

Ford Ad

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Rough Times Ahead for Henry Kissinger

The waning of Henry Kissinger's power is now proclaimed in unmistakable fashion by Senate voting on the foreign aid bill. The trouble is not trivial stuff like attacks from the press or snide cracks from barons in President Ford's entourage.

The difficulty is that Dr. Kissinger's central technique — the technique of the secret good guy — has been shattered by events. That technique depended on something that can no longer be — the presence of Richard Nixon in the White House.

The marks of Senate rebellion against Dr. Kissinger abound in votes on the aid bill. Virtually every issue ever used against the Secretary of State in the press was confirmed by Senate majorities.

Take his sponsorship of efforts to hamstring the Socialist regime of Salvador Allende in Chile. The Senate voted to cut military aid to the junta which overthrew Allende.

Or his support for the Saigon regime in the Vietnam peacemaking. The Senate voted to cut off fertilizer aid to South Vietnam.

Or his tilting toward Turkey in the conflict with Greece over Cyprus. The Senate twice supported amendments which would cut off aid to Turkey. When the President declared he would veto the measure because it interfered with Dr. Kissinger's efforts to foster a settlement on Cyprus, Sen. Vance Hartke told of a speech by the Greek

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foreign minister, George Mavros, to the effect that no progress was being made in the Cyprus negotiations any way.

The immediate cause for the sudden outburst of feeling in the Senate was frustration. For years senators had subordinated their real feelings on Vietnam, Chile and Greece. But to say that is only to pose another question — why had so many senators, and others as well, checked their feelings for so long? At that point there enters Dr. Kissinger's secret good guy technique.

The secret good guy technique finds its most vivid expression in the way Dr. Kissinger has habitually dealt with those of us in the press. From his earliest days in Washington he was skilled at making us believe that he was the only enlightened and sensible official in an administration full of unbelievable horrors.

Anybody who attacked him was running the risk of playing into the hands of the true hardliners. A good many of us accepted that line and pulled punches. Some even took at face value hints from Dr. Kissinger that he had

opposed the Cambodian excursion or the Christmas bombing of Hanoi — that he was truly a secret good guy.

The same technique was applied by Dr. Kissinger in dealing with Congress and various blocs of opinion in the country. A modified version of the approach expresses Dr. Kissinger's essential negotiating technique. As a diplomat, he specialized in delivering threats from others which he affected to deplore.

Thus he at all times painted horrible pictures for the Russians of what would happen if the Pentagon had its way. Similarly he let the Chinese know what the Russians thought about them and how exposed the Chinese would be if Washington copped out. When Hanoi proved fambunctious, he gave them a foretaste of the bombing they could expect in retaliation.

I do not mean to disparage these techniques which I here exaggerate for purposes of description. They have worked wonders. Dr. Kissinger has in fact been able to achieve agreements few thought were possible, in the Mid-

east and with China, Russia and North Vietnam.

The tactic worked so well precisely because it was believable. There was behind Dr. Kissinger an authentic bad guy — a man almost universally taken for a kind of ogre. The heavy was, of course, President Nixon, and that is why the Nixon-Kissinger partnership worked so well.

But with Mr. Nixon gone, Dr. Kissinger has no bad guy against whom to play secret good guy. Nobody can believe that President Ford is the villain. Nor has there been much disposition to accept hints, dropped vaguely by Dr. Kissinger, that depict the Defense Secretary, James Schlesinger, as the bad guy out to spoil détente, and Treasury Secretary William Simon as the heavy messing up oil talks with the Arabs.

The fact is that Dr. Kissinger can no longer play secret good guy. He is going to get his share of brickbats, maybe even some to make up for the wounds spared him in the past. Nothing he can do, or that President Ford can do, will change that.

The real question is whether Dr. Kissinger has the stomach to hang in there when he is only a Secretary of State like other Secretaries of State. For my own part I hope he does. For he has critical tasks yet to do. Indeed, it is hard to see how President Ford can manage foreign policy without him, even though his life is no longer charmed.