

Will We Dominate Half of the Earth?

American Imperialism: A Speculative Essay, by Ernest R. May (Atheneum, 239 pp. \$5.95), and *The American Empire*, by Amaury de Riencourt (Dial, 366 pp. \$7.50), maintain that in spite of our anticolonial tradition the United States is preordained to be "the Rome of the modern world." William R. Kintner's latest book is "Peace and the Strategy of Conflict."

By WILLIAM R. KINTNER

THESE TWO WORKS ENRICH the growing list of books concerned with the global expansion of American power. They differ in style, mode of analysis, and time span: Ernest May's essay attempts to account for the shift in attitude among a comparatively few American leaders of public opinion which enabled the United States during 1898-99 to deny its anti-imperialist tradition and become a colonial power through seizure of the Philippines, Cuba, and Puerto Rico and the annexation of Hawaii, thus setting the stage for the emerging American empire delineated by Amaury de Riencourt.

American actions during 1898-99 seemed so paradoxical that Samuel Bemis has called them "a great aberration." May attempts to explain these actions, as well as the almost immediate return to the traditional posture. He examines four commonly held explanations, one being that the long-lived Manifest Destiny doctrine offsets anti-colonialism. Social Darwinism saw history as an endless struggle that tests a nation's fitness to survive, a theory which had wide acceptance at the turn of the nineteenth century. Another view maintained that since colonial expansion served business it could command public support. A fourth interpretation

claimed that a "psychic crisis" had developed in American society which caused its leaders to go astray.

May's book does not attempt to disprove any of these four hypotheses, but adds a fifth: the influence on Americans of European attitudes and actions. Utilizing public opinion research concepts, May identifies the leading opinion-makers and endeavors to show how they affected the foreign policy establishment. He finds that a small group of sophisticated men, most of them residents of Boston and New York, widely traveled and intimate with European political leaders, eventually led their countrymen to reject their own beliefs and ape Old World empire-building.

In the middle of the last century liberals on both sides of the Atlantic censured imperialism in all its manifestations. Americans of this persuasion were able to torpedo the treaty which Grant proposed in 1869 to annex the Dominican Republic. But during the next thirty years opposition in Europe to colonial expansion tended to weaken, and many U.S. leaders were favorably impressed by the imperialist arguments advanced in Britain, France, and Germany. Such men as Gladstone, Randolph Churchill, and Joseph Chamberlain, who opposed colonialism at one time in their careers, eventually came to defend it. Chamberlain's profession of faith made in 1888 could perhaps have been paraphrased by later American Presidents:

No doubt the burden of this great Empire is tremendous. . . . But if we face our obligations, if we perform our duties well and faithfully, the honor and the credit will be proportionate to the sacrifices that we may make, while the abandonment of these duties would be as fatal to our material prosperity as it would be discreditable to our national character and our national honor.

By the end of the century, May asserts, "those familiar with English and

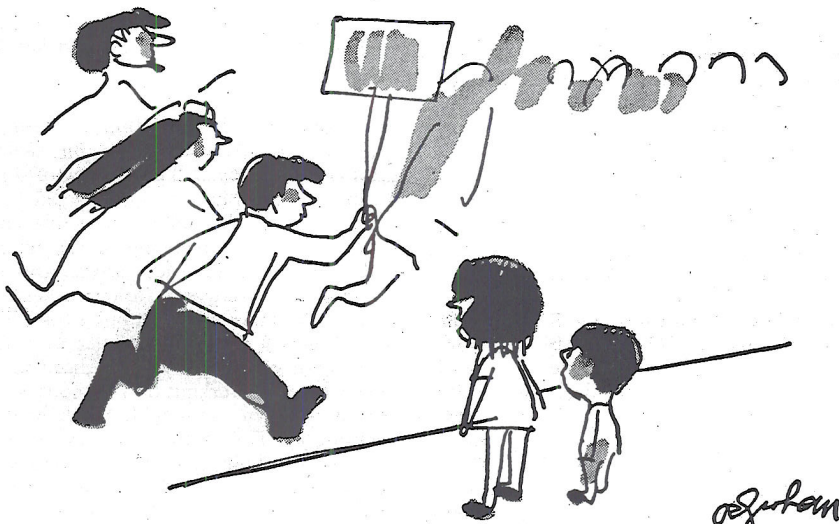
European experience must have seen the American past in a comparative light, measured the interests of the United States to some extent by what other nations believed to be their interests, and interpreted the national duty according to standards of enlightened thought within the Atlantic community." In his *Louisville Courier-Journal* Henry Watterson suggested the theme that imperialism might salve American social ills: "In every direction we multiply the opportunities of the people. We risk Caesarism, certainly; but even Caesarism is preferable to anarchism. . . . In short, anything is better than the pace we were going when the present forces started into life." In such a climate it became easy for Assistant Secretary of State Hill to urge that American policy was not imperialist expansion but "the extension of civilization." The balloon was soon to be pricked, however: "The complexities of the colonial issue, the Philippine insurrection, the Boer War, and the turn in foreign liberal opinion combined to have a powerful effect on members of the American establishment."

May's study is a useful contribution for those following America's growing interest in public opinion surveys. It achieves what it attempted: "to set forth a synthetic interpretation of a single episode."

The American Empire is a direct sequel to Riencourt's *The Coming Caesars*, published eleven years ago. According to the author, "the parallel established in *The Coming Caesars* between the development of the Classical world and the development of the modern Western world provides the conceptual framework for this study of the rising American empire." In particular, the similarity of ancient Greeks to modern Europeans, and of ancient Romans to modern Americans, is implicit throughout.

Riencourt argues that historical development is conditioned by long-term trends rather than by a succession of unpredictable accidents, and that in consequence "the margin of freedom allowed to statesman is far smaller than is commonly thought." The author also believes that historical motivation is only marginally conscious, and that the "collective unconscious" largely influences events. Armed with these insights, he asserts that "the growth of an American empire . . . becomes the logical outcome of centuries of historical development, and not merely of American historical developments but of worldwide trends." The burden of the book is "the study of the evolution of the United States' imperial destiny as the Rome of the modern world—from its roots deep in the past, to the troubled present and the largely preordained future."

The author seeks to validate his case



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with a varied array of facts. His impressive erudition is matched by the aptness of his analogies. In quick order Riencourt traces the roots of the American empire and the new type of human being produced by the American environment. Because America's foreign policy élite was essentially oriented toward Britain, U.S. intervention in World War I was inevitable. As the decisive factor in the defeat of Germany this was a major turning point in history, for a victorious Germany would have established a new balance of power on a global scale. America, which won the war, lost the peace, but the intervening years of isolationism were only a momentary detour in the course of events leading to the creation of the American empire, which had its genesis in World War II. That war ended with Hiroshima, and Riencourt makes clear that the dropping of the bomb was meant to be "just as much a warning to the Russians as an effort to subdue the Japanese."

THE ensuing Cold War, which came about in part because of the deep anxiety of the Russian leaders, led to the establishment of the American empire. After examining the historical record of the postwar decades, the author concludes that "the American empire is not accidental but was predetermined generations ago by the development and evolution of *Western society as a whole*; this growing empire has effectively protected not only the United States' interests but those of the entire Western world, of Western Civilization."

The Second World War, and the Cold War which followed, led to the creation of tools necessary to sustain and expand this empire. They are three: the dynamic, technologically fueled American economy, which should shortly produce an annual GNP of over a trillion dollars; the vast military machine created by the Pentagon, with its attendant military-industrial complex and the pervasive militarization of American life; and, finally, the ubiquitous CIA, whose tentacles, real or imagined, provide the necessary information and machinery for eliminating troublesome obstacles in the path of American expansion.

The milestones on the way to empire were the abrupt U.S.-Soviet termination of the Suez conflict in 1956, leading to the final emasculation of European military power; the disruption and absorption of the British Commonwealth; the transformation of Japan into an American outpost in the Western Pacific, and the Hawaiianization of the Orient, this last process largely consummated by the war in Vietnam.

American controls will be imposed on Latin America, but only after the final disposal of the anarchism inherent in Castro's brand of revolution. Africa is

also destined to fall within the American sphere; the American approach to Africa will, however, be conditioned by the solution of the racial crisis in the United States, for in the past "the main obstacle to imperial expansion was the fear of having to absorb too many non-white people as eventual citizens." Riencourt believes that "the only long-term solution to the problem [is] total miscegenation," but recognizes that this is impractical because "the races are being increasingly polarized and are moving full speed away from each other." His projection for Africa is somewhat fuzzy: while he expects that the United States will be compelled to bring South Africa under its control, he suggests that America may be tempted to sacrifice South Africa's white leadership on the altar of world opinion by forcing the emigration of the white African population and placing American Negroes in control of this prime strategic area. I agree heartily with the author that "a great deal of this speculation may sound rather far-fetched."

According to Riencourt's crystal ball the division of Europe is permanent, and the technological and economic domination of Western Europe by the United States is assured. "And just as the world of Classical Greece could only find its eventual unity *within* the confines of the much vaster Roman Empire, contemporary Europe—Western Europe . . . will find its true, and only, unity in the much larger framework of an institutionalized Atlantic community." When the frontiers of the American empire have been reached a U.S.-Soviet condominium will be established to rule the world: "The shadowy outline of the Great Condominium is becoming visible; the vague contours of this world-wide understanding are beginning to emerge out of the fog which is surrounding us. The Condominium will be essentially a tacit alliance

between two imperial *states*, not between irreconcilable and competing ideologies. It will be the partial conjunction of their national and imperial interests that will serve as foundation for their virtual alliance which will, in no way, put an end to their rivalry." The Russians and the Americans "will come to accept each other's empires and zones of influence—and, hopefully, in the more or less distant future, will focus their competitive instincts on a peaceful exploration of outer space, while jointly ruling the earth."

THIS book is an exciting intellectual tour de force reminiscent of the works of Tocqueville or Spengler. Although Riencourt is the author of *The Soul of China*, the present volume is notable for its almost complete neglect of where China will fit into the world of tomorrow. Riencourt also tacitly assumes that the Soviet Union has already lost its campaign to become the leading partner in whatever condominium may eventually be established. It ignores the view that the Roman strain seems more evident in Moscow than in Washington. Admittedly, the burgeoning power of the United States is impressive; yet the use of that power in, for example, Vietnam, or the *Pueblo* affair, or the continuing Middle East crisis, has been far from convincing. The United States has still to surmount its racial problems, and the growing clamor of the American anti-imperialists must be stilled if Riencourt's prophecy is to come true. Seen from his lofty vantage point, much will depend on the type of Caesars who will occupy the White House. It took men like Julius Caesar, Augustus, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius to make and sustain Rome. At present it is unlikely that such men could rise from the crucible of American politics—or that the American people would stand for them.



"... Sex and violence everywhere!"