

By David Eisenhower

WASHINGTON—To a society that takes pride in political candor and directness, the current Confucius-Bethoven-Lin Piao fury in China is hilarious.

Newspapers have reported banner-waving throngs raging against ancient philosophers they have never read, German composers they have never heard, Italian films they have never seen. And China-watchers shower us with speculation on the campaign's potential impact on China's future leadership.

Nowhere else can politicians arouse the political passions of an entire nation for months with no obvious villains, heroes or immediate purpose while reserving all options. The campaign's unspoken targets have presumably gotten the message. Instigators remain free to press on or to cease, with no hard feelings, after deviators are "re-educated."

Imagine how different things might have been had we, six months ago, seen this news dispatch:

WASHINGTON, Sept. 21—Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger today broke official silence on the explosive Andrew Jackson controversy, charging Jackson with "crimes, outlandish trickery, and bourgeois fetishism."

Appearing before a frenzied American University audience, Kissinger inserted his surprise comments at the conclusion of a speech denouncing John Jay as a "stool pigeon, renegade, Soviet lackey, gangster and generally devious fellow."

Diplomatic sources hesitated to ascribe great significance to Kissinger's remarks. State Department spokesman Robert J. McCloskey confined his reaction to a quote from Richard M. Nixon's "Six Crises" in which Nixon exhorts cadres: "Dare to struggle until all enemies of the people are brought to their just deserts."

The development ignited a storm of rumors around Washington in anticipation of possible Congressional countermoves. A peace of sorts settled over the city as Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr. in a late-afternoon press conference, termed Kissinger's remarks "appropriate," adding he for one would not rest until "we deal firmly with Trotskyite bandits like Jackson."

President Nixon remained in isolation at the Camp David Presidential retreat, working on his scheduled address before the Solidarity Alliance. Presidential spokesman Gerald L. Warren dismissed as "foolish" suggestions that Kissinger had acted at Nixon's behest.

On second thought, one wonders if the Chinese way of politics—subtlety and circumspection—is so ridiculous after all. A difference of substance—or style?

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