

# Hard-Headed 'Cri de Coeur'

## THE CONDUCT AND MISCONDUCT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

By Charles Yost

Random House, 234 pp., \$7.95

By CHALMERS M. ROBERTS

IT IS NOT just the Indochina war critics and the revisionist historians who are hacking away at the past and current conduct of American foreign policy. Now

it is the establishment. First came the thunderous voice of Hamilton Fish Armstrong in his farewell to the establishment's journal, *Foreign Affairs*, with his cry of "Isolated America." Now comes Charles Yost, a 40-year veteran of diplomatic service on three continents, finally as President Nixon's first ambassador to the United Nations, until 1971. Yost's volume is a *cri de coeur*, an outpouring of emotions long repressed by one so disciplined.

Yost is no revisionist; he might be called a modern establishmentarian. He is angry with much of the past, with the

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"misconduct" of American foreign policy. But like many others he seeks to discern not only what went wrong—with the war the ultimate wrong—but what must be done in order, as Armstrong puts it, that "we may recover our self-confidence and self-respect and regain for our nation the standing in the world's estimation it once possessed." Yost, in fact, goes further: He seeks a prescription for the global conduct of international relations. Coming from an erudite man with long experience within the foreign policy establishment, what he says is well worth reading.

His "ultimate conclusion" is that the conduct of foreign affairs "cannot become rational until these affairs cease to be 'foreign.'" In turn, he examines how the American system has worked, and not worked, and the "radical and comprehensive action" he believes nations must take to avoid catastrophe in the nuclear age.

On the first point Yost turns out to be a traditionalist. There have been too many "amateurs in the White House," too many presidents playing at being their own secretary of state. His current *bête noire* turns out to be Henry Kissinger and his "conceptual frameworks" for Mediterranean balance-of-power diplomacy. He yearns for the strong secretary, Acheson, Marshall and Dulles. Yet his analysis deplors some of their major works—the Truman Doctrine's sweep, aims to Indochina, dependence on nuclear weaponry, over-fear of Russian intentions.

Yost deplors an American role as the world policeman, too much interference in the internal affairs of other nations by an overblown bureaucracy around the world. (He would cut State's personnel by 80 per cent or more, almost all of the cut here in Washington; send 75 per cent of the military attachés back home; and the CIA's "ham-handed hanky panky" and turn its intelligence operation, for the most part, back to State, and so on.) Most especially he would vastly lessen "the excessive participation of the U.S. military in foreign policymaking."

He sees no contradiction, evidently, between a desire to lower the American profile and his assertions that the United States should "push and drive" South Africa, Rhodesia and Portugal "into the modern world while there is still time." And that the UN Security Council has a "solemn obligation," when its members can find agreement on a plan, to "impose a settlement" on the Arabs and Israel "or at the very least to impose measures which will ensure that armed conflict is not renewed."

Yost's "radical" ideas center on the United Nations. "Time no longer works in our favor," he writes. "The situation does not ripen; it rots." What to do, given the persistence of sovereign states, the nuclear arms race, population explosion and misery" on our globe? First of all, the public and the public must have a quantum jump in their exposure to the "facts of life." (The media are encour-

aged to continue and increase their efforts to "pry loose from coy politicians and bureaucrats" all they can about foreign policy conduct.)

The democracies should draw closer together; nuclear arms should be scaled down (he gives us a listing); limits should be put on big power "competitive intrusions into the Third 'World'; the UN should be a first, not a last, resort for American governments; U.S.-Soviet summit meetings should be held about once a year (Acheson and Dulles never agreed to that); aid should be multilateral, and so on down a list many others have drawn for a better future. In essence, all steps that would "with away" the concepts of "foreigner" and "foreign affairs" and replace them with "a sense of common kinship and citizenship."

Lest these latter suggestions sound like Yost has taken off for the wild blue yonder, it should be said that all that he proposes is tempered with wisdom drawn from a lifetime of practical diplomacy. There are some fine vignettes, some righteous anger, plenty of down-to-earth suggestions. To the radical left Yost will seem only an unhappy old boy. To the stuffy right he will seem too critical. To some he will appear too much a traditionalist. To others he will seem naive about presidents and the Congress. Yet without Charles Yost offers the reader some very hard-headed lessons from history and some sensible formulations on how to avoid the "misconduct of foreign affairs" in the next quarter century.