

EXCURSUS 1

Hans J. Morgenthau on PARALYSIS AT THE TOP

Henry Kissinger not long ago called for a new consensus on American foreign policy. In a sense probably unanticipated by the former secretary of state, such a consensus has already formed both at home and abroad. Its main tenet is that our foreign policy is in a sorry state.

The British Government is reported to have looked with "horror" at the recent American vote in favor of an anti-Israel U.N. resolution and its subsequent disavowal by President Carter. The French Government pursues a foreign policy without regard for American preferences. It in fact pursues its "special relationship" with Moscow on occasion, being the first to host the European visit of Andrei Gromyko. West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt's lack of respect for President Carter is notorious. The Soviet Union makes its moves on the international scene without regard for American reactions. The Iranian Government continues to humiliate the United States every day. The Government of Pakistan refused to accept proffered American aid. The Government of Israel pursues its settlements policy on the West Bank and in Gaza in spite of Carter's Washington April lectures to Menachem Begin. Jordan's King Hussein vacillates on the president's invitation to visit Washington.

What has happened that has so drastically diminished, if not the material power of the U.S., at least its prestige and influence among the world's nations? It would be tedious to enumerate all the instances of incomprehension, blunders, inconsistencies, and ambiguities which the public record of the three-year-old Carter administration

reveals. Much of this sorry state of affairs can be explained by the personal failings of members of the administration responsible for the conduct of foreign policy and by the haphazard manner in which Carter steers his ship of state. But not all of it can be thus explained. Two structural deficiencies in the conduct of U.S. foreign policy appear to offer at least a partial explanation: Democracy itself imposes peculiar restraints on the conduct of foreign policy, and the availability of nuclear weapons severely restricts the options available to contemporary heads of state.

The conduct of foreign policy under democratic conditions is hazardous business. The statesman must simultaneously comply with two requirements: pursuit of a sound foreign policy that serves the national interest and satisfaction of the aspirations of the nation. To do justice to both is difficult, for the conditions under which popular support can be obtained for a foreign policy are not necessarily identical with the conditions under which a foreign policy can be successfully pursued.

As Alexis de Tocqueville put it, with specific reference to the United States: "Foreign politics demands scarcely any of those qualities which are peculiar to democracy; they require, on the contrary, the perfect use of almost all those in which it is deficient. Democracy is favorable to the increase of the internal resources of the state; it diffuses wealth and comfort, promotes public spirit, and fortifies the respect for law in all classes of society; all these are advantages which have only an indirect influence over the relations one people bears to another. But a democracy can only with great difficulty regulate the details of an important undertaking, persevere in a fixed design, and work out its execution in spite of serious obstacles. It cannot combine its measures with secrecy or await their consequences with patience."

If Tocqueville's point is well taken, as I think it is, the



"TOO MANY STRINGS, COMRADE... TOO MANY STRINGS....."

EXCURSUS 2

Svend E. Holsoe on LIBERATED LIBERIA?

kind of thinking required for the successful conduct of foreign policy must at times be diametrically opposed to the kind of considerations by which the people and their representatives are likely to be moved. In the American case these inherent difficulties are vastly aggravated by the fact that the U.S. almost continuously either recovers from or prepares for a presidential election. Especially in the latter case, the temptation is overwhelming for an administration to gain electoral advantage by catering to the preferences of public opinion, regardless of their intrinsic merits in terms of foreign policy. It is part of the statesman's art to steer a middle course between respect for the perennial principles of sound foreign policy and the fickle preferences of public opinion.

These considerations shed illuminating light upon the apparent paradox of President Carter emerging from the primaries as almost unbeatable for the Democratic nomination while the U.S. under his leadership has suffered a string of humiliating defeats in its relations with other nations. The most spectacular of these defeats is, of course, the continuing captivity of fifty American hostages in Iran. By forswearing from the outset any form of violence in response to this outrage, Carter deprived himself of any serious leverage against Iran. Thus the U.S. is helpless in a situation that in another period of American history would have called for swift action settling the issue even at the risk of some American lives.

Nevertheless, the president, by putting the emphasis on saving fifty American lives by peaceful means, struck a sympathetic chord in American public opinion. Carter did what President Woodrow Wilson was alleged to have done: "He kept us out of war." It did not occur to public opinion or to Carter that American foreign policy has a duty, not only to fifty hostages, but also to the nation whose life and fortunes might be jeopardized by the actions or inactions of the president.

The anarchic character of the international system forces Carter, following historical convention, to contemplate physical violence, even nuclear war, as the ultimate factor in the settlement of international issues. Yet the irrationality of such violence makes him shrink from the use even of conventional violence lest it might escalate into nuclear war. Thus in an international crisis the president acts with utmost caution—if he acts at all—and he compensates for the lack of provocative action with bellicose talk.

The issue is not whether the president ought to pursue the national interest regardless of the possibility of nuclear war, but where to cross the line between concern for the national interest and fear of nuclear war. The problem is whether Carter, in his anxiety to avoid the apocalyptic abyss, has not chosen inaction as the easier alternative. The president seems paralyzed before the face of the future.

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...Isaac Bashevis Singer, recent Nobel Prize winner for literature, astonished the literary world when he was awarded the Nobel Prize for writing in Yiddish, long considered a dying language. Singer believes Yiddish will be resurrected just as Hebrew was after a lapse of 2,000 years.

The public is invited.

—*Huguenot Herald* (New Paltz, New York), April 23

We'll try to make it then.

The recent military coup in Liberia represents in a fundamental sense the usurption of the political, economic, and—most important—cultural dominance of the descendants of Afro-American colonizers, and a shift of power to the hands of indigenous Liberians. The April 12 assassination of William Richard Tolbert, Jr., Liberia's nineteenth president, caused the immediate collapse of his government and an end to a century of Afro-American rule.

Master Sergeant Samuel Kanyon Doe, leader of the military group, was promptly declared head of state and chairman of a newly created, seventeen-member People's Redemption Council. Doe moved swiftly to consolidate his power, calling in and imprisoning former Cabinet members. All airfields and borders were closed, and military officers were immediately appointed to take over the positions of superintendent of the nation's nine countries and five territories. Little resistance was encountered by the new regime. Members of the Progressive People's party (PPP) who had been detained because they had called for the overthrow of the Tolbert government were immediately released, and several were appointed to the new Cabinet. Five Cabinet posts were also given to members of the army, and three Cabinet members were held over from the former government.

Foreign governments and religious leaders in Liberia urged the new head of state to avoid public show trials and hangings of former officials. Nevertheless, on April 22 thirteen ministers and other top officials of the Tolbert government were executed by firing squad before a cheering crowd of thousands. Doe called for the population's return to normalcy and issued a proclamation declaring that anyone found disobeying the rulings of the People's Redemption Council would be dealt with summarily.

Although many were surprised by the suddenness and swiftness of the coup, the seeds of the revolt have been in gestation for a long time. There can be little doubt that the immediate cause was the inability of Tolbert's government to control the continued misuse of government money and property by officials. In addition, the recent expense of hosting the Organization of African Unity Heads of State meeting, the decreasing demand for iron ore (one of Liberia's major exports), and soaring inflation and energy costs all contributed to a rise in unemployment and a severe squeeze on Liberia's poor.

In comparison to many other African nations, Liberia's pace of modernization has been faster and the soundness of its economy more secure. In spite of this, a more fundamental issue remained to be addressed by the Tolbert government, and the coup has addressed it directly. Liberia's colonizers, nineteenth-century Afro-American settlers, along with their cultural descendants, have been the arbiters of modernity. If individuals were of settler background, they encountered little difficulty rising within the economic political system. Those who were of native parentage entered the modern urban world at the sufferance of the settler group. Consequently, people of indigenous origin were forced to compromise themselves and their heritage in order to participate in the development of their own country.