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Kissinger Clarifies Remarks

By Marilyn Berger
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Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger has explained that when he left open the option of using military force in the Mideast he was addressing himself to "an absolutely hypothetical case."

In an interview taped Wednesday and broadcast last night, Kissinger added: "I do not believe that such an event is going to happen. I was speaking hypothetically about an extreme situation that would have to be provoked by other countries."

Kissinger was interviewed by Bill Moyers, White House press secretary for President Johnson in the first program of a series, "Bill Moyers' Journal: International Report" on the Public Broadcasting Service (WETA).

Said Kissinger: "I think it is self-evident that the United States cannot permit itself to be strangled, but I also do not believe that this will really be attempted." Moreover, he said, "we were not talking, as is so losely said, about the seizure of oil fields. That is not our intention and that is not our policy."

The secretary declared that he was "astonished" at the attention given to his original remarks in an interview two weeks ago in Business Week magazine. "I think . . . many people have spread this around, frankly in order to sow some dispute between us and the oil producers, he said. When pressed by Moyers to say who he was referring to, Kissinger would not elaborage. "I think there are many forces," he said, "and I don't want to speculate on that." Kissinger stressed that U.S. policy was to achieve cooperation, not confrontation with the producers.

Kissinger conceded that his step-by-step Middle East diplomacy "is facing increasing difficulties, as one would expect. As you make progress, you get

the more difficult circumstances." But he defended his negotiating strategy against charges that he has systematically excluded the Soviet Union from playing a peacekeeping role.

"A final solution," Kissinger said, "must involve the Soviet Union, and it has never been part of our policy to exclude the Soviet Union from a final solution." But Kissinger has attempted to keep the Russians at a distance with the idea of bringing them in at a much later stage. It is his view that Moscow backs the most radical Arab demands.

But he said in the hour-long interview that the Russians were not playing "adversary politics" in the region. "I think the Soviet Union has not been exceptionally helpful," he said, "but it has also not been exceptionally obstructive."

Kissinger also conceded that "detente has had a setback" as a result of Moscow's repudiation this week of the 1972 trade agreement. But he said that the "imperative . . . of preventing nuclear war, which in turn requires political understanding, will enable us to move forward again."

At the White House, press secretary Ron Nessen said yesterday, "The President is determined to continue his pursuit of a policy of relaxing tensions with the Soviet Union."

In response to a question by Moyers on foreign aid, Kissinger said that he did not agree that the United States is "giving most of our food for strategic purposes."

He said: "We're giving some in countries in which political relationships are of importance to us, and it stands to reason that when a country has a vital resource, that it keeps in mind the degree of friendship that other countries show for it before it distributes this resource at essentially—well, essentially on a grant basis."

Kissinger added: "The vast majority—the considerable majority of our food aid goes for humanitarian purposes."

Food experts dispute this assessment and say that since scarcities have reduced the amount of food shipments, the aid program has become politicized. Statistics indicate that in the first part of the current fiscal year, less than half of American food aid shipments have gone to countries on the United Nations' list of neediest countries.