

Book Reviews

Contents

- Into the Darkhouse: American Diplomacy and the Ideological
Origins of the Cold War**, Joseph M. Siracusa, (Claremont, California:
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Paul H. Nitze's report entitled "United States Objectives and Programs for National Security" (otherwise and more popularly known as NSC 68) was a bureaucratic study which since its inception in 1950, has drawn the unabated attention of scholars of American diplomacy. Needless to say, "the most famous...paper of its era" has spawned innumerable interpretations over the ensuing decades. Was it a significant turning point in US defence policy? Was it a call to arms for nation which traditionally removed itself from the problems of the "Old World"? Was it amateurish, or was it a paradigmatic document? Or was it a response to the Korean War? Joseph Siracusa asserts that the basic American strategic position taken toward the USSR in NSC 68 in 1950 remained relatively unchanged from that taken in late 1948 in the wake of the Berlin crisis. This interpretation illuminates the basic thesis of this book: that although the early cold war players "thought and talked in terms of moral principles they acted in terms of power, the language of the Kremlin and the Soviet system of government."

As the title suggests, *Into the Darkhouse: American Diplomacy and the Ideological Origins of the Cold War*, delves into the varying conceptions within the American policy-making elite during a period gravely complicated by the sudden collapse of the German, Japanese, French and British empires. *Into the Darkhouse* constitutes a thematic history in which Siracusa has tied chapters to key documents emanating from the early Cold War period. It differs from the majority of past studies insofar as it has been written from the vantage point of the post-Cold War world (the obvious exception here is John Lewis Gaddis's *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History*). From this vantage point, it has been possible for Siracusa to attain successfully his stated objective in writing this book: the delineation of the "constellation of ideas, beliefs and assumptions (both spoken and unspoken) that informed American diplomacy in the period from the last stages of the Grand Alliance to the Korean War ... " His depiction of these ideas, beliefs and assumptions is complemented by the author's acquiescence in the historical truism that individuals can and have made a difference in forming their nations' policy. This axiom can, of course, lay claim to a distinguished tradition which stretches back at least as far as Machiavelli, according to whom there is "nothing I hold dearer or value so high as my understanding of great men's (sic) actions." *Into the Darkhouse* concentrates on the deeds of the likes of Winston Churchill, George Kennan, Harry Truman, and our own Minister for External Affairs, Herbert V. Evatt. Siracusa's adherence to the "great men/women in history" maxim serves only to enhance his readers' understanding of the politicking that lay behind the face of American diplomacy in this turbulent era of world affairs.

It should be added that, in this reviewer's opinion, the author has been guilty of an oversight in an otherwise meticulously documented work. On page 123, in the chapter entitled "America, Australia and the Origins of the Cold War", Siracusa asserts that

the main impediment to the conclusion of a peace settlement with Japan was Evatt's commitment to a tough policy toward that country, ultimately involving the destruction of Japan's capacity to wage war...Evatt refused to

accept an American invitation to attend a conference on 19 August 1947 to discuss the formulation of a draft peace settlement with Japan. He instead set up his own conference in Canberra for 26 August. An open breach appeared to have been deliberately programmed ...

Certainly, an open breach appeared to have been deliberately programmed, but by whom? In contrast to Siracusa's assertion that Evatt had done so, the reviewer points the finger at the United States' State Department. Its invitations to attend that conference were sent *after* the dates for the Commonwealth Conference in Canberra had already been decided upon. The most plausible explanation for this deliberate rift, provided by Frederick S. Dunn and supported by Howard Schonberger and Roger Buckley, is that the State Department felt that, in response to the pressures of Japanese nationalism and an increasingly fiscally-minded Congress, lip-service should be paid to the resolution of a formal peace with Japan. Unresolved inter-departmental disputes with regard to the form of the peace settlement, made it preferable that the administration should at least appear to be eager for peace. The timing of the Canberra Conference would be seen as the major impediment to the State Department's proposed conference.

In spite of this minor oversight, this monograph indeed represents the culmination of twenty-five years' research and teaching by Australia's most accomplished Cold War historian. As envisaged, Siracusa does not tell a simple story, instead choosing to illustrate the inherent complexities of foreign policy formation and implementation. In so doing, he has revised the flawed arguments of the revisionist historians, thereby reconciling at a higher level, the contradiction between their work and the traditional historians. This is in itself a fitting rationale for Siracusa's latest offering.

Peter Mauch