

communications) observe the classical scenes: human beings walking up the steps of the scaffold, bound to stakes before firing squads, kneeling for the sword. No one knows the number of executions in the Communist countries; in the Western world, year in and year out, South Africa leads in the number of executions. Franco's Spain continues to employ the *garotte*, which, in fidelity to national tradition, it brought back from the torture chambers of the Siglo de Oro. Perhaps no more need be said about the moral credentials of the Third World in this area than to note that Amin's Uganda, whose record of assassinations is notorious, is spearheading the drive to expel Israel from the United Nations—among other reasons, for its alleged inhumanities (Israel has not executed a single Arab terrorist in all the years since its independence). As to the United States, the next Supreme Court decision on capital punishment will determine what happens to those two distinctly American contributions to the technology of executions, the electric chair and the gas chamber.

Perhaps Camus died in good time. There was still some hope then that men of all political persuasions would at least agree on saying *no!* to certain bestialities, as they had said *no!* to Nazism. There is little ground for such hope today. But three executions will *not* take place in Greece, and by virtue of that fact the darkness is held back yet another moment and the sky (that lucid sky of Attica) is a little more visible for all of us.

PLB

EXCURSUS II

The United States in Consensus

We can say once more to the new nations: We have heard your voices. We embrace your hopes. We will join your efforts. We commit ourselves to our common success.

These concluding remarks suggest the overall tone of Henry Kissinger's long and commendable address at the U.N. on September 1. Delivered by Ambassador Daniel P. Moynihan to the Seventh Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly, the speech contains a large number of specific proposals that will take some time to unpack. Some of these proposals appear to be run in different if not actually opposite directions, and some will have a difficult time passing unscarred through the myriad governmental corridors of Washington. Which is to say that they have yet to

pass the acid tests of close scrutiny and application.

Nevertheless, the address marks a new approach to Third World countries and their claims; it has great promise and deserves strong support. Within the very recent past public exchanges between the United States and Third World countries at the U.N. were becoming increasingly rancid and destructive. And within the United States ideas about how to deal with the claims of Third World countries—particularly when proposals for a new international economic order were aired—have tended increasingly toward polar extremes. One extreme is that of abasement, intellectual and moral, which accepts as valid the charge that the poverty of the developing countries is caused and maintained by the political and economic policies of the developed countries of the West. The other extreme is irritation or deliberate indifference, which rejects not only the exaggerated charges of the Third World countries, but is prepared to ignore them if possible and oppose them when necessary. There is little question that the Third World countries perceived the U.S. to be moving toward the second position:

Kissinger's speech veered toward neither of these extremes, but set a deliberate course of its own. He attempted to elevate the terms of the discussion above the usual terms of the debate—a harsh critic would say he tried an end around—stressed the interdependent nature of many political and economic issues, and suggested actions which demand cooperative effort from the U.S., other developed countries, and the new, undeveloped countries.

How does all this square with the position concisely enunciated by Ambassador Moynihan not long before he took office, a position that he himself capsulized: *The United States goes into opposition*. Was he forced to read a position paper sharply at variance with his own? Not at all. A careful rereading of Moynihan's remarks (*Commentary*, March, 1975) will show that much of what he suggested under the rubric of opposition has been employed in Kissinger's speech under the rubric of cooperation and consensus. The ideologies of the Third World countries are implicitly recognized, the interdependence of much economic activity is acknowledged, limited and concrete proposals for action are suggested, and the duties as well as the rights of all countries are stressed.

Those countries sheltered under the umbrella term "Third World countries" are not all equal: The blessings of nature and history have fallen more generously on some than on others. Implicitly, Kissinger's speech takes these disparities into account. If many of the proposals put forth by Kissinger are implemented, the U.N. confrontations

between the U.S. and the developing countries, confrontations to which we have become accustomed though not injured, will be transformed, and the nations of the world will form new alignments. The U.N. will be the better for it, the Third World countries will be the better for it, and so will the United States. No panaceas; there will still be sufficient problems to occupy us, but the discussion of the international economic order will have been placed on a more realistic and productive level.

JF

EXCURSUS III

Thinking Canada

It has been a troubled summer along this little stretch of the Ottawa River's five hundred-mile journey to the St. Lawrence. Sandbars seem to be popping up in the middle of what are supposed to be boating channels, the water intake pipes for summer cottages need constant adjustment, and the fishing has been plain lousy. And all because the people thirty miles upriver at the Des Joachims dam (pronounced, for some reason, "Diswishaw") have forced the water level to an unprecedented low. Next to boats, beer, and the weather it's the chief topic of conversation in this part of the Ottawa Valley a hundred miles north of the nation's capital, so to speak. Were he or she not better informed by the natives, the visitor would find the place near idyllic. The local newspaper says the low water is a scandal, and people say the "guvurmet" should do something but that they don't expect much help from that quarter. So it seems the burden of living in paradise will continue to be relieved by the presence of at least one small thorn.

If you are foolish enough to let the newspaper from Ottawa invade your vacation idyll you discover Canadians are disturbed by much more than low water levels. In the Canadian version of world affairs lead stories have to do with the "beef war" with the U.S., with U.S. indecision about accepting a South Vietnamese former general who failed the morality test for Canadian residence, with the notorious Senator Vance Hartke (how he might wish Americans knew his name as well) and his suggestion that the U.S.-Canada auto pact be renegotiated, with the heroic Senator William Proxmire, who, in revealing Lockwood kickbacks to Air Canada, has given Canadians new hope for a Watergate of their own (every real nation should have one), and with whether or not the energy minister really got one up on President Ford when

they dedicated that dam together in Libby, Montana. That most people in the United States never heard of these momentous events only increases nationalist resentment of the colossus to the south. As is often the case in dealing with giants you basically, if ambivalently, admire, Canadians alternately feel neglected and exploited by the U.S. and are not sure which angers them more.

In any case, "Canadian news" is essentially protest news, the chief protest being that Canada is a country in its own right and not merely an appendage of the U.S. The dirty secret and motor force of Canadian nationalism is that it is a somewhat desperate search for arguments against the "commonsensical" proposition that Canada should reorganize itself as several states of the Union. Protest news, by being almost entirely reactive or comparative to the U.S., simply reinforces the impression it would dissipate.

The government of Pierre Trudeau is very big on promoting Canadiana in realms cultural and otherwise. The word is that anyone who can chord a guitar or has gotten beyond oil painting by numbers can readily get a grant from the arts council, but that may be an exaggeration. One local artist complains his application for a stipend was turned down, but then he is still having trouble with his chording, and his folk version of "O, Canada" sounds more like a bad imitation of Paul Simon under the 59th Street Bridge than it does authentically Canadian, whatever that may mean. "Whatever Canadian may mean" is, of course, the chief intellectual industry up here, and for years has occasioned innumerable, frequently unmentionable, articles in Canada's magazine or two. Of late there has developed an intellectual subindustry of criticizing the preoccupation with Canada's identity problems. "Let's stop talking about who we think we are and just get on with the business of being Canadians"—whatever that may mean.

Canada is an amorphous idea in search of a nation. As one born and raised here (although for the last twenty years or so making an uncertain way in "the States") I have never escaped its fascination. "Thinking Canada" is for Canadians what those "Think Snow" bumper stickers are for people in the Vermont ski hills. Think hard enough and something may happen. This winsome superstition, once an innocent indulgence, is now bankrolled by government money and advanced by government fiat. Canada is now demonstrating a penchant for coercing by law what cannot be created by social dynamics. In the communications media there is a mandated quota of "authentically Canadian" material. (A touching example is a recent TV show that, out of a zillion Hollywood movies, celebrated the first musical score written by a Canadian-born musician. It is a degree of distinction more likely to embarrass than to fill young