

Editor's Report

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Talking Straight

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NEW YORK — Normally there are few big surprises at the various national and inter-continental conferences held each spring by news executives to discuss their mutual problems, listen to generally bland speeches by outside notables, and to renew old friendships.



W. R. Hearst Jr.

You could have heard a pin drop in the jam-packed grand ballroom of the Waldorf-Astoria as

—Turn to Page B2, Col. 7

—From Page 1

Dr. Kissinger—speaking with a bluntness quite rare to diplomacy—all but hypnotized his audience by challenging the nations of free Europe to join the United States in a new and more equitable Atlantic Charter.

It was a major declaration of American foreign policy, no question about it. Scotty Reston, the most astute and accurate writer on the New York Times, was dead right in comparing the speech historically to the famous Marshall Plan speech of Gen. George C. Marshall at Harvard nearly 26 years ago.

Gen. Marshall, then secretary of state, recognized that post-war Europe and the U.S. had come to a critical point in their relationship. For the sake of the common welfare and mutual ideals, he extended a strong and friendly American hand full of dollars which was eagerly grasped.

Dr. Kissinger, speaking in furtherance of President Nixon's diplomatic program to make 1973 "The Year of Europe," also recognized that a new critical point in U.S. relations with its former allies has been reached. What is needed this time, however, is more of a partnership with a now-recovered, financially strong and increasingly competitive Europe.

The speech was as tough as it was forthright. In no uncertain terms he served notice that present military, economic and diplomatic strains could be eased only through a more mutually helpful attitude by the West European nations. We will continue to back their trade unity movement and keep our military commitments, he said, but the Europeans must reciprocate and share more fairly in the costs to us.

When Dr. Kissinger concluded he got a standing ovation. He had summarized clearly and calmly the past and present situation among the Atlantic allies and presented precisely a plan for the future, meanwhile expressing a lot of my own convictions.

It certainly IS high time that the nations of Western Europe take a good hard look at how important the U.S. has been and is to them — and to act accordingly.

Many of them don't even treat us civilly until they get shot at. They are stout allies principally when they want us for something. The most reliable has been England, which is only natural with our common language and cultural heritage. The British were the only ones who didn't run out on us when needed their moral support for our role in Vietnam.

Look back and what do you find? At the end of World War II, most of Western Europe was flat on its back — exhausted in every way. We were more than generous in helping the countries get back on their feet. Our aid and the drain on our gold, in fact, is to a large extent responsible for our monetary problems today, although it is true enough we got a lot of customers for our goods and a lot of our help came back profitably.

Today, thanks to us, the whole picture has changed. Both our former allies, with their Common Market, and our former enemies — Germany and Japan — have been transformed into powerful trade competitors even while still depending on our military might to keep them safe.

Altogether, since the last big war, we dished out nearly \$50 billion in aid to various Western European countries on an individual basis. Yet today, in fully war-healed Europe, there is resistance to any suggestion that we are now paying far more than our just share of joint NATO costs. We are spending some \$16 billion a year in maintaining forces committed to NATO — almost as much as the \$20 billion it costs all 13 other NATO members combined.

Whether President Nixon will get the partnership he seeks in his proposed new Atlantic Charter remains to be seen. Certainly most of the nations involved will be far from enthusiastic about picking up their fair share of the tab. But it will be a sorry world if they spurn the kind of solid new relationship which we now suggest.

Meanwhile that challenging offer — and its implications — could not have been spelled out more frankly, forcibly and compellingly than Dr. Kissinger did in his remarkable speech.

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AMONG THOSE LISTENING intently was another of President Nixon's remarkable speechmakers and foreign affairs experts — John Scali — our new ambassador to the United Nations and an ex-newspaperman with 18 years experience in reporting diplomatic news for the Associated Press, plus 10 more as chief diplomatic correspondent for ABC television and radio and two years as a presidential adviser.

I fortunately sat next to John next day at the Ban-shee's Luncheon, the highly popular fun break given annually to ANPA delegates by King Features. By the time the lunch and entertainment had ended, my opinion of him as a no-nonsense spokesman for U.S. interests matched that I have given Dr. Kissinger.

John didn't have to tell me how much he admired the straight talk of Dr. K — he speaks just as bluntly, clearly and to the point himself, both in private and at the UN.

This is one tough guy, this John Scali; tough as any Russian or Chinese who gives him an argument — or any Englishman or Frenchman, for that matter.

When the English and French delegates to the UN balked at including a general condemnation of terrorism in its latest anti-Israel resolution he threatened a United States veto accompanied by a United States denunciation of their position in the Security Council.

I would love to have heard that. He uses the kind of language all our diplomatic spokesmen should use, not just Dr. Kissinger and Mr. Scali. When they get through talking there is no doubt what they meant.

It is just possible that our two champs may, in fact, wind up by starting a healthy new trend against something that has bugged me for years — the double-talk and obfuscation which passes for the language of diplomacy.

Having to read between the lines of diplomatic pronouncements, having to listen and interpret correctly what is meant by the way speeches are delivered and to whom they are made, is old-fashioned and should have gone out with lace collars and cuffs. At least it should have gone out when English became the common tongue of diplomats rather than French, with its invitation to deliberate ambiguity.

In today's world it is both dangerous and stupid to have to wonder what a nation means when it says something.

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SPEAKING OF STRAIGHT TALK, if you have been wondering whether the Watergate mess is being deliberately avoided in today's column — the answer is yes, it is.

It is being avoided because President Nixon, at least as of my deadline, has yet to announce the results of his personal probe of the affair and what action he is to take.

The President of the United States, in my book of rules, deserves to present his side of the case before any definitive judgment is rendered.

After he does so, you will be hearing from me.