

Book Review: Planethood: The Key to Your Survival and Prosperity

By Benjamin B. Ferencz, with Ken Keyes, Jr., (Vision Books, 1988)

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Review by John H. McNeill, U. S. Navel War College

In PlanetHood, Benjamin Ferencz, a former U.S. Army prosecutor at Nuremberg and, like Sidney Bailey, a well-known proponent of the establishment of an international criminal court, sets forth his plan to secure world peace through the establishment of international legal mechanisms that will strike many readers as utopian and remind others of the tenets of World Federalism. The author believes that, by basing the legal structure of an integrated international community on the model of the U.S. Constitution, disputes between states would be resolved on a pacific but dispositive basis, while the individual political, social and economic rights of constituent states and their citizens would be unregulated and free. He calls for a world democratic republic to be established, with a world constitution, world laws, a world court with compulsory jurisdiction, and a world government, all based on the U.S. model writ large. According to the author, this book was written to help the people of the world move rapidly toward the supreme goal of a world system of lasting peace and abundance (p. 23).

Uncharacteristically for an international lawyer, Ferencz warns against placing faith in international agreements. Indeed, he states that "almost all such instruments contain artfully constructed clauses deliberately formulated with such skillful ambiguity as to allow each nation to interpret the vague phrases to its advantage" (emphasis in original). He illustrates this point by noting that "[b]inding treaties, signed to keep the skies free of ballistic missiles, are later interpreted in ways that defeat the fundamental purposes of the agreement." He concludes that "[t]hose who wish to live under the protection of law cannot be allowed to evade the law through self-serving misinterpretations" (pp. 44-45). The author suggests that, accordingly, world peace will arrive not via the law or the international legal process itself, but only from the creation and implementation of a

world democratic republic (p. 47). His book is a rallying cry designed to mobilize individual citizens to generate popular support for the establishment of this new process of peace, as he envisages it.

This reviewer cannot help but reflect, however, that the recent concrete and resolute actions taken by the UN Security Council in response to Iraqi aggression against Kuwait may yet give hope even to Ferencz and others whose faith in the established international legal system has been at a low ebb; these and other current developments remind us -- in the wake of the fundamental realignment in Eastern Europe -- that international norms are not merely shouted into the wind. They, too, are a powerful argument, and their implementation is now shaping the future of peace on this planet.