

Kissinger: 'Use of Force' An Oil Option

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Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger describes military action to bring lower oil prices in the Middle East as "a very dangerous course," but he leaves open the possible use of force to prevent "strangulation of the industrialized world."

Kissinger expressed these views in an unusually blunt year-end interview with Business Week magazine that centered on the world energy crisis.

Kissinger also warned of the danger of mounting pressures on many Western European nations within the next 18 months, as a result of soaring oil prices. Reviving his criticism of European behavior in the 1973-74 period, Kissinger said the European allies of the United States "suffer from an enormous feeling of insecurity" and "impotence" which "produces a certain peevishness" toward this country.

Kissinger's discussion of various methods of inducing the oil-exporting nations to reduce prices, which have more than quadrupled, elicited his most specific public comments about military action against the producing nations.

Asked if he has considered "military action on oil?" Kissinger responded:

"A very dangerous course. We should have learned from Vietnam that it is easier to get into a war than to get out of it. I am not saying that there's no circumstance where we would not use force. But it is one thing to use it in the case of a dispute over price, it's another where there's some actual strangulation of the industrialized world."

Kissinger added: "I want to make clear, however, that the use of force would be considered only in the gravest emergency."

He also said: "Any President who would resort to military action in the Middle East without worrying what the Soviets would do would have to be reckless."

Until now, Kissinger has declined to discuss publicly the possibility of using military force against oil producers. Kissinger brushed past the subject in an interview published Dec. 30 in Newsweek, saying he did not see oil prices as a cause for military action. In that interview, Kissinger also spoke more affirmatively of growing realization in Western Europe of the need for cooperative action to avert economic disaster.

State Department officials said yesterday they knew of no intervening developments that would have made Kissinger more pessimistic on either subject in the Business Week interview that he gave Dec. 23. Any difference in tone, they suggested, was probably due to a difference in questions. Kissinger was returning to Washington from Puerto Rico yesterday.

Kissinger, in Business Week, said he does not anticipate another oil embargo, "unless there is a war," and added: "I am not even sure of an oil embargo in the event of a war. It would now be a much more serious decision than it was the last time."

See KISSINGER, A16, Col. 1

KISSINGER, From A1

He said: "We're now engaged in rather delicate negotiations and these still show promise so why speculate about their failure while they're still in train?"

While there "is always the danger of another Arab-Israeli war" in the absence of a political settlement, Kissinger said, "On the other hand, war is talked about too loosely." He said, "I think the readiness of either side to go to war is often exaggerated."

The prospects for any immediate reduction in oil prices "are poor," Kissinger said.

Although the U.S. government in the past often indicated that it was encouraged by Saudi Arabia's expressions of support for lowering oil prices, Kissinger said, "I never for a moment believed, nor do I believe today, that the lead in cutting prices will be taken by Saudi Arabia."

Kissinger said: "The only chance to bring oil prices down immediately would be

massive political warfare against countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran to make them risk their political stability and maybe their security if they did not cooperate. That is too high a price to pay even for an immediate reduction in oil prices."

An "overthrow of the existing system in Saudi Arabia" could lead to a more radical regime like Libya's, Kissinger said. Similarly, he said, shattering "Iran's image of being capable of resisting outside pressures" could produce adverse political consequences. Creating such a political crisis, Kissinger said bluntly, almost certainly would be opposed by "Europe, Japan and the Soviet Union."

Instead, said Kissinger, the oil policy course that the United States has embarked upon requires making consuming nations "less vulnerable" to the threat of embargo or financial collapse, achieving sufficient energy conservation "to impose difficult choices on

the producing countries," developing financial institutions to relieve individual nations of a "sense of impotence" negotiating with producers, and creating alternative sources of energy.

Kissinger acknowledged, however, that it will take considerable time to create these desired conditions to induce pressure on oil producers to lower prices. "We think the beginning of this will occur within two to three years," he said.

The secretary stressed again that "we will not go to a consumer-producer conference without prior agreement on consumer cooperation."

In this interview, Kissinger sounded less sanguine than the official declarations at the time, on the Martinique conference last month between President Ford and French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing to resolve differences over the timing of a consumer-producer conference on oil. He said, "It's my impres-

sion" that the French leader shares U.S. views on the timing, but, "of course he has to speak for himself."

"All West European economies," Kissinger said, "with the exception of the Federal Republic of Germany, are going to be in more or less serious trouble within the next 18 months."

The Communist vote in Italy and to some extent in France, Kissinger said, has remained constant even when economies were performing well. An economic decline in Europe, said Kissinger, "would, therefore, have serious political consequences."

Returning to a theme of exasperation with the European allies during and after the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, a theme he has avoided in recent months, Kissinger asked, quasi-rhetorically: "Why are the Europeans so hostile to the U.S.?"

The European governments, he said, "opposed every move we made in the Middle East;

every strong action that was taken in the Middle East was taken by the U.S. . . ."

"When we went on a military alert for one day [in October, 1973], we were accused of having done it for political reasons . . ."

"I think," Kissinger said of the European allies, "they suffer from an enormous feeling of insecurity. They recognize that their safety depends on the U.S., their economic well-being depends on the U.S. and they know that we're essentially right in what we're doing."

"So the sense of impotence," Kissinger continued, "the inability to do domestically what they know to be right, produces a certain peevishness which always stops just short of policy actions. No foreign minister ever says this."

Kissinger, in the interview, also repeated his opposition to the limitations of \$300 million in Export-Import Bank credits for the Soviet Union,

imposed by Congress last month. Said Kissinger: "\$300 million over a period of four years is simply not enough to use as a bargaining chip with a major country."

When asked if he thinks that Soviet disappointment over these limitations will cause the Soviet Union to harden its position on Jewish emigration, rather than meet the freer emigration pattern tied by Congress to trade benefits for the Soviet Union, Kissinger replied:

"If these trends continue in the U.S., you can expect a general hardening of the Soviet position across the board over a period of time. They will not go back to the Cold War in one day. But there are many things the Soviet Union could do that would make our position much more complicated" around the world.

Congress, Kissinger reiterated, has "deprived the United States of important and maybe fundamental leverage."