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Alex B. Daspit

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Book Reviews

DOCUMENTS ON AMERICAN FOREIGN RELATIONS, Vol. III, July 1940-June 1941, edited by S. Shepard Jones and Denys P. Myers. World Peace Foundation, Boston, 1941. Pp. 805.

An encyclopedia editor once complained that he could get no help from the reviewers; they all gave unstinted praise as the only alternative to the impossible task of reading the work. The editors of documentary collections must have somewhat the same experience. Even though the documents here assembled are the formal records of the heightening drama which reached its climax at Pearl Harbor, and though some of them are informed with a certain candor and occasional flashes of illumination as in the incomparable speeches of Churchill, they are but a vague and formalized shadow of the enormous forces gathering for the catastrophe. They tell us again and with specific detail, what newspaper readers already knew: that by July 1940 the die was already cast for the United States; that our policy was to weld the Americas into a solid diplomatic unit; to hearten the conquered nations and encourage them to refuse to accept the "New Order"; to keep England and China fighting, and to egg on all potential Axis victims to resist to the end rather than to capitulate in the manner of Rumania; in short, to use all means possible to strengthen opposition to the Axis powers, and to gain time for the showdown recognized (at least by the administration) as probably inevitable.

They do not tell us what we would most like to know: Did the American government really understand Russia's position vis-a-vis Germany? Did Mr. Roosevelt really think we could win the war while staying out of it? Were there elements in the State Department intent to the end on "appeasing" Japan? The answers to these questions are obviously not to be found in a volume of public documents issued contemporaneously with the events.

On the Russian matter, we have the evidence of the lifting for that nation of the "moral embargo" of December 1939, in January 1941, some five months before the German attack; probably the State Department was not taken altogether by surprise by the events of June 1941. As to whether Mr. Roosevelt seriously en-

tertained hopes of winning the war without fighting it, the most careful analysis of the documents reveals only that he was determined that the Axis should be defeated. Nor do the documents answer the question with respect to Japan. As a matter of fact, if they point one way rather than another, it is to a negative answer. Throughout the year covered by the volume, there is no official pronouncement which indicates the slightest softening in this country's resistance to the New Order for Asia.

By 1940 no contradiction in the administration's basic policy, such as that represented by the Arms Embargo during the Spanish War, remained. If there were ambiguities in the nation's position, these could be accounted for in terms of the indecision in the public mind, the resistance of powerful groups within the country, and perhaps Mr. Roosevelt's secret hope that he might be able to accomplish the impossible and win the war by diplomacy and production. On the matter of Mr. Roosevelt's apparent indecision, however, a more likely hypothesis seems to be that the president was determined to take a united country to war with him, and in that undertaking one must concede that he improved even on the expert performance of Wilson in 1917.

This volume, which is the third in a series of annual collections published by the World Peace Foundation under the editorship of S. Shepard Jones, its director, and Denys P. Myers, shows the same care and thoroughness which characterized its two predecessors. It is intelligently organized, thoroughly indexed, and editorial comment, though held to a minimum, is sufficiently lucid.

Perhaps the volume would have more general appeal and usefulness for the layman if each chapter were introduced by editorial remarks presenting a framework for the official material, and pointing out significant trends or developments. If the editors should decide to include this additional comment in future volumes, however, it is to be hoped that they critically edit their own manuscript and excise the clichés such as "sturdy Britain," "bulwark of democracy," "called the tune," "battle of production," et cetera, which marred their preface.

ALEX B. DASPIT*

* Associate Professor of Government, Louisiana State University.