

Diplomat and Demagogue

The Memoirs of Spruille Braden.

New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1971. 496 pp. \$12.50.

GUTS, ENERGY, common sense, patriotism: these are the words that come to mind in reading Ambassador Braden's account of his experiences, frequently controversial, in the field of inter-American relations between 1932 and 1947. Many grave problems confronting American diplomacy during that period are recorded in detail. The events, as seen through the eyes of an insider and leading protagonist, acquire a vividness and liveliness not frequently found in diplomatic memoirs. This is more than a history—it is a human document.

Of the various episodes covered by these memoirs, five merit special attention.

Ambassador Braden was the United States representative to the mediating group attempting to seek a peaceful solution to the tragic conflict between Bolivia and Paraguay over the Chaco. The delicate negotiations were difficult enough by themselves, but became much more difficult because of the offensive and egotistical personalities of some of the other representatives. It was little wonder that the Chaco Peace Conference lasted some three years. However, the hard work and shrewd diplomacy of Spruille Braden kept the Conference going, and it culminated successfully in the treaty of peace which has survived to this day. More was involved in these negotiations than the conflict between Bolivia and Peru. The neighboring countries—Argentina, Chile and Brazil—had their own interests involved, and there was a real danger that unless the conflict could be controlled and settled, it might spread to other nations. If a major war had erupted in South America just prior to the invasion of Poland in 1939, Western Hemisphere solidarity and the security of the United States would have been seriously

prejudiced. Although Saavedra Lamas, the uncoöperative Argentine Foreign Minister, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for political reasons—there were no other valid reasons—it was Spruille Braden who had really earned it.

The next important highlight in this chronicle relates to the protection of the Panama Canal during the early months of the war. In 1939, when Braden was appointed Ambassador to Colombia, that country was served by a pioneering and efficient airline known as SCADTA. Its pilots were well trained and skillful, but also were Germans. As the war drew closer and closer to the United States, this circumstance represented a real danger to the security of the Canal. The danger was fully recognized by Braden, who went to great pains to eliminate it. There were many conflicts of interest involved, both in Colombia and in the United States, but in spite of great difficulties his purpose was accomplished before Pearl Harbor. During the war no bombs were dropped on the Panama Canal.

Braden's next diplomatic assignment was to Cuba, where he served as Ambassador during the middle war years, 1942-44. Here, as in Colombia, he soon became aware of widespread Nazi activity. Also, as in Colombia, the funds provided by the United States to detect and combat enemy subversion and espionage were picayune. To meet the obvious threat Braden, assisted by his Counselor of Embassy Ellis Briggs (later a distinguished Ambassador himself), enlisted the services of Ernest Hemingway, well known for his anti-Nazi convictions. Hemingway, as we all know, had a knack for meeting on equal terms with all types of people, from the illiterate to the literati, from lowly fishermen to royal personages. Through his variety of contacts a sort of intelligence network was set up which proved very useful throughout those years.

During that same tour of duty in Havana Braden again perceived, as he had earlier in Colombia, that the Communists, al-

though our military allies in Europe, were already beginning their tactics of infiltration and subversion aimed against American interests. Though Braden had serious differences with Batista, he saw that a Communist takeover in Cuba—such as happened later with Fidel Castro—posed a much more dangerous threat to the United States.

Undoubtedly the most controversial period in Braden's diplomatic career were the years 1945-1947, during which he served first as Ambassador to Argentina and then as Assistant Secretary of State in Washington. It was during this period that Peron, the Argentine dictator and demagogue, created difficulties, if not real dangers, for those charged with the conduct of American foreign relations. Peron's failure to take positive steps to terminate Nazi activities in Argentina; his attempts to curb freedom of the press; his harsh treatment of his political opponents; and his exercise of raw power as dictator—all these contributed to Braden's intense dislike of Peron. The dislike was mutual, since Peron viewed Braden as a threat to his own position and power.

While serving as Assistant Secretary, Braden continued to follow a "hard line" policy toward Peron. This was best exemplified by the publication and official distribution to the other American republics of the famous "Blue Book." It was a documented summary of Nazi activities in Latin America and of the connivance between the Hitler government and the Argentines. It was published in February 1946; and at about that time Peron was elected President of Argentina. This created an awkward situation for the United States, and there were differing opinions about how to handle it. There were those on Capitol Hill and in the Pentagon, as well as George Messersmith (then American Ambassador to Argentina), who felt that it would be in our interest to seek an accommodation with the Peron Government and to try to tone down the mutual hostility and distrust. This

seemed like "appeasement" to Braden, who could see no virtue in appeasing an unfriendly dictator like Peron. The controversy became highly acrimonious. President Truman and Secretary of State Marshall were confronted with a problem; they solved it by terminating the services of both Messersmith and Braden. The clumsy way in which these "resignations" were handled—whether deliberately or unintentionally so—is not unusual in Washington.

In his narration of the many diplomatic problems with which he was confronted Braden has included a number of perceptive characterizations of some of the officials with whom he had dealings. Some of these are pungent. He refers to "the egomania of the Argentine Foreign Minister, Saavedra Lamas." An old Bolivian diplomat is described as "a namby pamby in terror of his military colleagues." In a conversation with Henry Wallace about the relative responsibilities of the Board of Economic Warfare and the Department of State, it seemed to Braden that Wallace "talked a lot without seeming to know much about anything." Various problems at the time required many conversations with Lawrence Duggan, and Braden acquired "a high opinion of his intelligence; moreover he lacked Sumner Welles' pomposity."

These memoirs are enlivened by occasional bits of humor. One anecdote (which likewise throws light on a certain kind of newspaper reporting) concerns an important meeting of the Chaco Peace Conference in Buenos Aires. The Paraguayan Foreign Minister was an elderly gentleman who unfortunately had difficulty in controlling his bladder. At one point in the debate he showed obvious signs of discomfort. The Argentine Foreign Minister, aware of the potentially embarrassing situation, guided his colleague across the hall (crowded with newsmen) to the bathroom of the Foreign Minister's suite. The evening editions of the newspapers, under screaming headlines, declared that there had been a serious

crisis in the Chaco Conference. To quote Braden:

The stories made much of the fact that at one point the Argentine and Paraguayan Foreign Ministers emerged from the Conference room and hurried across the hall; the Paraguayan in evident distress and Cantilo himself looking very much concerned. Fortunately (the reports went) the difficulty was speedily surmounted by some master stroke of diplomacy, for within minutes they returned, both smiling happily, to the Conference.

On another occasion a young secretary in an American embassy was about to be transferred. The host government was grateful to him for many kindnesses and attention to its affairs, and proposed to confer on him a decoration of the second or third degree. The young man explained that by Presidential Order he was unable to accept a decoration. The authorities were disappointed. "But one cleverer than the others remarked, 'Surely there is no prohibition against your wife accepting a decoration.' He allowed as there probably was not. The country proceeded to decorate his wife with the Order of Chastity of the Second Degree."

Quite aside from all the pomp and circumstance, the running of an embassy is a full-time job. A good ambassador, as Braden observes, is *ipso facto* a hard working ambassador. He must be well versed in economic, political, military, cultural, social, financial and many other matters, and of course be familiar with the history and special characteristics of the country in which he serves. In addition to his normal contacts with the government to which he is accredited, he must ride herd on the multiple activities of the numerous officials of his own country. The proliferation of bureaucratic agencies, both in the field and in Washington, is wasteful and inefficient. Excessive personnel can lead to a dangerous loss of time in the formulation and execution of policy. In 1945-46 some of the

wartime agencies (BEW, OSS, etc) threatened to overwhelm the State Department, and gave Braden some real headaches when he was Assistant Secretary.

The lavish give-away type of foreign aid is not only wasteful; it may even be harmful, as Braden suggests. Money does not buy friendship or respect. The most constructive economic development comes from private enterprises and investment.* Delicate diplomatic negotiations must be conducted in secrecy. If covenants are to be "openly arrived at," they may not be arrived at at all. During the difficult Chaco peace negotiations, if some member of one of the delegations had turned over to Mr. Ellsberg or the *New York Times* the secret papers under discussion, there might never have been a peace treaty.

Experience taught Braden that totalitarian systems are dangerous as well as distasteful. During World War II we combated Nazism and Fascism. Ever since, however, we have had to cope with Communist aggression and subversion, and the latter is proving to be a formidable threat to our security.

In these memoirs Ambassador Spruille Braden has not attempted to write a history of inter-American relations between 1932 and 1947, or to deal with all the many other important events which occurred within this period. What he has done is to set forth with complete candor one man's experiences while responsibly involved in serious and controversial problems. Other persons, involved in the same events, and seeing them through different eyes, would perhaps describe them differently. However that may be, no historian can profess to have full knowledge and understanding of that period without a careful reading of this book.

Reviewed by PAUL C. DANIELS

*President Salvador Allende of Chile would do well to read the first 101 pages of this book, dealing with the development of the copper mining industry in Chile. He would then perhaps understand that the tremendous investment of private

capital—which is now being stolen—not only brought into being some of the world's largest copper mines, but also contributed greatly to Chile's stature as a nation. He might likewise perceive that the investment in developing this natural resource was not merely financial; there was also an immeasurable human investment in blood, sweat and tears.

Technology and Defense

U. S. A. and the Soviet Myth, by Lev E. Dobriansky, *Old Greenwich, Connecticut: The Devin-Adair Company, 1971. 274 pp. \$6.50.*

HERE Professor Dobriansky rigorously re-examines several fundamental themes deeply rooted in the conventional notions concerning American-Soviet relations. The broadest and least explicit of the questions he raises is one that was seriously debated twenty years ago, but is now smugly assumed to have been resolved. This question, posed most simply in the title of a book by Mr. James Burnham, is "Containment or Liberation?" Can the United States survive by working, in conjunction with other countries, to keep Russian expansion in check until the Soviet Union ceases to have aggressive ambitions or changes occur within the USSR so that these ambitions can no longer be implemented? Professor Dobriansky criticizes the current policy of containment and argues that the liberation of non-Russian nations within the Soviet Union would be the only change substantial enough to end Russia's historically persistent colonial expansion.

Professor Dobriansky analyzes the concept of the nation-state and finds that the USSR cannot rationally be considered one. An understanding of this point is tragically lacking in Americans, yet it is vital that the citizens and the officials of this country comprehend it thoroughly. A state is a political entity, with legal sovereignty and