
BACKGROUND BOOKS

AMERICA'S PEACE MOVEMENT

"Other expedients than a resort to the sword for the adjustment of international difficulties are fast coming to form the established policy of Christendom. Let this process continue fifty years longer, and it will be well-nigh impossible to involve civilized nations in war."

So argued one contributor to a 141-year-old essay collection called **The Book of Peace** (Beckwith, 1845; Ozer, 1972). The subject, says the preface by George C. Beckwith of the American Peace Society, is "a sort of Delos, whither the best spirits of every party, creed and clime gather to blend in sweet and hallowed sympathy."

In making the case against war, the authors of the 64 essays invoke such authorities as Seneca (who found that, in conflict, "avarice and cruelty know no bounds") and Napoleon (warfare is "the business of barbarians"). One author protests that the military received 80 percent of the average \$26,474,892 spent (excepting debt interest) by the U.S. government between 1834 and 1840. The Navy, costing more than \$6 million a year, should be "abandoned," he said. A "most expensive TOY!"

As *The Book* suggests, the bibliography of peace is heavy on advocacy.

The classic early history of the U.S. peace movement is Merle Curti's **Peace or War: The American Struggle, 1636-1936** (Norton, 1936; Ozer, 1972). A later survey is Peter Brock's **Pacifism in the United States from the Colonial Era to the First World War** (Princeton, 1968).

American pacifism had roots in the European Enlightenment that were not always easily transplanted to the New World. The early religious pacifists among the colonists, Brock relates, faced situations that the brethren they left behind never had to contemplate—hostile Indians, for example, and, in 1776, an armed revolt against English oppression.

The Society of Friends greeted the War of Independence by refusing to serve either in George Washington's army or in public office. But not all Quakers, says Brock, were so minded. Philadelphia cloth manufacturer Samuel Wetherill, Jr., argued that the Continental government "cannot exist without defense, the sword being its sinews." And being "defensive," the war was "not sinful." Soon "disowned," he formed a new sect, the Free Quakers.

The rise of secular antiwar sentiment is the subject of C. Roland Marchand's **The American Peace Movement & Social Reform, 1898-1918** (Princeton, 1972) and David S. Patterson's **Toward a Warless World: The Travail of the American Peace Movement, 1887-1914** (Ind. Univ., 1976). Patterson dwells on the appearance of "diverse" activists dedicated to often overlapping isms: pacifism, world federalism, internationalism, legalism. They shared "a hope for gradual evolution toward a peaceful world order." But their faith tended to obscure the "menacing international problems of their day."

In many ways, peace movement history is best approached through biography. For example, LeRoy Ashby's rendering of Idaho's Senator William E. Borah (1865-1940), **The Spearless Leader** (Univ. of Ill., 1972), supplies a portrait of the Progressive movement that spawned American isolationism.

But surveys are useful, too. Charles Chatfield's **For Peace and Justice: Pacifism in America, 1914-1941** (Univ. of Tenn., 1971), and John K. Nelson's **The Peace Prophets: American Pacifist Thought, 1919-1941** (Univ. of N.C., 1967), trace the often convoluted history of peace organizations. In **Seeking World Order: The United States and International Organization to 1920** (Vanderbilt, 1969), Warren F. Kuehl deals with the

roots of the internationalist tradition.

As Kuehl notes, 18th-century American thinkers were drawn to German philosopher Immanuel Kant's idea that friction between modern nation states could be ameliorated if they agreed on principles of law and right and established a "world republic." As early as 1780, Benjamin Franklin was musing about a plan that would "oblige nations to settle their disputes without first cutting one another's throats." Thomas Paine also spoke of a "confederation of Nations."

Early peace advocates, while supporting "some type of world society," were pacifists first, internationalists second, Kuehl notes. But "the modern advocates of a politically organized world"—men such as Andrew Carnegie and William Howard Taft—"were internationalists first and pacifists only incidentally."

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Yet even they had differences, as the League of Nations debacle showed. Kuehl blames the League's defeat in the U.S. Senate on the "Utopia or Hell" attitude of the internationalists. Rather than support the League during the 1919-20 debate over it, they squabbled over details; "legalists" were annoyed by President Wilson's disinterest—"well-known," scowled Taft—in a world court.

In those days, says Kuehl, "it took an independent thinker to become a practicing internationalist." These proud pioneers "never formed a catalogue of beliefs, and this was their failing."

One gauge of how *historians* can differ is the story of the Outlawry of War movement and the Kellogg-Briand Pact.

Outlawry was the brainchild of Salmon Levinson, a Chicago lawyer. He decided that lasting peace would result if nations simply banned war as a "decider of disputes," much as dueling had been outlawed and finally abolished. As Charles DeBenedetti relates in **The Origins of the Modern American Peace Movement, 1915-1929** (KTO Press,

1978, cloth; 1984, paper), Outlawry offered Americans a way to "cleanse the processes of international diplomacy" without being mired in European politics, as the League would have required.

Support came from such disparate folk as liberal philosopher John Dewey and ardent nationalist William Borah, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Borah, who had presidential ambitions, persuaded the Coolidge administration to use a 1927 French suggestion for a treaty to "outlaw war" between the two countries as a springboard to begin talks toward a multilateral pact banning *all* war.

In DeBenedetti's view, the resulting 1928 Kellogg-Briand Pact was morally "edifying" and politically deft. The pact appealed to Eastern internationalists and Midwest nationalists, who hoped it would "quiet quarrelsome Europeans."

Other scholars, however, rank these events among the most bizarre developments of "the Fool's Paradise of American history," as Samuel Flagg Bemis called the post-World War I era. In **Peace in Their Time** (Yale, 1952, cloth; Norton, 1969, paper), Robert H. Ferrell found Outlawry and the Kellogg-Briand Pact to be prime illustrations of Americans' "appallingly naive" understanding of power realities. The French, seeking U.S. endorsement of the European status quo, manipulated Yankee idealism with "astonishing ease."

Lawrence S. Wittner's **Rebels Against War: The American Peace Movement, 1933-1983** (Temple, 1984, cloth & paper), traces the fortunes of various peace advocacy groups over the past half century. Tellingly, his account gives short shrift to two achievements of the internationalists.

The United Nations (UN), as conceived in 1944, dismayed world federalists; the Fellowship of Reconciliation viewed it as "camouflage" for the big powers' "domination." And the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO),

overwhelmingly endorsed by the U.S. Senate in July 1949, was scorned by peace groups. The editor of *Fellowship* called it a "military alliance" that ends "the so-recent dreams of 'one world.'"

Not so, says Alan K. Henrikson in **Negotiating World Order: The Artisanry and Architecture of Global Diplomacy** (Scholarly Resources, 1986). NATO, he points out, was created partly because the founders were disappointed that the UN's development as a collective security group seemed stunted by Soviet abuse of the Security Council veto. NATO "remains, in principle," he argues, "a fragment of a wider security system, a section of a general world order." Peace activists were wrong, he says, to dismiss President Truman's assertion, on signing the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949, that protecting "this area against war will be a long step toward permanent peace."

Many authors deal with the contortions of the peace forces in the later post-World War II era.

In **Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975** (Doubleday, 1984, cloth; Holt, 1985, paper), Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan trace "the Movement's" long march "from the fringes of American politics into its very heart" (the impact of Hanoi's "harsh rule" after the 1975 fall of Saigon is relegated to a footnote). While young people, they note, "gave it needed energy," the movement was "a loose, shifting, often uneasy coalition of groups and individuals" led by adults. Indeed, as John E. Mueller points out in **War, Presidents and Public Opinion** (Wiley, 1973, cloth; Univ. Press of Amer., 1985, paper), at least through 1968, youths, Democrats, and the college-educated were less hostile to the war than were older people, Republicans, and non-college graduates.

The souring of liberal intellectuals on

the war, and their alliance with the New Left, came with the movement's turn from an antiwar to an anti-America stance. For example, in **Armies of the Night** (New American Library, 1968; Signet, 1971, paper), his novel/history of the 1967 march on the Pentagon, Norman Mailer speaks of "the diseases of America, its oncoming totalitarianism, its oppressiveness." The "center of America," he writes, "might be insane."

The movement's middle-aged vanguard, "the re-emerged intellectual Left," is the focus of Sandra L. Vogelsgang's **Long Dark Night of the Soul** (Harper, 1974). Quiescent during the Kennedy administration, which courted them, the intellectuals confronted not only an undeclared war but a scrambled political lexicon. While the Old Left associated totalitarianism "with secret police and thought control, the New Left equated it with 'power'—the 'power elite' of the corporations, the universities, or the 'system.' Because they condoned power applied with 'social benevolence,' new radicals could and did condemn Berkeley as totalitarian while they praised Cuba as democratic."

The intelligentsia and the young, Vogelsgang writes, "found each other in the 1960s largely because of a sense of shared powerlessness. By the end of the Johnson era, it was not to be clear that they meant the same thing by power."

The prime post-Vietnam concern of the heterogeneous peace movement—and of "policy intellectuals" and government officials—has been nuclear arms. **Cold Dawn** (Holt, 1973), John Newhouse's exploration of the origins of the U.S.-Soviet SALT talks, displays the high expectations of its time; Newhouse finds SALT "probably the most fascinating, episodic negotiation since the Congress of Vienna," one that may "go on indefinitely." As befits *its* time, Raymond L. Garthoff's later comprehensive

SALT history, **Detente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan** (Brookings, 1985, cloth & paper), is cooler about results and prospects.

Advocacy publishing on nuclear issues, however, remains heated. Among recent warnings of atomic Armageddon are **Missile Envy: The Arms Race and Nuclear War** (Morrow, 1984, cloth; Bantam, 1986, paper) by Dr. Helen Caldicott, the Australian peace pediatrician; Robert Jay Lifton and Richard Falk's **Indefensible Weapons: The Political and Psychological Case Against Nuclearism** (Basic, 1982, cloth & paper); and Jonathan Schell's **The Fate of the Earth** (Knopf, 1982, cloth; Avon, paper).

The Schell book was followed by "Nuclear Winter," a theory pressed by Cornell astrophysicist Carl Sagan, in articles in *Science* and *Foreign Affairs*, that even limited nuclear combat—"a pure tactical war, in Europe, say"—would fill the atmosphere with smoke and dust and usher in an era of subzero darkness that would extinguish life around the globe. Though the computer model on which the theory was based was flawed, Nuclear Winter remains a powerful image, oft-invoked by antinuclear activists.

"Horror is needed," says Ralph K. White in **Fearful Warriors: A Psychological Profile of U.S.-Soviet Relations** (Free Press, 1984). "The Peace movement cannot do without it." Also useful is an image of an overly aggressive U.S. military establishment—a false image, argues Richard K. Betts in **Soldiers, Statesmen and Cold War Cri-**

ses (Harvard, 1978). His study of the advisory role of senior military men since 1945 shows that, generally, they were no more (and often less) eager to intervene in foreign crises than were White House civilian advisers. Military advice has been most heeded by presidents when it opposed the use of force, and "least potent when it favored force."

Peace advocacy thrives on both fear and hope. Alan Henrikson notes in **Negotiating World Order** that it is "turbulent" times that "produce visionary blueprints of a better order." War has always been the "principal stimulus" to efforts at international peacekeeping. The Napoleonic Wars led to the Concert of Europe; the World War I "clash of alliance systems" spawned the League of Nations; the next war led U.S. leaders to look again at what Wendell Willkie called "One World," via the UN.

Henrikson observes that peace as St. Augustine conceived it, "the tranquility of order"—the goal of the classic internationalists, among others—is elusive at best. But from generation to generation, the quest for peace, however defined, retains its intrinsic appeal. For their part, in *Who Spoke Up?*, Zaroulis and Sullivan ask the reader's sympathy for the protestors of the Vietnam era:

"Like the Abolitionists over a century ago, they gave voice to their consciences; but America (like all nations) is not grateful to those who would tell her she is wrong. And so . . . the antiwar movement has become quasi-mythical, half-buried in time, an increasingly dim and distorted historical presence remembered kindly by some, belittled and reviled by others, recalled inaccurately even by many who helped to make it happen."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Readers may wish to consult titles cited in WQ Background Books essays on *Strategic Arms Control* (Autumn '77), *The American Military* (Spring '79), and *America's National Security* (Winter '83), and in *Vietnam as History* (Spring '78).