

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Reaction to the White House Shuffle

The recent firing of Dr. Schlesinger was, in my opinion, the worst mistake President Ford could have made.

Dr. Schlesinger is an intellectual and pragmatist and by most accounts, one of the most competent Defense Secretaries ever. He refused to be dazzled by Henry Kissinger or detente, but instead stood firm for our defense and security. For that, he was fired by a President who would sell us all out for the glory of Henry Kissinger and that dirty joke called detente.

I would urge those senators who agree that national defense should have priority over Dr. Kissinger's image, to oppose and reject any nominee for the Defense Secretary's position. A vacancy would only reflect reality: any sycophant named to the post would not be "in charge" in any real sense of the term, but would be required to defer to Dr. Kissinger.

This latest action has left me sickened and resolved to see that President Ford is defeated next year.

CARL P. HORTON

Oakton, Va.

The facts are that a non-elected President decided, after more than a year in office, and in preparation both for his first election campaign and for some difficult foreign policy negotiations, to tighten up the policymaking hierarchy, replace certain carry-over members of the former administration with men of his own choosing, and incidentally eliminate sources of dissension and friction in his government. And this is exactly what he said when asked at the press conference at which the announcements were made.

For this he is attacked as (a) weak; (b) ruthless; (c) ignorant; (d) heavy-handed; (e) deceptive; or apparently even (f) all of the above. Poppycock. Most of the commotion is directly the result of a growing tendency to dramatize and personalize current events generally and politics in particular. Perhaps newsmen feel the need to compete with Monday night football. Sure Kissinger and Schlesinger were in conflict. They apparently had very different views about important defense and foreign policy issues. And the President had long since made it clear that if push came to shove, he was going along with Kissinger. That doesn't make the policy any the less the President's. And push came to shove, so Schlesinger got pushed.

As for the accusations of cruelty, clumsiness, etc., in the way the "massacre" was carried out, one could also describe these same events as candid, open and above board. Not very different, in fact, than the way they are carried out in the board rooms of the big corporations in which most of the President's men grew up and learned their trade.

IVAN B. GLUCKMAN

Reston.

Are we to be subjected to 11 months of President Ford playing political games with Ronald Reagan for the benefit of the ultra-conservatives?

HALE GABRIELSON

Kensington.

I am sorry to hear of Mr. Rockefeller's move. However, it may leave him free to organize the liberal wing of the Republican Party. Certainly the services of this most valuable and able man ought not be lost to the party or the country and especially at this time.

It seems odd to me that no one stoutly defended Rockefeller against the accusations of the wild-eyed conservatives. We have surely heard enough from them by now. It was they who brought the government to near ruins under Nixon in the first place.

Rockefeller has a broad and generous vision of America and he has vastly contributed to the establishment and perpetuation of the great ideals he believes in. Furthermore, he has continued to do so despite the bitter and unfair and hateful attacks made upon him by—it would seem—anyone who can wield a pen or mouth a phrase. I put it all down to jealousy. Which is sad, indeed, for what other family in America can match the diverse philanthropy of the Rockefellers? None.

MARION E. SITTLER

Washington.

Is ambition enough of a qualification for Secretary of Defense?

EDNA ANGSTMAN

Vienna.

In the November 5 edition, Cannon and Witcover report that President Ford's explanation of the shakeup in his administration has raised "new credibility problems for him".

Might I suggest that Mr. Ford's credibility problems had their genesis back in the days when he was steadfastly proclaiming Mr. Nixon's innocence?

Nothing's changed. Although Mr. Nixon's been replaced by a Ford and not a Lincoln, the country's still getting the same old Dodge.

LEONARD GREENBERG

Reston.

If President Ford fired Secretary of Defense Schlesinger primarily to resolve a conflict of personality and will between two strong men, it is deeply regrettable. Mr. Schlesinger is a man of intelligence, wisdom, and integrity, who has the courage to call things by their right names. Deviousness and two-facedness are alien to his nature.

If Mr. Schlesinger was fired to resolve a fundamental conflict over U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union, history will determine—and perhaps sooner than we think—whether President Ford made the right decision.

ERNEST W. LEFEVER

Washington

The reported glee of Kremlin leaders over the sacking of Secretary of Defense Schlesinger brings to mind an interesting historical parallel: the execution of Sir Walter Raleigh by King James I as part of a craven policy of submission in response to Spanish threats of war against England.

WILLIAM A. LINDSAY

Wheaton.

Many of us are puzzled as to whether Dr. Kissinger's power position remains substantially intact, despite the Sunday night massacre. Joseph Kraft's column, "The Crumbling Administration" November 4, appears to represent a scathing denunciation of President Ford's intellectual acumen. Mr. Kraft is a known Kissinger admirer and defender. Theoretically, when one identical twin succumbs to pain, the other winces. Could this give us a clue as to Dr. Kissinger's new status?

JOHN W. DIXON

Fairfax.

We are in James Schlesinger's debt for an intelligent interpretation of American and allied security interests in an era of burgeoning dialogue with our principal adversary, and for his forthright advocacy of programs to advance those interests.

Furthermore, only time will permit a full appraisal of his immense service to national security during the only forced abdication of a commander-in-chief in our nation's history.

LINCOLN LANDIS

Arlington.

After watching the President's press conference on November 3, I could not help think how nice it would have been to have as interrogators someone other than newspaper reporters.

The indirectness of their cross-examination to the central points in question was embarrassing. . .

Had the conference contained some students of American diplomatic and defense policy, then perhaps the American people might have learned what the hell happened over the weekend. As it was we were given Kissinger's little quip about a military coup. Which really meant "don't bother me. This is sophisticated stuff which you wouldn't understand anyway."

HARWOOD S. NICHOLS

Alexandria.

To be sure, the President has the prerogative to select and discharge any in his administration. I only object to the graceless way it was handled.

JUDITH A. LIPP

Fredericksburg, Va.

Ford's speech to announce the personnel changes was filled with inconsistency and contradiction. We were told continuity was the reason for the changes. Yet the ousted were praised for their fine accomplishments. We were told the country needed to demonstrate to the world that our policies during the Nixon-to-Ford transition would not impact on our international relations. Yet the men who carried out our policies are now gone.

It becomes clear that Ford sought not continuity but conformity. Schlesinger and Colby have demonstrated an honesty and a frankness, with Congress and the public, that transcends partisan politics and inspires open debate and fact-finding.

The Sunday night massacre will surely confirm that this political maneuver will only extend continuity in our government to the point of the limited comprehension of the man who claims responsibility for it.

THOMAS E. GREGG

Alexandria.

As the dust begins to settle, we suppose, over the havoc wrought by the "weekend wipeout" on both sides of the Potomac, more thoughtful impressions begin to take shape. Leaving aside who may be "better" or "best" for what President Ford may be trying to achieve, and even declining to match one man's "genius" against another's... the whole sorry affair does begin to sound somewhat archaic. It tends to bring to mind, if not nostalgically, the succession of almost comic opera power-struggles which characterized much of 19th century *mitteleuropa*. Thank Heavens we are no longer confronted with those shakoed-and-tunic(k)ed White House cops, or the comedy would far outweigh the political overtones of whatever effects Mr. Ford has intended.

And speaking of political overtones, what was it in particular, if anything so specific, in the President's Press Club speech which turned the polled American public against him and for New York... pretty much all of a sudden. Are we to extrapolate from such a turn some forebodings for 1976?

JOHN M. ANSPACHER

Washington.

In the oft referred to debate between former Secretary of Defense Schlesinger and Dr. Kissinger over arms limitations and detente in general, the reader of newspapers has little opportunity to see very clear differences. Rather than clear cut alternatives, the two cabinet ministers seemed to be debating fine points, not whether or not to achieve real disarmament, but what size small slice should be made. The debate appears then to be about which fine pointer has the better plan to retain U.S. hegemony over most of the world, a debate in other words that takes place inside of the assumptions that the late C. Wright Mills called "crackpot realism."

Instead of candidates lining up behind Schlesinger and Kissinger, they might really open up the foreign policy debate, and begin to discuss disarmament, long-range commitments made years ago to fascist dictatorships, and other secret and semi-secret alliances that affect our lives. As we near our 200th birthday we might begin to pay attention to some of the warnings of our founding fathers: "No entangling alliances," said George Washington. "Don't go abroad in search of monsters to destroy," said John Quincy Adams. "End secret diplomacy," said many a great American.

SAUL LANDAU,

Associate Fellow,
Institute for Policy Studies.

Washington.