

Aneta Firýtová

M.A. Dissertation Evaluation

2016

*The U.S. Peace Corps-Possible Areas of Improvement in the Third Millennium*

Aneta Firýtová has chosen the United States Peace Corps as the subject of her M.A. dissertation. This is a revised and updated version of the original dissertation she submitted and progress has definitely been made. I would like to thank my colleagues in the Department of North American Studies who assisted with the supervision and sympathized with Aneta's complicated personal situation. The work is properly structured and referenced and the bibliography is adequate. In addition, the treatise is enhanced by the surveys sent out by Aneta to Peace Corps volunteers. Aneta has divided the dissertation into an Introduction, four main chapters, and a Conclusion. In the paragraphs that follow, I will discuss each section of the work.

The Introduction spells out the aim of the dissertation, which is to show possible improvements in the Peace Corps during the presidencies of George W. Bush and Barack Obama and to see whether concerns of the volunteers were reflected in subsequent changes. Geographically, the research is limited to the African continent. Overall, the Introduction is satisfactory, but I can imagine that some readers might criticize the lack of a greater discussion of the available literature.

In Chapter 1, Aneta discusses the history of the Peace Corps from the organization's founding in 1961 at the behest of President John F. Kennedy until the collapse of Communism in Europe in 1989, which resulted in the end of the Cold War. She goes into detail about the evolution of the organization both bureaucratically and on the ground. I think that this chapter is satisfactory.

Chapter 2 represents an analysis of how the Peace Corps changed between 1989 and 2001. Of course, the end of the Cold War meant that change was necessary. I like how Aneta emphasizes both the organizational and practical aspects. Work expanded to include the countries that had comprised the former Soviet Union and the work moved beyond education to environmental challenges and economic development. This chapter is also fine.

In Chapter 3, Aneta discusses developments over the past fifteen years and possible areas of improvement. She demonstrates an understanding of the complexities involved and each section is quite informative. In fact, this chapter leads the reader smoothly into Chapter 4, which is based on some primary research conducted by Aneta herself.

Chapter 4 is an analysis of 100 questionnaires sent out over the internet to Peace Corps volunteers in a number of African countries. She discusses the responses to seven open-ended questions from a number of angles. It is obvious to me that Aneta invested a lot of effort in this endeavor and I think that this chapter is the most original of the entire treatise.

In the Conclusion, Aneta rightly says that possible improvements in the Peace Corps vary according to the opinions of the various respondents. She shows how difficult making improvements to such an organization is and how overcoming bureaucratic intransigence is easier said than done. Individual aspects are discussed and Aneta does recommend that further research be conducted.

Overall, this version of Aneta's dissertation is a welcome improvement over the first one and I believe she has taken the advice given to her by my colleagues

and myself. The English could be better, but, as Aneta is not a native speaker, I can forgive grammatical and other errors. She should be accorded the opportunity to defend her work at the state examination. I recommend a classification of either **VERY GOOD or GOOD** depending on the quality of the oral defense. I wish Aneta good luck.

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