

Reston on the 'Anderson Papers'

A LESSON STILL UNLEARNED

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The Anderson papers on the U.S. government's handling of the Indian-Pakistani war suggest that the Nixon administration has learned very little from the damning disclosures of the Pentagon papers on the Vietnam war.

For Jack Anderson's classified documents tell much the same story of damaging



decisions arrived at in secret, of subjective presidential orders imposed on the objective analysis of the President's own principal advisers, of official explanations which mislead the Congress and the American people, and finally of defiant disclosures of the facts by officials who have lost faith in the judgment and truthfulness of their superiors.

Every time these official deceptions are published, the issue is presented to the public as a conflict between the government and the press, but the issue is much deeper than that. It is a conflict within the government itself on how to make and present policy in such a way as to retain the confidence and trust of the civil service, the Congress, the nation, and the other governments of the world.

PRESSURE

If you read the official reports on the meetings of the National Security Council's Special Action Group for December 3, 4 and 6, it is hard to get the impression that Dr. Henry Kissinger and other top officials are really grappling with the political, strategic and moral problems of the Indian-Pakistani crisis.

Mainly they are being told by Kissinger, who is obviously under pressure from his boss, what the President wants done — no evenhanded stuff but wants to favor Pak-

istan — and there is a clear suggestion that the bureaucrats are opposing the President rather than obeying his orders.

"I'm getting hell every half hour from the President," says poor Kissinger, "that we are not being tough enough on India . . . the President is blaming me, but you people are in the clear," he adds, as if the main war were not in India but between members of the President's staff.

POISON

No doubt there were other unpublicized meetings which dealt more analytically with the nation's long-range strategic problems, but the impression left by the published papers is that the President decided to go along with his friends in Pakistan, and that the official explanations were so inaccurate or incomplete that even the American ambassador in New Delhi, Kenneth Keating, protested that they "did not add to our position, or more importantly, to American credibility."

It is the old story, and it has poisoned American policy and diplomacy under both Presidents Johnson and Nixon for almost a decade. The issue is "credibility," which is a fancy word for mistrust in the official statements and "background briefings" of the White House.

Something new seems to have come over American political life, and it is not official lying. It is the widespread public tolerance of misleading official statements, and even a general tendency not to denounce the twisters who indulge in this practice, but the reporters who expose it.

It cannot be said that the lies and blunders and misjudgments of these past two administrations have not been reported, or that the Johnson and Nixon administrations were very clever in concealing their tricks, or that they were very successful as a result of them.

On the contrary, they have been deceitful, clumsy, and

unsuccessful, and even after the Pentagon papers, and the Anderson papers, the reaction seems to be not that they were wrong and deceptive, but that they were caught.

KISSINGER

It is even clearer from the Anderson papers than from the Pentagon papers that policy is being planned, not in the State Department, but in the White House, and that in the Indian-Pakistani case it was being guided primarily by Kissinger, who is not available for questioning even in secret by the responsible committees of the Congress.

"We need to think about our treaty obligations," Kissinger told the National Security Council Special Action Group in the December 3 meeting. "I remember a letter or memo interpreting our existing treaty with a special Indian tilt. When I visited Pakistan in January 1962, I was briefed on a secret document or oral understanding about contingencies arising in other than a SEATO context . . ."

What does that mean? What secret document or understanding? And though the Senate is supposed to ratify such treaties, nobody on Capitol Hill seems to know about any secret understanding with India or Pakistan.

CONCEALMENT

Even the President seems to be left in the dark at points under this system. For here is Kissinger, in the December 4 meeting, saying that whoever was putting out "background" information on the Indian-Pakistani war was provoking presidential wrath. "The President is under the 'illusion,'" Kissinger is quoted as saying in the December 4 memorandum,

"that he is giving instructions; not that he is merely being kept apprised of affairs as they progress." "Dr. Kissinger asks that this should be kept in mind," the minutes add.

Again from the December 4 memo: Kissinger said he did not care how third parties (countries) might react, so long as (U.S.) Ambassador George Bush understands what he should say (in the U.N.).

It is an interesting approach for a government that came into office vowing to have an "open policy" that would restore confidence in the United States and "bring us together" and is now going to Peking and Moscow to negotiate a "generation of peace."

Never mind what "third parties" think. Never mind the human consequences of the massacres in East Pakistan. Never mind the strategic implications of losing influence in India to the Russians. Never mind doing one thing and saying another. Just do as the President says!