

to leave the debate to the experts. To give into that temptation is undemocratic in principle and, quite possibly, deadly in consequence.

A new great debate about nuclear weaponry is urgently needed. Indeed, there is the risk of reviving the kind of bomb shelter hysteria we had in the 1950's and early 1960's. That risk can be minimized, however, and is in any case less dangerous than the denials and deceipts that presently pass for maturity. There is no certain road to disarmament, but in this election year that candidate should become President who can point the way toward a world delivered from nuclear terror. The sadness and the sickness is that, as of now, there is not a candidate in sight who even has that hope on his public agenda.

RJN

EXCURSUS IV

A Sort of Disengagement at the U.N.

Henry Kissinger had to stay over in the Middle East, putting the final touches to the second Egyptian-Israeli disengagement agreement. For that reason his address to the Seventh Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly was read to that august body by Patrick Moynihan, the newly appointed American ambassador. The address may be seen as a sort of disengagement too, as at least a temporary veering away by the United States from a head-on confrontation with the so-called Third World. But it was more than that. The address contains massive policy proposals (the text runs to over twenty-six pages of single-spaced typescript, and it took Moynihan well over an hour to read it) and a remarkable quantity of good sense. Those in this country who have criticized Kissinger for being unresponsive to the needs and demands of the poorer nations should, if not applaud, at least recognize this potentially far-reaching step. The initial response, at any rate, from Third World delegations was surprisingly favorable, and there followed a marked deescalation of anti-American rhetoric on the banks of the East River. Together with the setbacks to the campaign by the radical Arabs to throw Israel out of the United Nations and the voting down of the latest Cuban proposal to give international legitimacy to the (largely fictitious) Puerto Rican liberation movement, Kissinger's address counts as a third American success in the thoroughly antagonistic United Nations context this year. This is a rather cheering record. It should be cheered much more than it has been.

The address contains one major proposal, the setting up within the International Monetary Fund of a new agency to give compensatory loans to Third World nations suffering from fluctuating world prices of the commodities they export, up to \$2.5 billion or more per year and a potential total of \$10 billion in outstanding loans. This proposal touches directly on one of the most crippling problems of the poorer nations—their vulnerability as exporters of raw materials in a world market over which they have very little control. Some commentators have observed that this proposal has the potential magnitude of the Marshall Plan.

The address further contains a number of other very concrete proposals—on the expansion (by 400 per cent) of the resources of the International Finance Corporation, on the transfer of technology, on international agreements governing the operation of transnational enterprises, on trade concessions to Third World manufactured products, on the building up of food reserves, on aid to the poorest nations. Some of these proposals are, of course, highly technical, and their merits are by no means unanimously agreed upon by economists. And there have been notable omissions, of course. The address does not go into the issue of "indexing" (linking commodity prices to the rate of inflation, one of the pet projects of the Shah of Iran). The discussion of transnational enterprises does not mention the problem of "exporting profits" (foreign corporations failing to invest an adequate proportion of their profits in the host countries, one of the persistent peeves of Third World critics). Nevertheless, the address is full of highly specific, concrete economic propositions, most of them touching directly on the urgent interests of the poorer nations.

If the address is long on concrete proposals, it is short on rhetoric. That in itself must have come as a relief to an audience accustomed to a very different mix. Kissinger made a few succinct rhetorical forays—against materialist ideologies that fail to deliver the material goods, against an ideology of nonalignment that has produced a new bloc, against the newly rich oil countries that claim to speak for the poor whose misery has been sharply increased by the hiked-up oil prices. Every one of these points could have become major emphases in the address (and, in my opinion, justifiably so) by an American secretary of state bent on confrontation. Kissinger limited himself to just a few side remarks on these topics. The overwhelming bulk of the address was positive, nonpolemical, matter-of-fact. As he put it: "The nations assembled here have a choice: We can offer our people slogans, or we can offer them solutions. We can deal in rhetoric, or we can deal in reality. My government has made its choice." Again, this stance deserves cheers.

The United Nations today is dominated by a Third World ideology (vaguely Marxist in its conceptual underpinnings, but mostly having little continuity with what has been the Marxist tradition in the West) that contains one fundamental assumption: The poverty of the Third World was in the past and is today the consequence of imperialist exploitation; conversely, the affluence of the West was and is caused by the same exploitation. This assumption is false, both with regard to the past and to the present (notwithstanding the fact that, of course, exploitation has been a reality in many places). The assumption leads to a militant mendicancy: It supplies a moral justification for every economic interest of countries that manage to define themselves as victims, past or present, of Western imperialism. It allows these countries to disclaim responsibility for their condition and to couch every economic demand they make upon the West (and indeed upon the world economy) in terms of "reparations." In the face of this ideology Western countries have a number of options.

One option, at least theoretically, is a penitential stance: The West would then admit all the charges, plead guilty as it were, and proceed to negotiate the size of the "reparations" to be dished out. A number of Western intellectuals find this stance plausible; it is difficult to imagine sovereign nations taking it (though some governments in Western Europe, such as Sweden, have come rather close). Moynihan, in a number of recent statements, has vigorously repudiated this possibility, which he aptly called "plea bargaining"; the Kissinger address does not even mention it.

Then there is the option, which seems to have characterized United States statements in the world organizations in recent years, of mainly ignoring the specific economic demands made by Third World countries. The position smacks strongly of contempt as well as indifference to the human suffering of the poor. The Kissinger address marks a reversal of this position.

A third option is counterbelligerency on the rhetorical level, perhaps positing a blustering new Americanism in the face of the militant mendicancy of the Third World ideology. There was some apprehension that Moynihan's appointment to the United Nations portended such a move (*furor hibernicus* unleashed against all those Africans). If Moynihan's demeanor since his appointment has already dispelled such apprehension (he has been reassuringly ambassadorial), the Kissinger address has made it very clear indeed that this would not be the American posture for some time to come.

Thus the address seems to open up a fourth option, more promising than the aforementioned three. It indicates a stance that is dignified, responsive to the urgent needs of Third World mis-

ery while remaining unresponsive to Third World cant, practical, self-assertive without bluster. The address is hardly an earthshaking manifesto. But it is a very hopeful step in the right direction, and it deserves domestic support across party lines.

PLB

EXCURSUS V

Open Season for Madness

It is no wonder that exorcism and astrology are popular these days. This is a season for political madness, and ostensibly sane people act in ways only marginally different from the zanies.

Normally, for example, movements and leaders try to defend their interests, and failing that, at least to make themselves and their cause look noble or moral. These days it is the fashion to discredit or attack one's own side. The Portuguese Communist Party, for example, followed a maximalist strategy which—besides being very likely to fail—was guaranteed to make the West remember what the cold war was all about. Not to be outdone, General Franco's regime executed a number of dissidents, reminding us why so many, in the days of the Civil War, felt it was worth fighting against Falangism to the bitter end.

Things are not much better in the United States. In the Patty Hearst trial the defense—designed by attorneys who are militant leftists—is attempting to discredit the Left, arguing that only "brainwashing" could account for Ms. Hearst's ostensible conversion to the SLA. And it is the state that is contending that a young woman born to privilege and wealth could quite sanely join an unusually insane revolutionary movement. If the state is right, our institutions are in deep trouble indeed.

Politically, Senator McGovern at least managed a high moral tone, denouncing the CIA and the Administration for covertly supporting Portuguese socialism, presumably because it made it more difficult for us to expostulate with the Soviet Union about its support for the Portuguese Communists. Of course, the Senator had already argued that the Vietnamese refugees were duped into exile by the belief that they would die if they remained at home, thus supporting the theory that preserving one's life is the only political value of importance. It is, however, a cheap shot to criticize McGovern, whose instinct for reducing his own political attractiveness must now be proverbial.

It is more interesting that the Government of the United States now seems to regard New York City as the major enemy of the Republic. Washington