

EXCURSUS I

Turnaround or Tease?

"There's nothing like the prospect of hanging in a fortnight to concentrate the mind," Dr. Samuel Johnson once observed. Although the oil price hikes and the growing determination of poor countries to apply the lesson of those hikes to their own strategic raw materials constitutes less than a hanging, these and other developments do seem to have concentrated the mind of Henry A. Kissinger. In his most recent address to the United Nations there flowered a vision of interdependence worthy of pursuit.

Kissinger has consistently seen the world as a big boys' world, one in which the really important things are done by northern industrialized nations in general and by the great powers in particular. Other countries are an afterthought, like little boys who tag along and watch. Last September, when Kissinger appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee as a nominee for Secretary of State, a black witness complained to the committee that Kissinger had summarized his attitude toward Africa when he said, "This is the year of Europe."

True, Kissinger followed the lead of Addeke Boerma, Director-General of the FAO, and others in calling for a world food reserve program shortly after his confirmation. But that seemed unconnected with the rest of what the Secretary of State said and did. Those interested in global development continued to complain that neither Kissinger nor any of his top aides cared much about the poor countries.

Kissinger began caring publicly about those countries after the energy crisis arrived. He somberly reminded the OPEC countries, and the U.S. public, that the hike in oil prices would have a disastrous effect on many less developed countries. He was right, of course. This concern for the poor countries had, however, a suspiciously self-serving tone. It was, after all, tied to a solution that would greatly benefit the United States. More important, neither Kissinger nor anyone else in the Administration admitted that, with our sell-to-the-rich-and-starve-the-poor policy, we are the Arabs of the food crisis. Food and fertilizer prices soared *prior* to the oil embargo. These price increases will cost poor countries better than \$5 billion this year and give the United States about \$3 billion in additional income—far more than the sum of our development assistance. About that the Administration has said nothing.

When the United Nations prepared to convene an extraordinary session of the General Assembly to consider the control and distribution of raw materials—a topic that touches on long-standing inequities between rich and poor nations—the Administration first stood aloof, criticized, and then at the last minute applauded. Not incidentally, Algeria had called for the special assembly partly to counter Kissinger's efforts to get the major oil-consuming nations to act in concert.



Janice Stapleton

On April 15, presumably speaking for the Administration, Kissinger set forth our six "common tasks to whose solution the United States offers its wholehearted cooperation" and in them envisioned global development with rich nations and poor working together for their mutual prosperity. He stressed that the United States did not want to see the poorest nations overwhelmed, and he promised that this country would expand assistance to the less developed countries, offer them trade preferences and help in other ways. Kissinger was short on particulars, but those offered were modestly significant, such as the hope that U.S. assistance to help countries raise their food productivity would increase from \$258 million to \$675 million this year.

It would be easy to read his entire statement as a confidence game, a facade of mutuality covering the same old selfishness. That interpretation may prove to be well founded. On the other hand, Kissinger's speech could be a genuine turnaround, the prelude to a much more equitable relationship between the United States and the poor nations. The proper strategy in either case is to hold Kissinger to his word by

building broad support for its implementation.

If the resources scare has concentrated the mind of Mr. Kissinger and this Administration, ordinary citizens can do a great deal to see that it stays concentrated and help to concentrate the mind of Congress as well.

Arthur Simon

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EXCURSUS II

The War That Never Ended

To some Americans it still comes as news that the war in Vietnam is not over. In the year and a half since the signing of the cease-fire, more than 44,000 soldiers have been killed in combat. As usual, there is no accurate count on the thousands of civilians killed, wounded and made homeless. At least, it is said, America is out of the war. One wishes that were true. The Saigon regime could not fight, and possibly could not survive, without continued billions of dollars and technical support from the U.S. This year the United States is spending ten times as much on South Vietnam, with a population of 19,000,000, as on India, Pakistan and Bangladesh combined, with a population of 711,000,000. This does not mean, unfortunately, that we would be helping others if these billions were not being poured into South Vietnam. But the connection between human need and resources is further and grotesquely distorted by our apparent entrapment in South Vietnam.

Graham A. Martin, U.S. Ambassador in Saigon, said in March, 1974, that \$850 million is needed by South Vietnam in 1975 and a "somewhat lesser amount" in the following year. Two more years of heavy economic aid is all that is needed. The Vietnamese, he said, "are ingenious, hardworking people. . . . I am convinced that now the situation for an economic takeoff on the Korea-Taiwan economic model in a very much shortened time is here."

Were Mr. Martin a credible witness, his argument might offer some moral reason for continued involvement. No one would, in any case, suggest cutting Mr. Thieu off without an advance notice of some months, perhaps even a year. Mr. Martin is not to be trusted, however. He is the man who wired Secretary Kissinger, warning him against giving "an honest and detailed" answer to Senator Kennedy's inquiry about our

Indochina policy. He is the same man who, in April of this year, smeared Dr. George Webber, President of the New York Theological Seminary, as being responsible for the deaths of Vietnamese school children attacked, allegedly, by Viet Cong fire. (Dr. Webber responds, quite reasonably, that not only did he, while in South Vietnam, have neither contact nor influence with the Viet Cong, but Martin stubbornly refused to help Dr. Webber's delegation make contact even with Saigon officials.) Mr. Martin, it has been noted, behaves more like Saigon's ambassador to the U.S. than our ambassador to Saigon. Except a Vietnamese would not so egregiously assault American sensibilities and common sense.

Others paint a very different picture of South Vietnam's future. According to an in-house report made by the World Bank, South Vietnam will still need \$770 million a year in aid in 1980. The figure for 1990 is \$450 million a year. Neither figure includes military aid, now running at well over \$1 billion a year. General William Westmoreland, now seeking political office in South Carolina, recently spoke out for continued U.S. support of Saigon. Comparing it with South Korea, he holds out hope for an economically and militarily viable South Vietnam. Such comparisons are now as stale as they have always been implausible. He goes farther and says: "I would not rule out a peacefully unified Vietnam in the far distant future." The General makes clear he is not thinking of a mere twenty or thirty years. That tunnel gets longer and longer. Maybe the reason there is no light at the end is that it is going straight down.

In his response to Senator Kennedy, in which he said he was not taking Mr. Martin's advice to be evasive, Secretary Kissinger spoke of an "obligation" to Saigon that was inherent in the Paris cease-fire agreement. He did not answer the objection that the agreement has been consistently violated by the other three parties (Hanoi, Saigon and the PRG) and, at least implicitly, by the U.S. in the past year and a half. For too many years of U.S. policy in Indochina obligations have been ineluctably breeding obligations. As to the related argument that we cannot walk away from our investment in South Vietnam, Eric Sevareid recently remarked: "Investment is a curious term for a tragic blunder."

There is every inclination to give Mr. Kissinger the benefit of the doubt. But one remembers that in February, 1969, he expressed confidence that U.S. forces in Vietnam would be out by the next fall. He is credited by some with ending the war. In fact, he and Mr. Nixon waged the war during its four most bloody years, in which more people were killed and bombs dropped than in any prior