

Groton-Yale author mimics Soviet attack on U.S.

by Mark Burdman

Mortal Splendor: The American Empire in Transition

by Walter Russell Mead
Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1987
381 pages, \$19.95 hardbound.

Walter Russell Mead's *Mortal Splendor: The American Empire in Transition*, is one of a number of books now coming out on the theme of the "inevitable decline of the American empire," which are meant as "positive signals" to the Russians. In this case, the author, a 35-year-old honors graduate of Groton prep school and Yale University, begins his book with an overview of American history nearly identical to that put forward in the past by Mikhail Gorbachov and the Soviet propaganda apparatus.

One noteworthy sample of the Soviet line appeared in the Soviet Foreign Ministry's *International Affairs* publication in July 1987. The magazine published the analysis that the roots of "Pax Americana" and "American imperialism" lay in a notion called "national Americanism." This, in turn, is a form of "American exclusiveness" that was created by the 17th-century's "Puritans and English pioneers' religious leaders," who believed that America would be the "city on the hill"; in the 18th century, the U.S.'s Founding Fathers would believe that America had a "special destiny and a special divine mission." Later, Anglo-Saxon racism of the late 19th century used the "city on the hill" idea to assert "an evangelical righteousness of America's actions," and, after

World War II, this became the "Pax Americana," as the United States became the "center of all that was conservative and reactionary."

This silly line, "Cotton Mather caused American imperialism," is repeated by Walter Russell Mead, in his introductory chapter, "The Idea of Empire." Excuse his prose. Education at Yale these days causes brain damage, especially as the university becomes more and more the favorite place for "gay rights" festivities, and less for education.

Writes Mead:

"We Americans have always believed that we inhabit a special universe, or at least a special part of the ordinary one. The Puritans believed that God had called them across the sea to build a new and purified state with a special relationship to the Deity. The Indians and slaves no doubt had other words for the Puritan commonwealth, but the Pilgrims, like their successors, never cared much for the opinions of heathens and savages.

"The religion of Cotton Mather lost its hold on the minds of the American people, but not his idea that the nation was special. There was little resemblance between 17th-century New England and the United States after 1945. Religion, culture, government, even the ethnic composition of the people, had undergone a profound transformation on a scale unmatched, perhaps, in the history of any land. Unchanged, though, was the image of America, set like the city on a hill, a light unto the Gentiles as they sit in immemorial darkness."

Following this, Mead's history of the United States is littered with formulations like, "The U.S. is, after all, a settler state. To admire our past is to admire the present of Israel and South Africa." Or: "American history no longer

looks so much like the triumph of reason and order over chaos and war. It is no longer natural and therefore completely understandable for white people to exterminate reds, enslave blacks, and napalm yellows. . . . The U.S. is and always has been a cruelly racist society. . . . Any stick will do to beat the blacks.”

Fundamentally, all this should be read more as a message to the Soviets than as the radical-chic diatribe it appears to be, even if Mead believes what he is writing. The implicit message to the Russians is: “We accept your view of our history; in exchange, kindly help us to ‘manage’ the decline of the United States.” And, since acceptance of the Russian imperialists’ view of American history means the spiritual-cultural death of the United States, Mead’s message is: “Help us commit suicide.”

A book that fellow Yale graduate George Bush might like. After all, Mead has written a book expressing the world view of a significant faction of the American liberal establishment in the era of Reykjavik and the INF Treaty sell-out. Groton-Yale is the main academic route for the “school of treason” in the United States, and graduates of these institutions (especially those with honors), more than graduates of most other U.S. academic institutions, tend to share the abhorrence that the Russians feel for the American republican tradition that extends from the Mathers, through Benjamin Franklin and the Founding Fathers, Abraham Lincoln, up to the political movement of Lyndon LaRouche today. Of course, it is one thing to feel this abhorrence as a Russian, with inbred, culturally fostered hostility to Western values. It is quite another to do so as an author with an American birth certificate and passport. But such is the degeneracy of the Eastern liberal establishment today.

All roads lead to Stockholm

Lawfully, Mead, for all his fulminations against “American imperialism,” has no objections to that brand of imperialism which is both liberal and fascist. He admires the concept of the late Averell Harriman (himself a Yale graduate, whose father’s banking interests employed George Bush’s father Prescott), expressed in the 1971 book, *America and Russia in a Changing World*, that East and West would converge toward “Swedish socialist concepts.” Mead writes of Harriman and like-minded architects of the immediate post-World War II period, the period that Mead labels the “Golden Age” and “Age of Pericles” of the American liberal elites: “As both the U.S.S.R. and the United States converged toward Swedish-style social democracy, the developing countries too would move in this direction. All roads led to Stockholm. . . .” A nice way of endorsing what became known in the 1970s as “fascism with a democratic face.”

Mead also admires the Fabian-socialist doctrine of “industrial democracy,” the which, he admits ironically, developed under the arch-imperialist regimes of Great Britain, the European continent, and Teddy Roosevelt’s U.S.A. in the late-19th/early-20th century. From this standpoint, he calls

for a “new social contract,” a “politics of compromise,” based on the guarantee of a “minimum wage” to workers in the developing sector. But since he is so hostile to the American republican system of scientific and technological progress, it is hard to see how he thinks Third World wages will rise, except by magic and the usual Keynesian-corporatist tricks.

Mead’s policy proposal is not serious. What motivates it, is something else. Throughout the second half of the book, his concern is to appeal to a new liberal-progressive constituency that can be pulled together, under conditions of a “post-Reagan era” that will be a period of decline, limits, social chaos, possible regional wars in Latin America, and the like. Read carefully, Mead’s book seems to be a desperate appeal to the liberal-progressive-yuppie part of the political spectrum, to pull a political coalition together, to prevent someone else from doing so. If one would guess that that someone else might be Lyndon LaRouche, we only point to Mead’s gratuitous and fatuous attack on the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative—another favorite theme of Soviet propaganda. There are other encoded anti-LaRouche messages throughout.

Will agape attack Yale?

Perhaps the most self-revealing comment in the entire book appears on page 97, when he writes: “What underlay American policy in postwar Europe was not a sudden attack of agape—pure Christian love—but practical considerations.”

Indeed, nothing could be truer than that American policy in postwar Europe lacked “agape”: under the patronage of the Harriman bunch from Groton-Yale, U.S. policy has been in the vise of a Calvinist-Protestant elite that rejects “agape” in its theological, economic and political expressions.

But, in the language of the 1960s in which Mead grew up, he is not part of the solution, but part of the problem. That is why he makes the curious gnostic juxtaposition of “agape” and “practical” considerations. His cure is worse than the disease. When he equates “American republic” with “American empire” in his destructive, radical-chic mimicking of Soviet propaganda, he necessarily undermines what is precisely most “agapic” in American history and political life. He begins by attacking Mather, the Founding Fathers, and the “city on the hill” idea. He later attacks the American Constitution, in the liberal mode popularized by the pro-Soviet friends of Lloyd Cutler today, as obsolete and irrelevant. He gives short shrift to Lincoln, who was probably the most “agapic” of American Presidents, with this sardonic comment: “Though Lincoln was the Great Emancipator, it was his ultimate desire to send the blacks to Africa.”

After reading *Mortal Splendor*, one could easily conclude that a good “attack of agape” is probably the only thing that could cure the intellectual and spiritual ravages caused by an American liberal elite trained at such institutions as Groton and Yale.