

Kissinger's Uncharacteristic European Policy

THE FUNERAL preparations were in full swing, and the eulogies were being drafted and rehearsed. True, the patient had not yet exhaled his last breath but having suffered a 3-day succession of blows to his vital organs, few expected him to survive. The busy-body mortician was piqued at the one member of the family whose aggressive optimism seemed to be putting into question the profitable service to be rendered.

The drama was unfolding at the 13-nation Washington energy conference, and the date was Feb. 13, 1974. The man, now busying himself with the last rites, had just for three days been secretly or not-so-secretly punching away at the patient to make sure he would not escape the coffin. His name was Henry Kissinger, U.S. Secretary of State. Now, he was insisting on the decorum of the solemn occasion. Whatever the suspicious cause of the E.E.C. patient's imminent demise, he wanted

no autopsy, and insisted the next of kin be uniformly gracious in accepting the verdict of fate.

French Foreign Minister Michel Jobert was criticizing his E.E.C. colleagues for succumbing to Mr. Kissinger's intensive arm-twisting. He was reminding them of their advance pledge to seek direct arrangements with oil-exporting countries. By no means was a regulatory function to be delegated to an eager United States. Mr. Kissinger, having destroyed a European solidarity whose substance was unacceptable, was now putting the onus for its absence on France. France, he demanded, should restore it by joining in the capitulation of the others.

Hardly had the European Foreign Ministers returned from their American Waterloo, when, with the pain of their twisted arms subsiding, they proceeded to act on the E.E.C.'s prior resolutions. By March 4th, the nine Com-

munity members had announced a joint offer of long-term economic and technical cooperation to 20 Arab countries.

WHAT the real issues were all about has on numerous occasions been spelled out by Mr. Jobert. In a French television interview, on Feb. 14th, he stated: "If it isn't the multinational, capitalist, international companies that furnish these /energy/ supplies, then it will be the governments, the producing governments which now have freedom to exploit, which have regained freedom to exploit their oil resources . . . They can only sell them to companies — if the companies want to buy them — or to governments. And they will sell to governments. So, what does everyone want? To deprive these producing countries of the chance to find a government buyer — is that what they want? . . . some people want to . . . impose a kind of reverse embargo, an embargo on producer countries, to refuse them bilateral contracts at the government level . . . /France/ would be living beyond her means if she kept herself from making bilateral contracts and entrusted herself to a sort of international arbitration . . . The United States claims — I'm referring to oil matters — that now it can conduct this arbitration, but I seriously doubt it can do it."

As for the responsibility for the sharply raised oil prices, Mr. Jobert, during a Washington news conference on Feb. 12th, squarely placed it at the door of the oil companies: "All I know is that during the crisis of October, November and December, a number of oil companies did in fact make contracts at exorbitant prices, and that they made all the prices on the market go up."

In a speech on Feb. 25th, Mr. Jobert dissected the purpose of the mechanism imposed in Washington for negotiating the international flow of oil and related monetary problems: The preparatory committee "did not deal with the substance of the /energy/ matter, but with procedure. The truth itself is entirely political. It is obvious that this mechanism was set up so that the United States can regain the leadership of the European countries and lead them as far as possible in areas as divergent as foreign affairs, finance, industry and

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energy." During another news conference, on March 8th, he searched recent economic and political events for clues as to U.S. intentions: "... there is in fact the Western world, for which the guiding power—it is Mr. Kissinger who said so—is the United States, and this guiding power, moreover, has a currency it uses as it pleases. There is an oil crisis that has several political explanations — for example, the Middle East crisis — but the real explanation for the oil crisis is to be found in the fluctuations of the dollar and the way in which the United States has managed this currency, which is actually an international currency; the U.S. has managed it on the basis of purely national preoccupations."

LEARNING of the E.E.C.'s offer to the Arab states, Kissinger was furious — furious enough not to be pedantic about the fact, timing and extent of having been briefed in advance by the E.E.C. leaders. A State Department spokesman would at last concede what everyone was guessing all along — that the U.S. was not concerned about European diplomatic solidarity as such. The United States was not after vocal harmony; submissiveness, whether or not orchestrated, would do. Kissinger himself was speaking of "confronting" the French head-on. Concretely, "Kissinger and his aides, including specialists on France, have been studying the options open to them in dealing with France . . ." Among the contemplated steps is "some action detrimental to French interests — perhaps in the area of defense policy." (N.Y. Times, March 7)

On March 11th, Kissinger would explain to a Washington audience that "the biggest problem American foreign policy confronts right now is not to regulate competition with its enemies . . . , but how to bring our friends to realize that there are greater common interests . . ." — which was tantamount to saying that right now the United States' worst enemies are certain West European countries.

THE FRENCH response to Washington's ominous posturings came on March 8th, and again in a news conference by Mr. Jobert (which, like so many of his key statements, went unreported in the American press). On that occasion, he said what had never before been uttered by a responsible leader of any of the Atlantic partners. After paying due lip service to the cliché, "I would like American troops to stay in Europe," the Frenchman threw a diplomatic A-bomb: "Having said that, if you want to make an issue of this, if you try to set up a choice between dignity and independence on

the one hand, and keeping American troops in Europe on the other hand, then I can tell you that in fact, *keeping U.S. troops in Europe is not at all of fundamental importance to us, but it is to the United States.* Mr. Hartmann, a State Department official, appeared before the Armed Services Committee of the House of Representatives. He said that the U.S. was not in Europe to protect European security, but to protect American security, and that it was a mistake to think it was acting out of concern for European interests; that it was maintaining the present level of American forces in Europe, not as an act of political charity, but because of calculations of national interest."

To be sure, Kissinger's United States is anything but impotent in the face of this self-chosen challenge. Before long, American connoisseurs may find themselves denied camembert and brie, and the taste of a choice cognac or armagnac may become a nostalgic memory to them. More consequentially, this or that of France's E.E.C. partners, repeating the volte-face at the Washington energy conference, may again be scared into re-joining Kissinger's "multilateralism." More ominously, precisely as during the oil crisis the U.S. attempted, by remote control, to settle its European accounts in the oil fields of the Middle East, so could it now scare one sheik or another from talking with Europeans.

BUT WHATEVER the prospective successes of the U.S. perseverance in bringing Western Europe down on its knees, in the long range it has but a meager chance of prevailing. Not much, but rather little, will depend on Mr. Kissinger's skills in international blackmail.

For, unlike the policies that enabled him to effect a modicum of inter-continental balance with the Soviet Union and China, his European policy is one of sheer improvisation and contrivance. Kissinger had not merely threatened Brezhnev, nor had he merely held out all kinds of promises to him. Instead,

A Plea for Clemency

The U.S. Senate has passed legislation to restore the death penalty. Among the so punishable crimes is treason.

Should the law apply retroactively, the responsible executives of the American oil companies participating in Aramco could conceivably qualify for the death penalty. They have betrayed the United States, on foreign orders, by denying oil supplies to its armed forces. The fact that they acted on no loftier motive than the admitted desire to protect a source of profits makes this a case of treason for pay. This is hardly a mitigating circumstance.

We are, therefore, urging the U.S. President to commute the death sentence to the traitors, in case that penalty should be proclaimed for them.

even while carrying both the carrot and the stick, he could point to a fundamental world power constellation that advocated his conception of "balance." The same grammar prevailed in talks with Chou En-lai. Even as he kept meeting with the North Vietnamese Le Duc Tho, he was not merely engaging in the kind of diplomacy also practiced by kidnappers and hijackers. The concessions he demanded of the adversary had, in the changed international reality, become compelling also from the adversary's own point of view. They were dictated by power realities that exceeded the manipulative capabilities of any group of men.

But all this is quite different with regard to Europe. Keeping it underfoot as a doormat for America's business community is an arbitrary ambition. It does not derive from overwhelming historic portents. Even at best, its successes can therefore merely be short-lived and occur on the margin of sweeping historic trends. Even the Kissingers come and go, as do the Brandts, Wilsons and Joberts. Kissinger's genius in re-formulating his country's relationships with the U.S.S.R. and China lay in the correct discernment of supra-personal factors; the ultimate weakness of his European policy lies in an antithetical reliance on the power of contrivance. Vis-a-vis Europe, the incumbent U.S. Secretary of State is not a Kissinger at all, but something of a John Foster Dulles, or perhaps merely an internationalized version of the late J. Edgar Hoover. ■

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American Ideology on the Offensive

THERE are ideas and public advocacies that are uniquely American. Irrespective of geography and political inclination, to outsiders they sound more exotic than the most remote and unfamiliar civilizations. More people the world over can appreciate the doctrinal intricacies of, let's say, China's Cultural Revolution than can appreciate certain American ideas. These sound to them stranger and more incredible.

Americans acutely register those reactions to themselves. They register them while traveling abroad. They also register them while staying at home and encountering echoes of foreign attitudes. They are often confounded by manifestations of anti-Americanism, particularly because they come from politically diverse sources. If only one could pin it all on the Communists! But there is a sort of anti-Americanism that by far antedates not only Brezhnev and Stalin, but also Lenin and even Marx. And it is encountered in non-Americans of virtually all political persuasions.

Worrisome confusion leads to a search of a simplistic, but mentally satisfying, "explanation." It is frequently found in the theory that foreign criticisms stem from sheer envy.

This condescending rejection supplies a treble narcissistic self-hallucination. It takes for granted the unexamined premise that the achievements of the American society in all or most areas of life are unmatched by any other country. It presumes that, on the whole, there can be no merit to foreign criticism. And, by "identifying" jealousy as the "real" generator of the criticism, it turns a potential source of embarrassment into an actual source of further self-flattery. The foreign critic is no real critic at all; he is an ungracious and secret admirer.

THE REAL source of the inter-civilizational antagonism is much more genuine. It derives from no mutual misunderstanding, but from fully and mutually understood intellectual and moral incompatibilities. It is occasioned by intellectual constructs which nowhere, except in the United States, gain currency as social ideas.

There is an unending number of formulations of what can only in America pass for a public philosophy of any kind. A particularly concise rendition was recently provided by Richard G. Gerstenberg, chairman of the General Motors Corporation. He presented it to a conference on "areas of public concern," and excerpts were published in the *New York Times* of March 4th.

Gerstenberg's social objectives could not be more commendable. They just about exhaust every worthwhile public aspiration:

As a nation we have launched ourselves on a most ambitious social agenda. We want to achieve even higher standards of education, health, and well-being for all our people. We want to abolish poverty. We

acceptable in their societies, they have not "learned" to strip the human being of anything other than greed and selfishness. The view that everything socially desirable can only come as a by-product of profits leaves them non-plussed, stunned, shaken in either their religious or humane values. They wonder how greed can be so blatant, direct, un-

Revolutionary Pronunciamento, U. S. Style

What follows is the full text of a radio commercial that is being dinned into the ears of the public (as per advertiser's copy; punctuation, etc. retained):

I pledge allegiance to the united state of Marine Midland . . . created by revolution, dedicated to the proposition that independent citizens of New York State, are only as free as their money. So, the board of directors of the revolution, granted Marine Midland customers two basic freedoms. The freedom to cash a Marine Midland personal check up to a hundred dollars, with no hassle at any Marine Midland office, across the street, across town, or across the state . . . just by whipping out a Marine Midland mastercharge card and the freedom to get up to a hundred dollars any day, any night from Moneyomatic machines, freeing citizens from the oppression of banker's hours. So, New Yorkers with shorts need no longer get up-tight at night or on weekends when they need some of their own money . . . that's freedom . . .

THE REVOLUTIONARY BANK FOR INDEPENDENT PEOPLE
MARINE MIDLAND BANK
Member FDIC, baby

want to rebuild our cities. We want to preserve and restore the beauty of our great resources; our land, our waters, and our skies. We want to give every American — of whatever color, religion or background — an equal opportunity to become all he is capable of becoming. We aim for full employment, and even more — the full opportunity for everyone to participate in all America has to offer.

This more than matches the combined utopias of Isaiah, Karl Marx and Albert Schweitzer. But the General Motors ideologist accepts it all as an immediate, realistic challenge. It is "right for our country and for our time." It is all within reach, if only we are wise.

IT IS IN the recommended means of achieving that social utopia that uniquely American thought is at work. Says the G.M. philosopher:

Not one of our grand national goals — not one — can be accomplished unless business prospers. Profits, from which come all wages, taxes, and dividends, fuel the growth of our nation, and our future depends on the profitability of free enterprise.

Here we are at the heart of what many people find repulsive about America. And it is not merely the upside-down economics in which all life and initiative miraculously begin with, rather than culminate in, profits. It is not that the repulsed people have not been exposed to, or that they have not themselves practiced, greed, rationalization and the art of euphemising. But they have also been exposed to other human notions and concerns. Whatever the degrees of inconsistency and hypocrisy that are

mitigated and aggressively expansive. And how can it at one and the same time purport to be an objective social view and advocacy? How can self-evident sales slogans double as religious abstractions? What kind of minds does it take to obfuscate all these intellectual and moral demarcation lines? How can the merchant, in the very attempts to unload his wares, keep introducing himself as a modern-day Socrates or Plato? Even the worship of the golden calf in the Sinai was merely a brief interlude in the history of ideas. For that worship to have developed full ideological dimensions is the prevalence of human inferiorities.

It is not decisive how many Americans subscribe to that "philosophy." It suffices that the American civilization continues to be hospitable to this sort of notions as valid ideas. But speaking statistically, least of all is this a marginal phenomenon. If anything, it is a "philosophy" that determines much of America's public life.

Assuredly, belief in the superiority of free enterprise is not confined to the United States alone. But the uniquely American ideological superstructure built on a vulgarized, cash-register version of it would be as unacceptable to England's Conservatives, France's Gaullists, and West Germany's Christian Democrats as it would be to any socialists. For nowhere but in the United States are corporation sales manuals confused with ideological literature. Nowhere else is philosophical Neanderthalism official doctrine.

IT IS A BASIC democratic premise that every citizen be free to speak out on

public affairs. Whatever his occupation and social status, he has that right. A business executive must be as free to participate in any public dialogue as anyone else. His ideas may or may not be influenced by his professional and economic status. When, however, a General Motors or other businessman assumes that by virtue of his institutional position he is ipso facto also a legitimate social philosopher and objective public leader, he ought to be ridiculed away from any public forum. For he is then an impostor. I have nothing against a salesman telling me what legislation or public policies he deems desirable, but when he is assuring me that he wants me to buy his vacuum cleaner, car or TV set out of purely philosophical, social or ideological reasons, I know I am dealing with a swindler. I do not want him locked up, merely because I am unwilling to delegate to anyone the authority of judging the criminality of words. That is why the sole effective protection against this sort of skulduggery can be found in public mores that set limits of tolerance towards lies and pretenses for profit.

But a civilization built on the premise that the sole human motivations are selfishness and greed is not induced to setting such limits. Its profiteers have a relatively easy time convincing themselves and others that, by virtue of being profiteers, they are social philosophers and reformers.

French President Pompidou has a banker's professional background. He would or could never say to the French people: "Elect me to be your national leader, because my banking interests are the ultimate interests of all of you, and our national advancement will result from my banking success." The equivalent, however, is essentially what American business cabals are saying to the public. And the highest national office holders, who often are merely on leave from those very business cabals, uphold them in that "philosophy." Typically, one successful businessman, A. N. Spanel, of the International Playtex Corporation, has for years been hiring space in the American press to share his cash-register "ideas" with the nation. He speaks out on just about every major national and international issue. Without ever once incorporating his own business promotion slogan, he instead includes in each of the features a legend that explains his "idealism": "YOU AND EVERY MAN IN BUSINESS ARE TRUSTEES OF THIS NATION AND THE WORLD."

A MYSTERIOUS, holy and all-surpassing assignment of fate, traditionally accepted by religious zealots and world redeemers; a missionary calling that made the Crusaders cross countries and continents; the secret divine charge once implied in "the white man's burden"; the enigmatic self-perception of esoteric

A 50-Percent Logic

President Nixon would not uphold emergency energy legislation that included a rollback of the inflated oil prices. He and all the other federal officials in charge keep explaining that the only way to overcome oil shortages is to let prices rise. This is to provide incentives for the oil industry to increase its production. So far, the argument is logical.

Then, however, we are told that eventually oil supplies will be in such proportion to the demand as to result in price decreases. This assumes that the oil companies would continue increasing production beyond the point of diminishing prices and profits. Now why would they do that?

political conspirators who mysteriously know themselves to be acting for "the people"; the very stuff that congeals a "Symbionese Liberation Army" and a succession of short-lived other one-room "People's Armies" — all this shows up in a businessman's adaptation. But never before has the ulterior motive behind the thing been more crass or obvious. For this time we are not confronted with a fanaticism of fanatics, but with a fanaticism of cynics. They contrive it precisely as they contrive all other promotion slogans. They have at last managed to theologize profits.

When sheer business considerations are taken for a social ideology, it is a foregone conclusion that they will also determine the meaning of patriotism, public duty and national responsibility. When, in a war situation, a huge corporation finds it profitable to continue serving the enemy's war effort, none of its leaders will go to jail for treason. That is precisely the function ITT, General Motors and other American companies fulfilled during World War II, without as much as inviting an official investigation. When supposed national adversaries told American oil companies

to cut off oil supplies to the U.S. armed forces and the companies complied, any suggestion of disloyalty was dismissed on the grounds that their non-compliance might have prejudiced sources of profits. By this reasoning, any saboteur or spy against the U.S. military should be excused by virtue of having been paid for his services to the enemy.

THE ARROGANCE of the business "ideologists" has greatly increased during the Nixon cadence. G.M. "philosopher" Gerstenberg is put on the defensive neither by compromising disclosures of his corporation's war-time service to Nazi Germany nor by disclosures of its long history of sabotaging public transportation as a means of promoting sales of private automobiles. If anything, he is demanding an even more favorable public attitude towards the business-authored religion:

We are daily confronted with evidence that not enough Americans understand this /that "our future depends on the profitability of free enterprise"/. To them, the word "profit" has a grubby, selfish sound. The Vice President, Gerald Ford, noted recently, that many Americans consider a legitimate profit as a "rip-off, something that the bad guys steal from the good guys."

When the underlying predatory notions are raised to the status of a prevailing social philosophy, even a polemic against it lends it the appearance of a legitimate side to a public controversy. It is not such a side. However unlimited must remain the democratic dialogue, swindle is not a legitimate part of it. A civilization which has lost this discernment is humanly inferior, no matter how formidable its means of frightening critics. Although an offspring and part of the broader Western civilization, its own unique interpretations all too often alienate and confound Europeans more than the rituals of some jungle tribe.

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