

# Adjusting to a World Without Nixon

NIXON: C'EST FINI . . . NIXON GOES . . . NIXON TREEDT AF . . . NIXONS RUCKTRITT . . . K OTSTAVKE R. NIKSONA. The news was splashed across front pages in every written language and, for an entire day, the world became a global village in a collective state of shock. Richard Nixon's sudden resignation was almost as traumatic in New Delhi as it was in New York. Muscovites buried themselves in Pravda's page-one story. GI's on duty in the Far East clustered around transistors to listen to the Armed Forces Radio broadcast of the Nixon speech. Kibbutzniks in Israel huddled in front of communal television sets to watch satellite coverage of the event, and the revelers in Harry's New York Bar in Paris paused long enough to hear Nixon's farewell—and to cheer or weep. "The President is dead," said one Communist diplomat. "Long live the President."

Even before the transfer of Presidential power to Gerald Ford, the U.S. took steps to assure the rest of the world that America still had a functioning and stable government. The U.S. Information Agency distributed a filmed interview and biography of Ford to most of its overseas posts. The Pentagon kept U.S. forces at their normal peacetime state of readiness: any extra alert, strategists reckoned, would only convey a sense of insecurity.

## A 'FAST AND HARD' MESSAGE

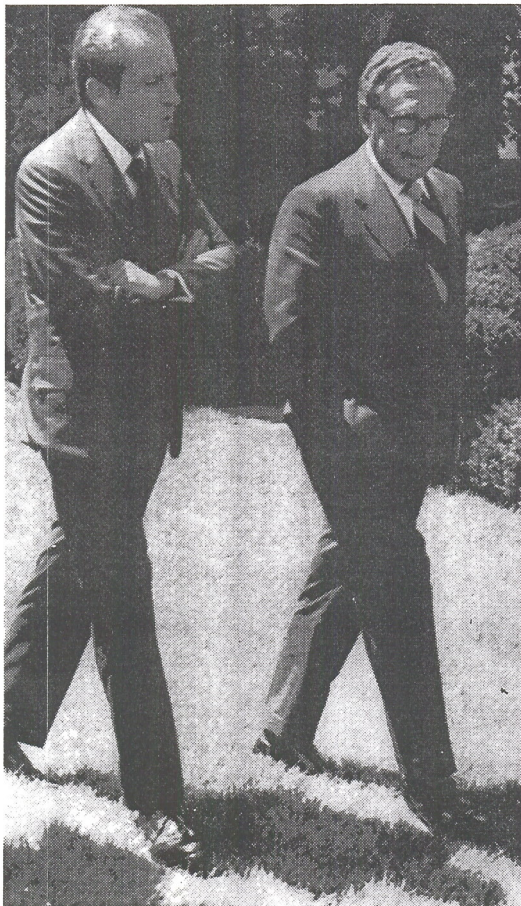
The crucial symbol of foreign-policy continuity was clearly Henry Kissinger, and most foreign governments took heart from Ford's early announcement that Kissinger would stay on as Secretary of State. Just hours after his swearing-in, the new President made his first diplomatic contacts: along with Kissinger, he met with about 60 ambassadors at the White House. That same day, Kissinger ordered a "fast and hard" message sent to all American ambassadors instructing them to emphasize that the abrupt departure of Richard Nixon did not signal a wrenching change in U.S. foreign policy. And a State Department official indicated that Kissinger would likely be dispatched on a globe-trotting mission to a dozen or more capitals to tell foreign leaders that "all is well in Washington again."

Still, the sudden awareness that Richard Nixon was out of office gave the world pause. The new President and his views on foreign policy (following story)

were both mysteries overseas. And foreigners were aware that whereas foreign policy was always Nixon's long suit, Ford has focused his attention on purely domestic matters. No one knew how much influence Kissinger would retain with his new boss. It was even hard to calculate how much Nixon's departure would detract from the old foreign-policy magic associated with Kissinger's name. So closely linked in the world's eyes were the former President and his Secretary of State that while French Cabinet Minister Françoise Giroud in-

Kissinger foreign policy: "The historians are probably going to say that the Nixon-Kissinger policy falls into two parts: the period of hard choices and new directions, when Mr. Nixon may indeed have been necessary but which is now largely completed; and the period of following through, which can be done without him if it can be done at all."

What's more, the special working relationship between Nixon and Kissinger, which had made them such a formidable team, seemed in recent weeks to have gone sour. "How the hell am I supposed



Going, going, gone: Though the symbol of continuity in foreign policy was Kissinger

sisted, "The foreign policy during the Nixon years was Nixon's," a Soviet diplomat was just as emphatic in saying, "We have always regarded Kissinger as the architect of American détente policy and Nixon as his pupil."

Kissinger's continued presence at the helm of the State Department was nonetheless immensely reassuring. So too was the feeling that even if Nixon had masterminded the innovative foreign policy achievements of the past five and a half years, his presence was no longer as crucial now. As London's prestigious magazine, *The Economist*, said of the Nixon-

to conduct foreign policy in this atmosphere," Kissinger himself fumed last week. Even before that, the strains were becoming apparent. When Kissinger won the Nobel Peace Prize last year, one White House insider confided to *Newsweek's* Bruce van Voorst, "Nixon practically had a tantrum. He thought it should have been his." And when the investigation into Kissinger's role in the wiretapping of seventeen officials and journalists was reopened in June, Nixon at first refused to accede to Kissinger's requests that the President assume responsibility for the taps. It was only when

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Kissinger threatened publicly to resign unless his name was cleared that Nixon certified he had given the wiretap order. Last Week, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee gave the Secretary of State a virtually clean bill of health.

It was a timely action. For even though President Ford would probably assign highest priority to such pressing domestic problems as inflation, the fact was that foreign affairs, as always, could be expected to intrude urgently in the Oval Office. Last week, the continuing blood-letting in Cyprus, a new Communist military push in South Vietnam and the tenuous state of semi-peace in the Mideast all clamored for attention. So too did the tasks that Nixon and Kissinger left unfinished: tightening the bonds between the U.S. and its Western European allies,



Sven Simon

... there was an uncertain Ford in the future

repairing a badly frayed alliance with Japan and healing the world's economy. And it was hard to imagine that Ford could long delay meeting with Soviet Communist Party chief Leonid Brezhnev and Western European leaders.

Indeed, one of Ford's major tasks in the first few months of his Administration will be to introduce himself to a world that knows little of him—and, in some cases, doubts his qualifications for the Presidency. "The only Ford we know here is the car," cracked one Asian politician. But in spite of Ford's international anonymity and his reputation as

an innocent in foreign affairs, his ascendancy gave rise to considerable optimism in some quarters. Said one Soviet expert on U.S. affairs: "If he were as dumb as the Georgetown snobs think he is, he wouldn't have lasted in your politics or gotten as far as he has. He's obviously a good student, and the White House is the best school in the world. Give him time—and Kissinger to teach him—and he'll learn."

#### AN EXPLETIVE DELETED

If for no other reason, most foreigners were willing to give Ford the benefit of the doubt because they had come to realize that Nixon was no longer able to lead the Western world. Then, too, as foreign leaders read through the latest Nixon transcripts last week, the former President's supposed expertise in international affairs seemed suddenly to be riddled with holes. "A cursory reading," marveled one leading European politician, "conveys the impression of an indecisive President with a crass ignorance of economic and monetary affairs, a President who doesn't give an expletive deleted about the Italian lira and who reacts like a high-school student to the floating of the British pound, not quite sure what it means."

Relief at Nixon's departure was matched by a wave of encomiums to the American political and legal system. The Constitution, the Congress, the courts, the press and the American people were all saluted for their role in pursuing the Watergate nightmare to its necessary conclusion. "The whole episode is a sign of the vitality of the American system," said one influential Arab businessman, "and a testimony to American political morality." The praise was often coupled with an admission that few other nations would have persevered as the U.S. did. "I wish I could say that such a drama would have ended with such dignity in a European country, but I don't think so," a Belgian diplomat confessed. "The Watergate denouement and the smooth transition will immeasurably enhance America's image throughout the whole world."

Whatever new luster might be added to America's image, the key calculation overseas was that American foreign policy would hardly change at all. Policymakers around the globe pointed to the truism that a nation's foreign policy depends on its national interests, and that those do not change overnight even though a government might. Still, they acknowledged that it would be implausible for a President unversed in foreign affairs to strike out with any daring steps. As a French political analyst

noted, "There is reason to believe that American foreign policy will slow down—which many of us will welcome." It cannot, however, slow down too much, for Ford and Kissinger already face a series of challenges that call for U.S. action and involvement. Foremost among them:

**Détente.** Talks with the Soviets on the limitation of strategic arms are expected to resume next month in Geneva, but Ford will first be called upon to settle a dispute within his own Administration on the proper stance for the U.S. to take. Kissinger believes that even a partial agreement would be a plus, while Defense Secretary James Schlesinger argues that a limited pact would be unwise and that the U.S. should stand firm until Moscow makes sufficient concessions and a comprehensive accord can be reached. To gain such a compromise from Moscow, Ford may have to make good on one pledge that Nixon could not fulfill: tariff concessions to the Soviets, currently blocked in Congress because of Russia's refusal to permit the free emigration of Soviet Jews. Even then, the Kremlin leaders may well elect to hold firm and test the fledgling President's mettle.

**Asia.** "What I am concerned about," said one Chinese America-watcher, "is the U.S. capability of responding to a crisis." The potential crisis that all Chinese officials worry about most is Soviet adventurism on their border—and what the U.S. response would be. For the immediate future, however, there are far more pressing problems for both Washington and Peking: the internal dissension within China, the failing health of Premier Chou En-lai and the uncertainty over who will emerge in power when he or Mao Tse-tung dies. Until the succession question is answered there is little chance that much significant progress will be made in relations between the United States and China, but Peking will be waiting for a sign that the Nixon era rapprochement will continue.

In contrast, the Japanese will be looking for indications that the cold shoulder they got from Nixon will not be repeated by Ford. Tokyo generally seemed pleased with the change in Presidents, but as one Japanese put it, "What we want to know is what about import restrictions, and will there be protectionism? There will be no answers until Ford names his economic advisers."

**Western Europe.** Relations between the U.S. and its European allies were frequently strained during the Nixon Administration. Washington was angered at Europe's refusal to join the U.S. in a common front to combat the Arab oil boycott. Europe was concerned that Nixon and Kissinger were oblivious to its economic troubles and so eager to pursue détente that they might not protect European interests in the process. Then too, Nixon's preoccupation with Watergate and Kissinger's with ongoing Mideast crises left little time for Europe. Now, European diplomats and officials hope

that Ford will reach out to shore up the NATO alliance, that he will not be so preoccupied with cultivating the Soviets and that he will turn to the urgent financial problems facing the Continent.

**The Mideast.** Though they got along just fine with Nixon, Israelis are delighted at the prospect of dealing with Ford. But the Arabs are gravely troubled. "In Congress, Ford has given steady support to Israel over the past twenty years," beamed one Israeli diplomat. "His record is very strong." But an Arab countered, "Nixon was relatively able to free himself from Zionist pressures and pursue a more evenhanded policy. Many Arabs feel he was in a better position to pressure Israel into needed concessions if a peaceful settlement is ever to be achieved." The Arabs are hoping that Kissinger, whom they trust and like, will persuade Ford that his predecessor's policy must be followed if new conflicts are to be avoided.

#### FORD'S BEST INSURANCE

But with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin clinging to power by one vote and a large number of Israelis adamantly opposed to any territorial concessions, the Arabs are taking no chances. Cairo has begun a new initiative to improve relations with Moscow and with Palestinian guerrilla groups. Saudi Arabian officials have warned that they will once again impose an oil boycott if Israel does not withdraw from more occupied land this fall. And Syria has indicated that if such withdrawal does not occur, it will ask the U.N. to pull its observer force out of the Golan Heights—and Syrian soldiers will resume fighting.

Ultimately, Ford's best insurance against a major international crisis will be the maintenance of the U.S.-Soviet détente. And last week the Soviet Union indicated it understood that too. Mikhail Sagatelyan, vice president of Novosti Press Agency, told NEWSWEEK: "However acute the character of the forthcoming struggle for détente may be, one may . . . assert with a good dose of optimism and confidence that the future of the cold war forces looks today scarcely less bleak than it did yesterday. After all, the policy of détente today has an immeasurably stronger and more massive following than it had yesterday." And in the hospital room where he is being treated for an inflamed pericardium, poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko—a sometime angry young man now responsive to the Kremlin's official line—penned a tribute to détente:

*Near the Pushkin monument  
I see an American student in velvet  
jeans  
With a worn, suede shoulder bag  
That does not smell of winter—  
The winter we have overcome. . . .  
We have settled accounts, thank  
God,  
With the cold war crone  
And, I believe, no one has power  
To drench America and Russia  
With icy water ever again.*