truman, a newcomer to international affairs, embraced the views which FDR had rejected or ignored. With the support of, rather than opposition from, the President, the Riga axioms soon became the consensus within the U.S. policy elite. Yergin convincingly demonstrates this process, showing how the complexities of domestic politics interacted with the press of international developments to undercut those who sought accommodation with the U.S.S.R. and to firmly entrench the Riga ideology in the collective psyche of the American government. By the end of 1946, Secretary of Commerce (and former Vice President) Henry Wallace had been forced from government for having been the one nationally prominent politician to publicly doubt the validity of the Riga assumptions, Secretary of State James Byrnes had been discredited within the government because of his efforts to reach a settlement with the Soviet Union, and those who remained were afflicted with "a perma-

nent crisis mentality" which, Yergin suggests, shaped U.S. foreign policy into the 1970s. The great upheavals in American foreign policy in 1947 and 1948 were the translation of ideology into action, the practical embodiments of the Riga assumptions.

The victory of the Riga axioms was of seminal importance to American diplomacy in the postwar era. It meant the widespread acceptance of a rigid and cynical definition of Soviet power, although that definition in many ways did not always conform to reality. As Yergin puts it, "American leaders might have seen themselves confronted by a cruel, clumsy, bureaucratized, fear-ridden despotism, preoccupied with reconstructing a vast war-torn land. Instead, the Americans were convinced that they faced a cunning, sure-footed enemy, engaged in a never-ending drive for world hegemony."

Complementing this vision of the Soviet Union, Yergin argues, was a new preoccupation with U.S. national security. This preoccupation was prompted by a number of factors: the technological revolution in warfare, military fears of drastic budget cuts, interservice rivalry, and the recent trauma of global war. America's security was now seen in global terms. This perception, combined with the Riga axioms, ultimately led to global competition with the Soviet Union. The new expansive concept of national security provided the rationale for confrontation; the Riga axioms provided the enemy.

Having drawn this portrait of the

interpretive framework of American policymakers in the immediate postwar era, Dr. Yergin comes to conclusions not at all complimentary to American foreign policy efforts in the late 1940s. It appears that the U.S. pursued a passionately ideological foreign policy within a framework so rigidly anticommunist that even Soviet efforts to be conciliatory were interpreted as tactical moves in some Soviet master plan for world domination. Complex local crises, such as that in Greece, became global confrontations. Soviet strength was exaggerated while its weaknesses were ignored, negotiation was abandoned as both dangerous and impossible to conclude successfully, and the idea that Soviet leaders might be reacting to American policy was discounted because Soviet policy was thought to be driven by ideology. Beneath this morass of misperception and misunderstanding, Yergin senses lost opportunities. He suggests in his epilogue, for example, that the current detente with the U.S.S.R. is "perhaps" a vindication of FDR and the Yalta axioms, clearly implying that at least limited accommodation with the U.S.S.R. would have been possible long ago if American policymakers had viewed the U.S.S.R. from a different perspective.

Yergin argues that the combination of the Riga and the national security formulations became the "commanding idea" of American foreign policy and formed the intellectual basis of America's international behavior for more than a generation. Thus, his