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The Effects Of Watergate On Summitry

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The skies are black with foreign dignitaries flying into Washington for meetings at the summit with President Nixon. But despite portentous appearances and grave toasts, the visits unseat the administration argument that Watergate should be swept under the rug so that Mr. Nixon can get on with important foreign business.

The true message of the meetings is that there is no serious threat to peace and stability in the world today. Now, if ever, is the time for the country to ponder the famous biblical question about what it profits to gain the world and lose the soul.

Consider, first, the most important of the current round of visits—the visit from Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka of Japan. Japanese-American relations have an important bearing on international security, and on the climate for trade and monetary dealings. At the moment, the rapport is less than perfect.

But the way to handle the Japanese-American problem is to enlarge its scope. The Europeans need to join this country in dealing with the monetary and trade problems posed by Japan's sudden rise as an economic giant. Japan needs to thicken diplomatic ties all around the world so that her security does not become a plaything of maneuvers among the United States, Russia and Communist China.

The way to foster that result is not for Mr. Nixon to come on as an untroubled superman, able to pull prosperity and security out of Uncle Sam's top hat. The right approach is rooted in honest acknowledgement of the President's limitations. Thus Watergate, if anything, should help him in his dealing with Mr. Tanaka.

The visit by the Shah of Iran last week makes the same point. The Iranian monarch was over here in large part to buoy up his military forces with the most advanced American jet fighters. During his visit he met with a group of journalists, and we naturally asked him what threat obliged him to seek such sophisticated military hardware. After not a little fencing, it developed that the threat came from Iraq.

Now it so happens that the Shah pre-

sides over a rapidly developing country of 31 million people, with tremendous oil reserves and a modernized army. Iran is the colossus of the Persian Gulf. Iraq has less than one-tenth the population. She is racked by divisions at the top, and a long-drawn-out losing struggle with its Kurdish minority. So whatever the danger, Iran can handle it. The American President does not need to flex muscles, make commitments and push allies into belligerent positions.

The right American role, on the contrary, is conciliation. This country needs to calm down the Shah and hold his ambitions in check. And that modest function is entirely consistent with further pursuit of the Watergate investigation.

A third current visitor is Prime Minister Gough Whitlam of Australia. Mr. Whitlam is one of the post-Vietnam brand of Asia leaders. Since coming to power in December, he has been moving rapidly to divorce his country from American policy in Southeast Asia. Thus he normalized relations with

China, and has been outspokenly critical of Mr. Nixon's bombing forays.

So much so that if it hadn't been for Watergate, and the weakening of the President's prestige, Mr. Nixon might not even have received Mr. Whitlam. Now they have met, and the lesson of the meeting is clear. If the United States maintains a position in Southeast Asia, it will not be thanks to bombing and other strong arm tactics. There isn't any support for that stuff here, and it doesn't really work over there.

On the contrary, there has been prog-

ress toward a settlement in Laos, even though the Congress has acted to cut off Mr. Nixon's capacity to bomb in Southeast Asia as of August 15. While dire things are heard about Cambodia because of the bombing cutoff, in fact the end of the bombing will weaken the true obstacle to settlement in Cambodia—the government of the American puppet, President Lon Nol. It will promote the emergence of President Nixon's old enemy, Prince Sihanouk. And in the end, when Mr. Nixon swallows his pride, it will be seen that Prince Sihanouk is the best available barrier against domination

of Cambodia by the North Vietnamese Communists.

What all this says is that the world outlook only works to reinforce the lesson of Watergate. This country is being hurt, not helped, by the indiscriminate intervention of an imperial president fortified by overblown military and intelligence services. Abroad, as at home, wisdom lies in facing squarely up to the bloated political monster we have allowed to burgeon in the name of national security.

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