

NYTimes Over There Lie Peace for All

JUN 11 1974

By Russell Baker

OBSERVER

One imagines the President and Secretary Kissinger emitting vast sighs of relief as they soared out of their homeland for foreign shores in pursuit of the generation of peace. There is little here any longer to encourage them to dwell upon their nobility. Beset by sheriffs, prosecutors, querulous scribes and a sullen populace, what great man would not welcome a grand tour abroad, accepting the salute of cannon and the deference of sheiks to remind them that dishonor in the homeland is the true test of prophethood?

Mr. Kissinger's brief stay in Washington after his long stay in Araby must have been particularly unsettling. Having returned a hero only to find that the press was more interested in whether he had lied to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee about wiretapping, he was disagreeably reminded that while he had been laboring on the generation of peace abroad a generation of cynicism had come to full flower at home.

As for the President, whose seventh crisis now seems likely to afflict the country longer than the Vietnam war, he would be less than human if he did not feel an impulse to settle permanently among foreigners and let the subpoenas gather dust at the White House gate. He is, after all, a man who could exclaim to Messrs. Haldeman and Ehrlichman that he would like to be shed of the whole Presidential business and see Spiro T. Agnew taking the pressure.

Is it not in character that he should feel a similar urge now to put down at a warm-weather port and announce that henceforth the White House will

to be located abroad for the full-time service of the generation of peace?

It is an absurd idea, of course, which is precisely what makes it plausible. For the last two years the absurd has been the commonplace in government, and after the first day or two of excited headlines about the White House's refusal to come back to the United States we should quickly accept it as we have accepted all the other improbabilities of recent months.

Such an event would, in fact, be an excellent solution to the entire Watergate affair. The President would be over there someplace working on the generation of peace without being hounded mercilessly by courts and Congress, and the rest of us would be over here, just as we are now, managing somehow to get along without a President.

Freed from the harassment of American courts—for surely no host country would extradite him—he would not have to press the dangerous doctrine that Presidents are beyond the law. Congress could go home, and the rest of us could learn to think about something other than President Nixon sixteen hours a day.

In his domestic manifestation the President at this stage is, in any case, only an encumbrance to the country. If he were established abroad as the bringer of peace, we would retain his useful foreign policy services without the disadvantage of having him permanently planted in the forefront of our vision, making it impossible to think about fishing, baseball, watering the flowerbeds and sitting on the front

porch smelling the honeysuckle.

The Athenians used exile as a government institution for ridding the state of great men of whom it had tired. Aristides the Just, although a good man as the name implies, was voted into exile, the story goes, simply because the Athenians tired of hearing him called "the Just."

The Nixon case has certain parallels. Leaving aside the legal questions of Watergate, President Nixon seems to have tired the country so thoroughly with his conduct of the affair that there might be a substantial vote for exiling him as a nuisance, provided the vote did not imply a judgment that he had committed crimes, or was unfit for office, or was anything else other than a source of intense national fatigue that we should like to have removed.

The Constitution, unfortunately, does not provide for exile and cannot be amended for that purpose in time to give us relief. On the other hand, it contains nothing that forbids a President from removing himself to foreign parts and continuing to do his business from over the waters. Presidents, in fact, commonly do this for short terms.

President Nixon would undoubtedly be happier finishing his second term abroad. The Adriatic coast of Italy would be ideal, considering his taste for warm water. He would be freed of all the domestic impediments now obstructing his great work for peace, and we would be freed of a tiresome and disagreeable distraction from the great work of living.

After a few years everybody might very well be glad to cheer him on a triumphal visit to Washington for a weekend at the White House.