

The World And Nixon

By C. L. Sulzberger

PARIS—The Republican party, in the current United States elections, had to pay a large price because of Richard Nixon. He seemed to understand the world much better than his own country and his leadership talents were therefore more appreciated abroad than at home. Foreigners don't vote in the United States.

Americans were horrified by the immorality and ethical aberrations exposed in the Watergate scandal. Nevertheless, a medley of foreign leaders, ranging from Chou En-lai to Georges Pompidou and from King Faisal of Saudi Arabia to Golda Meir, worried as a President they respected began tottering from power.

While Mr. Nixon was appointing to high White House positions a bunch of small-town, middle-class fixers with no apparent sense of national dignity, he was also naming as his diplomatic right hand Henry Kissinger, a respected, knowledgeable Harvard professor who had opposed his politics and was wholly removed from the locker-room society of his Pennsylvania Avenue clubmates.

The former President had patiently set about making himself an expert on international matters because he recognized in them his country's major concern. Hubert Humphrey, who was to oppose him in the Presidential race, told me in 1967: "Nixon will be a very strong contender. . . . He knows that foreign policy is the issue of our day."

Such percipience paid off. Mr. Kissinger explained (while he was still national security adviser in the White House cellar) just how he worked with the President. It was plain that Mr. Nixon remained both architect and decision-maker in U.S. policy until his position became mortally eroded.

According to Mr. Kissinger: "The President required a complete spectrum of analyses and recommendations on any subject—and then he wanted to make his decision. This was his operational system. Nixon wanted to be sure that every option was covered and fully explained—he would study them and choose."

Mr. Kissinger saw Mr. Nixon's job then as making the final choice after every possible view had been heard. Mr. Kissinger was not expected to favor one or another line, merely to present them all with approximately equal impartiality; and there had to be a full, written record of the process. Those who saw him [Kissinger] as "a Machiavelli" were silly, he contended. His function was to present equally the

opinions he favored and disfavored.

Another time Mr. Kissinger said: "He [Nixon] feels very strongly that he must avoid being surprised by something he could have foreseen. All possible results of any given line must be examined." And this remained Kissinger's principal function until the President started to use him as his secret personal emissary on super-negotiations—with North Vietnam, China, Russia.

Mr. Nixon himself once described his concept to me as "the specific purpose of maintaining a U.S. policy role in the world rather than a withdrawal from the world and international responsibilities. . . ."

"It is not enough just to be for peace. The point is, what can we do about it? Through an accident of history we find ourselves today in a situation where no one who is really for peace in this country can reject an American role in the rest of the world. . . ."

"Our idea is to create a situation in those lands to which we have obligations or in which we have interests where, if they are ready to fight a fire, they should be able to count on us to furnish the hose and water. . . ."

"We must not forget our alliances or our interests. Other nations must know that the United States has b

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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the capability and the will to defend these allies and protect these interests. . . .

"For the next 25 years the United States is destined to play this super-power role as both an economic and a nuclear giant. We just have to do this. We cannot dodge our responsibilities. . . . We could be a terrible threat to the world if we were to lose our restraint or if we were to sacrifice our own power and allow ourselves to become too weak to uphold the weak."

It is one of the tragedies of American history that the man who so clearly discerned a proper relationship between the United States and other nations should have paid so little heed to the moral quality of U.S. national needs and the men selected to face them. This split judgment ultimately destroyed Richard Nixon—as it damaged his party at the polls. It did not blemish his foreign policy.