

How Right Was U.S. Might?

The Diplomacy of a New Age: Major Issues in U.S. Policy Since 1945, by Dexter Perkins (Indiana, 190 pp. \$5.75), summarizes the problems and circumstances prevailing when the American government made its most vital decisions of the past twenty years. Frank Altschul is chairman of the Committee on International Policy of the National Planning Association.

By FRANK ALTSCHUL

“THE STUDENT of American foreign policy since 1945,” Dexter Perkins states in the preface of this slender volume, “must inevitably be aware of the pitfalls in his path.” The printed material available is voluminous, and furthermore “the vital diplomatic correspondence has for the most part not yet seen the light of day.” Recognizing these difficulties, the author has attempted to highlight in chronological order some of the more challenging problems with which our diplomacy has had to deal within the period he has undertaken to survey.

Viewed as a brief introductory course in recent diplomatic history, this study has much to recommend it. It serves to remind even the initiated of the circumstances prevailing at the time when vital decisions were made. And throughout, Dr. Perkins seems guided by the modest disclaimer “that opinions of a general character must be held provisionally, and that the scholar must always be ready to re-evaluate his data.”

As the Second World War drew to its end, there was in the United States a hopeful feeling that the spirit of co-operation that had characterized our wartime relations with the Soviet Union would continue in the years ahead. How this mood of optimism was gradually displaced by a general sense of antagonism verging on hostility is recounted step by step in the first chapter, entitled “The Growing Rift.”

In succeeding chapters full credit is given to the vision that inspired the Marshall Plan and the North Atlantic Pact. How, in spite of the conspicuous success achieved by both, conflicting viewpoints about the future of Europe and the nature of the Soviet menace produced the present disarray in the

Alliance is clearly set forth. NATO faces an acute problem, precipitated by General de Gaulle. Admittedly, as the author states, “the difficulties of detail involved in the readjustment will be numerous.” But when he adds that “nothing has happened to suggest that they cannot be overcome” one wonders whether he has taken sufficiently into account the geographical position of France.

The author seems inclined to what many would consider an unduly charitable view of the recent conduct of our foreign policy. This comes into sharp focus in his final chapter where, among other things, he challenges the apprehension so vigorously expressed by Senator Fulbright about “the growth of ‘arrogance’ and the dangers of the abuse of power in the conduct of our affairs.” It is Dr. Perkins’s position that “a critical attitude with regard to the use of American power must necessarily rest upon one of two assumptions, first, that that power has been used for ends that merit moral condemnation; second, that it has been extended, or rather overextended, so that the burdens assumed had become greater than could be borne.”

Neither of these assumptions appears to Dr. Perkins to be warranted at this time. With this not everyone would

agree. In regard to the first, it should perhaps be noted that Senator Fulbright’s criticism was never directed to those highly constructive measures, the Marshall Plan and the North Atlantic Pact. His intense opposition was aroused by our ever-growing involvement in the Vietnamese adventure. And applying to this undeclared war Dr. Perkins’s own standards, many would question whether, whatever its military justification, the bombing, with the inevitable civilian casualties involved, is not fairly subject to moral condemnation. And others would ask: Is the attempt to contain the spread of the Communist ideology in Southeast Asia by the laying waste of a small country morally defensible, quite apart from any consideration of the wisdom of such a course? And in regard to the second assumption, while it may be true that at the moment the burdens we have assumed through the extended use of our power can with some sacrifice be borne, the wonder persists at what point in the future Dr. Perkins—to use his own expression—will have to “re-evaluate his data.”

In concluding, the author makes the point that “the study of foreign policy ought to teach us that we do not control the future of the world.” This is something we are at times inclined to forget. “It ought also to teach us to do what we can to see that our own country, in serving its own interest, also serves the interest of mankind.” The fear that in Vietnam we are serving neither our own interest nor the interest of mankind lies at the heart of much of the criticism of our intervention in Southeast Asia.

The Winds of Change Are Bitter

Island in the Sound, by Hazel Heckman (Washington, 284 pp. \$5.95), is an illustrated memoir of a fast-vanishing way of life in America. Historian Margaret L. Coit comes from a small town that is fast being converted into a suburb.

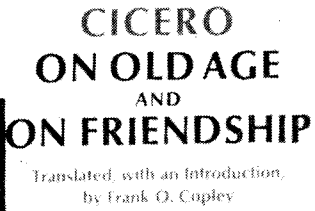
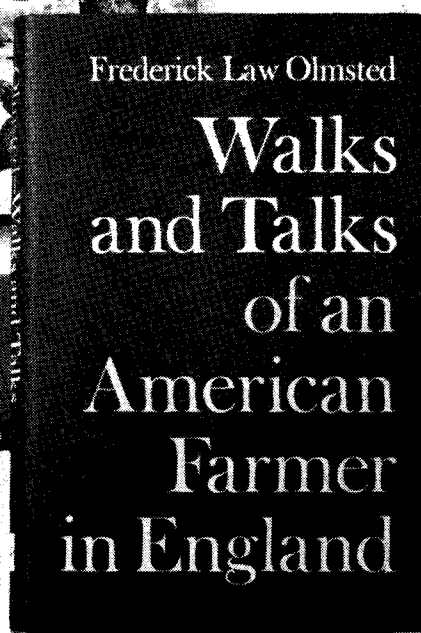
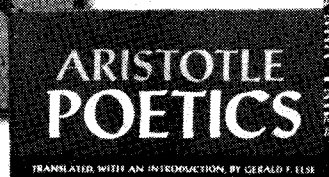
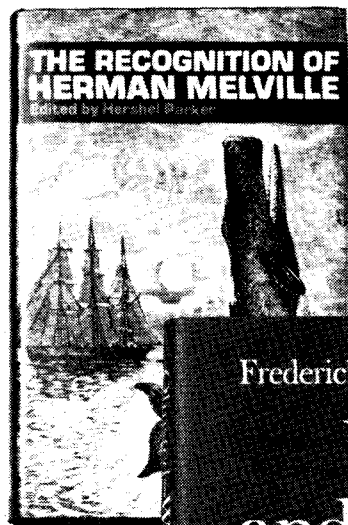
By MARGARET L. COIT

AMERICANS like to pretend that they love small towns. A prevailing myth is the rural character of our country, “the basic American values” to be cherished and found in a small community; the supposed longing of those city-pent to seek roots, nature, and “the simple life.” In practice, as any beleaguered native of a small town within

commuting distance of a city knows, newcomers, in their yen for the best of two possible worlds, trample down the rural values for the goals of suburbia.

One of these vanishing communities is Anderson Island, three and a half miles off shore in Puget Sound, which, “like a quiet afterthought,” as Kansas-born Hazel Heckman describes it, is linked to the mainland by five ferry trips a day. Anderson Island is a place of woods, of sun-washed meadows and storm-washed shores, of rambling white farmhouses and straggling stone walls, of screaming gulls and browsing deer and rusting mailboxes, mute monuments to those who have gone before.

Its hundred or so residents live comfortably on little, and few “could be persuaded to live elsewhere.” Local phi-



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losophers might have stepped out of poems by Robert Frost: "A man can't say he really owns anything in this world," said one. "The most he can count on is a lifetime lease on what he wants to keep." Another observed "that when his own life had come to an end, it would be as though a finger had been inserted in water and then withdrawn, leaving no trace."

Oldtimers on Anderson live alone, watched gently by those younger. Children inevitably go away, hoping to return "when their work on the outside is done." Island women, strangely young "in face and outlook," have radios, television, freezers, and washing machines, yet find their greatest joy in the woods, searching out mushrooms and ladies' slippers. There are natural poets and artists, instinctively creative, among them.

The Islanders "live in a world apart . . . responsible for one another." They bring gifts: a golden squash or red tomato out of the garden, a box of strawberries or jar of jelly, fresh-baked cakes and pies. They give each other permanents or cut each other's hair; those with cars fetch and carry for those without. After an Island funeral in the clubhouse, filled with potted plants and evergreen and quiet talk of community affairs and

the deceased, a neighbor waits with a tractor to fill in the grave.

Mrs. Heckman writes of her poignant hope that the Island may remain unchanged. Weekenders and summer people are temporary nuisances who despoil the roads and beaches, littering the shore and the wading pool with broken glass and beer cans. Now are coming more subtle pressures. Already, the Island has lost its identity as a polling place, its right to drink its own unpasteurized milk. Soon it may lose its school. Rumors of an influx of newcomers and ensuing "development" brought an old-timer's comment: "I really don't want to live to see it." Paved roads and continuous ferry service are simply not desired. "Progress is held of less importance than living space."

Anderson Islanders live the kind of life traditionally supposed to be the dream of other Americans. Mrs. Heckman's lyrical and evocative book poses the question whether this way of life will endure. For it can exist only by the sufferance of those who, giving lip-service to its values, in practice superimpose the patterns of suburbia. Meanwhile, island living has a quality all its own. Mrs. Heckman has captured its essence in this modest and thoughtful book.

The Harmony of Confederacy

And Promises to Keep: The Southern Conference for Human Welfare, 1938-1948, by Thomas A. Krueger (Vanderbilt. 218 pp. \$6.50), recounts the prewar efforts of Southern liberals to combat the evils of race discrimination and economic depression. Edwin Yoder, Jr., is associate editor of the Greensboro (N.C.) *Daily News*.

By EDWIN YODER, JR.

THE SOUTHERN Conference on Human Welfare and *Gone With the Wind* were both products of the South of the late 1930s, and both reflected authentic sides of its character. But romance was, as usual, more durable; and while the film version of GWTW is shortly to enjoy its sixth revival, the Southern Conference was dead by 1948.

Why the difference? To ask that question is to ask why organized liberal politics in the South is usually a tempering force, rarely a decisive one.

The Southern Conference on Human Welfare, Thomas A. Krueger tells us in this thorough if occasionally pedestrian

monograph, was the indigenous liberal South's response to the New Deal. Specifically, it resulted from the National Emergency Council's designation of the region as "the nation's No. 1 economic problem." It was a massive rallying of the Southern branch of the Roosevelt coalition; and like that coalition it brought together a mélange of improbable allies—laborers and farmers, Negroes and urban liberals, newspaper editors and a handful of high-minded Southern politicians like Brooks Hayes, Claude Pepper, and Lister Hill. (All the politicians, significantly, deserted the ship long before it sank.)

Its organizing convocation at Birmingham, Alabama, in July 1938 was perhaps the largest tent meeting of Southern liberals of all time. The roster was dotted with distinguished names. Its plenary sessions migrated to Chattanooga two years later, and to Nashville after that, and the immediate reason for the shift of scene is wry testimony to the hardihood of the native foe. It was Birmingham's "Bull" Connor who, more than two decades before his clash with Dr. Martin Luther King, forced the conference to segregate itself in the city's municipal auditorium—whites on one