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American Foreign Policy:
Playing Chicken with History

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Rangsit, Thailand
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Mr. Richard H. Nolte
Institute of Current World Affairs
535 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York

Dear Mr. Nolte:

The following essay summarizes a number of thoughts which have been slowly developing in my mind over the past three years of the Institute fellowship. Having been permitted to range broadly in a variety of fields under Institute sponsorship, I find that things fit together in a certain way, which I have tried to communicate here. My apologies to my dear Institute friends, from the Washington luncheon of last year, for having taken so long to answer the questions they posed to me then. I hope they will find the wait to have been worthwhile.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Race

Jeffrey Race is an Institute Fellow studying how the institutions of the past influence people's behavior toward one another today. His current area of interest is Southeast Asia.

PLAYING CHICKEN WITH HISTORY

I

Somewhere in my college notes from Government 180 -- Introduction to International Relations -- twelve years ago is my professor's complaint that the State Department was then lacking in vision, that it had lost (if it ever had) its grasp of what was happening in the world, and that the then Secretary of State spent all his time on operational matters and the latest crisis, rather than thinking about the big issues of where the US and the world ought to be heading. It is no doubt a measure of how insistent are these day-to-day operational pressures that the very author of those criticisms has now himself become the "ultimate action officer" at the Department of State.

Now that Mr. Kissinger's tenure is drawing to a close, it is appropriate to review some of the strengths and weaknesses of the past few years. I am mindful that Mr. Kissinger is coming in for much criticism lately, some of it spiteful, now that his departure is imminent. It is not my desire to join in the chorus now that criticism has become fashionable. Rather, I want to express some long inchoate thoughts which have recently jelled in my mind, ideas growing out of one of my own special fields of inquiry (social stratification), which I believe may provide a useful perspective as a new administration, at least in the State Department, takes over in a few months.

What I want to try to do is to pull together several kinds of observations that have recently been made by a variety of observers and to show that the issues they are raising each in their own way are part of a much larger problem in our diplomacy -- and how our inability to get a grasp on this problem is due to the peculiar way Americans think about the world, aggravated in recent years by some of the incumbent Secretary's personal idiosyncrasies, intellectual and administrative.

My starting point is a conversation during a luncheon in Washington more than a year ago, where one of my colleagues asked what kind of security commitment the US should make to Thailand: Should we be willing to commit troops? Or stop at air support? Or only military and economic aid? Or wasn't Thailand important enough for any commitment at all?

My reply, which my luncheon partners found quite disappointing and even annoying, was that this way of thinking about international relations was growing increasingly irrelevant, that it did not respond to the most important changes taking place in the world today, that it had gotten us into very bad trouble in Vietnam, and that continuing to think in this way would get us into worse and worse trouble as time went on. (I couldn't tell them exactly why at the time, but the year's interval has given me a chance to put my thoughts together.)

In truth national strategy documents -- NSSMs and the like -- are filled with the most sophisticated and subtle analyses of state-to-state relations, blocs, scenarios, and contingencies. The recent improvement in the level of thinking must certainly be chalked up to the credit of Mr. Kissinger. My point is that in this fixation on grand strategies of deterrence, international equilibria, and military technology, we have lost sight of the basic principles of international politics. I concede that this is a disturbing thing to say, but I am ever more convinced that it is true.

The perspective which is absent is summed up in the title of Harold Lasswell's

famous book *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How.* Like domestic politics, international politics *is about inequality -- how to get it, how to keep it.* This is the conception which is currently absent, while we remain transfixed by the subtle analyses of the "strategic thinkers" and "defense intellectuals" who have mistaken our well-being for where certain flags are flying in relation to certain lines on the ground.

Our attention is not, much to our detriment, on the secular processes which are inexorably shifting the whole matrix of human -- and international -- relations, changes taking place over many decades and even centuries. Seen in larger terms, the Vietnam War was one consequence of our failure to incorporate these secular changes into our diplomatic calculations. The "strategic thinker" may complain that century-long trends are not very helpful in responding to crises of the moment; I can only reply that the crises of the moment are embedded in these secular trends, and our planning is incomplete, dangerously so, if it does not include them. Vietnam was one such debacle; others may be in store, on a grander scale. It is of this I want to speak.

II

It may be helpful in making my points to review briefly my conception of the function of the Department of State, or at least, its most important function. There are three elements:

(1) to identify US interests: moral, material, strategic;

(2) to identify external threats to these interests; these might be

  (a) statically, other actors, e.g., hostile powers;

  (b) again statically, structural/ecological factors, e.g., resource constraints;

  (c) dynamically, changes in patterns of (a) and (b);

(3) to recommend presidential responses

  (a) to preserve our interests; or

  (b) where our interests must inevitably suffer, to pursue wise policies which will permit us to adapt as gracefully as possible, with the minimum of pain.

These responses should be by means consistent with the values on which our nation is founded; or perhaps more realistically, so that the "tough-minded strategic thinkers" will not stop reading here, including the values for which we stand with the interests which we must protect.

I apologize for this high-schoolish exercise, but it is essential in order to focus attention on point (2c): the central theoretical and practical importance of our conception of structural changes in the pattern of international relations. (This outline corresponds to the "rational-comprehensive" mode of decision making, and there are other empirical models of the decision-making process, but I believe that the rational-comprehensive model must remain our goal.) If our conception of structural change is wrong, or absent, our responses will be inappropriate, the job won't be done right, and our interests will suffer, either absolutely, or relatively more than would have been necessary with a better understanding of the world.

I can give only my subjective appraisal of how we are doing on these points. As for (1), my impression is that present levels are quite good. For (2a), we are if anything over-achieving -- seeing threats out of proportion. For (2b), we are lately doing much better, spurred by the energy crisis, but implementation remains weak. It is on (2c) that we have run into the true disasters, because of our absence of a conception of structural trends in human societies, including the emerging world society. Until we solve this shortcoming, it is perhaps premature to address point (3).

III

Are there secular structural trends? The answer to this question is crucial, and it is YES. Major shifts are occurring in the world we live in, and the paradigm of analysis that has worked for a long time will lead to great troubles in the period we are entering, for it will focus our attention, and our resources, on variables less and less significant to our well-being.

What was the old structure, and what model did it use, and what is the new structure, and what is its relevant model?

The major characteristics of the old structure were:

* It was a relatively zero-sum conflict between opposing units; that is, in the short run, the surplus which could be appropriated grew very slowly.

* The major mechanism of transfer of surplus between units was military force; thus power, the crucial element in getting what the other unit had, depended on men, armies, the natural resources to support war; and military technology.

* There was one other way to get ahead. Much like in Victorian society, you could greatly profit by a good marriage (i.e. an alliance). The analogy is more than fortuitous: marriages for wealth and power are characteristic of societies in which there is little mobility.

* Technology, except military technology, was not a policy variable, though it was of central importance in the capacity of political authorities to support large armies, as it testified to by the rise of great agrarian-based empires such as the Egyptian, the Roman, and the Khmer.*

* The great intellectual achievement of this kind of world was the balance of power theory of international relations.

Yet the central concepts of this paradigm, balance and equilibrium, betray its static vision. It is largely concerned with power, especially military power, and with other things only insofar as they affect power, the *ultima ratio* of this paradigm. Yet we know, if we are attuned to the fundamentals of politics, that it is about distribution, "who gets what," and *power is just one way*. This line of thought, on which the "defense intellectuals" and "strategic thinkers" are fixated, is just one means of having one's way, and not a very subtle one, useful in one historical period, ever less so in the period we are entering.

It may be helpful to lead into a discussion of our new paradigm by contemplating the great mansions of Newport, Rhode Island. It is significant that most of these

* For a comprehensive treatment of this issue see Gerhard Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, New York, McGraw Hill, 1966.

great mansions now stand empty of their former inhabitants not through war, nor invasion, nor even through revolution. They were simply made irrelevant, insupportable by the slowoperation of secular social changes, of a kind now fairly well understood by students of national social stratification, less well by students of international stratification. Not a few of the descendants of the builders of these elegant residences are now living in little apartments washing their own dishes. Will we as a nation be out of our mansion, and washing our own dishes -- without dishwashers?

The general nature of this problem is very complex, and the end yet remains uncertain, but some broad outlines are apparent for those who are interested.

First, various studies indicate that *world* inequality is *increasing*, both in terms of distribution of income, and distribution of power.*

Second, there are technical reasons, beyond the scope of this paper, to believe that this pattern cannot go on forever, in fact cannot even be maintained at its present high level; that eventually, patterns of world inequality will follow patterns of domestic inequality along the "U-curve" made well known by the distinguished studies of Simon Kuznets.**

Third, this emerging structure differs from the history of the world heretofore in two pivotal respects: product is growing very rapidly per capita due to rapid progress in technology; and we now have a world exchange economy. The major transfers of surplus are now taking place through this international exchange system, and no longer through plunder, the transfer mechanism out of which the present paradigm of international relations developed.

Hence *de jure* colonialism is no longer necessary to maintain high, in fact *increasing* levels of international inequality, a startling structural feature of the new world system which neither colonizers nor colonized anticipated, which shows just how in the dark about the real structure of the world are the world's decision makers.

Third World leaders, having succeeded in casting off colonialism without seeing their expectations of sudden plenty fulfilled, are just waking up to this fact that international inequalities of power and wealth are mediated by technology and access to technology, working through the international exchange economy -- just as in their own domestic societies there are subtle mechanisms which transfer economic surplus from the poor to the rich. Many academic observers, of a variety of political persuasions, have begun to explore this phenomenon.***

Consequently the "rules" of this international exchange system are under attack, so as, first, to stop the transfers from poor to rich and second (we may expect) eventually to bring about a reverse transfer. Recent UNCTAD documents are typical of this trend. Again, numerous observers have remarked on this phenomenon, without yet, I think, really setting forth satisfactorily its implications for American diplomacy, by relating it to some body of theory about how the world is changing and how elites can or should respond to this kind of change. Thus Brzezinski remarks

* Irving B. Kravis, "A World of Unequal Incomes," *The Annals* 409 (Sept. 1973), pp. 61-80; Irving L. Horowitz, *Three Worlds of Development*, New York, Oxford, 1966; Steven L. Spiegel, *Dominance and Diversity*, Boston, Little Brown, 1972; and on a current basis, the annual World Bank *Atlas*.

** Simon Kuznets, "Quantitative Aspects of the Economic Growth of Nations: Distribution of Income by Size," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 11:2, Part 2 (January 1963), pp. 1-69.

that "equality is becoming the most powerful moral imperative of our time," Cleveland writes of the "global fairness revolution," and Tucker has composed several long articles on the theme of "egalitarianism and international politics."* Yet contrary to the tenor of these articles, the "global fairness revolution" (in Cleveland's terms) is not something that started yesterday, or even since the Second World War: it is part of a centuries-long process of which we ourselves are a part, and out of which our political institutions grew.

It should be apparent that the major problems, and the major challenges ahead, are those of the international political economy, to which the old diplomacy, and the whole edifice of "strategic thought" and "national security doctrine" are inadequate. Yet following the dictates of the latter, we ignore the glacial changes taking place in the world political economy which will decisively affect our lives in the future -- certainly as much as those long-run trends affected the great homes of Newport, now turned into museums.

This is essentially a question of balance, regarding what is the "main act" in international affairs, and what is the "background." Present diplomatic and national security doctrine focuses on the struggle for power among states, using certain means, with the assumption of a structure which does not change to make irrelevant the historic means of international competition. Yet in our time what was the unchanging background is becoming the main act, and our failure to perceive this, and to adjust the balance of our national activities, threatens to bring us great grief.

It is a curious pattern of human history that groups which rise to power seldom understand the reasons for their rise. The rise occurs for reasons beyond their ken, and probably beyond their control; and since the process seemed automatic, there is a tendency to assume that its automaticity will continue -- if it is even thought about at all. When a shift downward occurs, the factors are similarly beyond their ken, though perhaps not beyond their control at that point if only they were sufficiently aware. This phenomenon is operating now, exemplified by the ex post facto discovery that *de jure* colonialism is unnecessary to increasing levels of international inequality.

It is true that we have had some significant statements from US leaders, for example Mr. Kissinger's May statement in Nairobi. It is unfortunately equally true that such statements are spasmodic responses to the rising level of verbal harassment from Third World countries, and are viewed as a distraction, necessary to still the howling, so as to get on with the main business of American foreign relations, which is seen as involving Japan, China, West Europe, and the USSR. These

*** See for example Johan Galtung, "A Structural Theory of Imperialism," *Journal of Peace Research* (1971), pp. 81-117; the writings of the so-called "dependency" theorists, or any of the recent issues of *World Development*. A contrary view is contained in Jerome Slater, "Is United States Foreign Policy 'Imperialist' or 'Imperial'?" *Political Science Quarterly* 91:1 (Spring 1976), pp. 63-87.

* Zbigniew Brzezinski, "U.S. Foreign Policy: The Search for Focus," *Foreign Affairs* (July 1973); Harlan Cleveland, "Our Coming Foreign Policy Crisis, " *Saturday Review* 2:25 (September 6, 1975); and Robert W. Tucker, "A New International Order?" *Commentary* (February 1975) and "Egalitarianism and International Politics," *Commentary* (September 1975).

occasional ad hoc responses are part of no larger American vision of the way the world is moving, and that is very dangerous. That they come across so clearly as being extorted under pressure makes them appear hypocritical to the Third World audience, and that is even more dangerous.

IV

Analysts of American society from Tocqueville to Huntington have remarked that we are an ahistorical people, born so to speak without a past. Louis Hartz has even gone so far as to call ours a "fragment society," and to develop a whole theory of political development from this. Being born without a past makes it peculiarly hard for us to deal with the future. This factor alone is probably not enough to account for the rigidity of thinking of the "defense intellectuals" and their continued fixation on the categories of "strategic thought," as presently defined, since there are many exceedingly brilliant people in the business. We must probably also include in our explanations the more material vested interests of the defense think tanks and the career interests and ego investments of the present generation of practitioners. As Thomas S. Kuhn points out, major shifts in vision, in the paradigm of analysis, occur not through conversion of the present generation of thinkers, but through their attrition and replacement by a new generation, sensitized to the problems of the old paradigm by some crisis or "anomaly."

What are the dimensions of the crisis it will take to capture the attention of the next generation of thinkers? This is a disturbing question, since the foreign policy crisis of the century -- the Vietnam War -- appears at this moment to have been insufficient to do the job.

As I have written elsewhere,* the Vietnam War was part of a doomed attempt to resist these inexorable shifts in the structures of societies and of the international environment. American policy makers were warned on many occasions over the years of the folly of their efforts in Vietnam, yet they persisted, with tragic results. Attempts by various people to try to bring in the larger issues of historical change were alternately laughed off and vigorously resisted -- and as one former consultant to the US defense establishment, I can attest to this fact from personal experience.** If I may be permitted to quote myself:

> The history of the last thousand years in peninsular Southeast Asia has been one of marches and countermarches among the contending empires and petty principalities. Only Vietnam was an important power throughout, and at this point, long-range processes of consolidation have left but two -- Vietnam and Thailand -- facing each other in the struggle for regional dominance.
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> Massive, and related, changes have taken place in both countries, on which the US has tripped and stumbled. These changes are the same ones which began to rock the West three centuries ago, which crushed or decisively altered the most powerful European kingdoms of the day, and out of which America's own revolution grew. Our traditions dictated that we should honor, not resist,

* "Will America Remain Committed to the Past in Southeast Asia?" *Washington Star*, November 9, 1975, reprinted in *Congressional Record*, November 14, 1975, pp. S20074-5; see also "Choose Life! A Parable for American Policy in Asia," *Yale Review*, forthcoming.

** "Vietnam Intervention: Systematic Distortion in Policy-Making," *Armed Forces and Society* 2:3 (May 1976), pp. 377-396.

these same changes in Asia; only American pride permitted our leaders to think that they could resist what humbled the potentates of earlier eras. But resist we did -- and do.

What are these changes? Simply demands for broader political participation, resulting by well-understood processes from increasing urbanization, literacy, communications, and wealth. Shortsighted French attempts to suppress such demands succeeded only in bringing the Communists to dominance in Vietnamese politics, and French leaders were humbled in 1954 like the Bourbons in 1789. Americans rushed in with their own attempt to halt the course of history. They succeeded in radicalizing the opposition in South Vietnam, and also in Laos and Cambodia, and they too have been predictably humbled for their failure to understand and adjust to the flow of events.

Ironically decades back American patriots engraved an epitaph for the British soldiers killed at Lexington and Concord. Near the bridge by which was fired "the shot heard round the world," this monument now reads, "They came three thousand miles to keep the past upon its throne." In the last two centuries, have Americans learned only to treble the distance they will go on the same fool's errand?

The "lesson" which appears to have come out of our sad Southeast Asian experience is to walk away from the problem, without peering into the reasons for the debacle (except in the most narrow technical sense) or reflecting on how our activities might be brought more into tune with the realities of the situation. (This comment is based on conversations with many people in the government and on my own attempts to engage officials in a dialogue about the meaning of our Vietnam experience.)

But for those who are persuaded of the marginality of Southeast Asia, let us contemplate an example in Europe itself. American "strategic thinkers" emphasize the importance of maintaining the strength of the NATO alliance against East Europe and the USSR, yet the strength and cohesion of several of our major allies are being sapped from within. This is especially clear in the case of Italy, where American policy has been propping up the status quo Christian Democrats for more than two decades. In exact analogy with Vietnam, this whole structure would have collapsed long ago but for massive infusions of external support, financial and otherwise. In the most recent elections we again went through the same drill: open threats of the terrible consequences if the Christian Democrats were not returned to power, accompanied presumably as in the past by massive undercover funding to favored candidates, all in obliviousness of the internal social factors which long ago drained the blood from our chosen instrument and turned it into the zombie it is today. The social sciences may be backward, and there may be many things we don't know about why societies behave as they do, but we do know enough to realize that this kind of policy can lead only to ruin. But it is typical of the "strategic thinker's" focus on the background rather than the main act that he insists on talking of grand alliance policy in Europe rather than attending to the real factors that make for strength in international politics. This attitude led to catastrophe in Vietnam, and to another narrow escape just recently in Italy. What will it take to wake us up?

Unfortunately attention to such secular processes is largely excluded by the static Kissinger vision of an equilibrium of power among the major international actors, and a "stable structure" (to use his favored phrase) of international

hierarchy as between the more and the less powerful.* Within this paradigm Mr. Kissinger has imposed a more structured way of thinking about national security, and harder thinking. These are no mean achievements, just as detente with the USSR and rapprochement with China are desirable breaks with the inflexible and unthinking anticommunism of an earlier era.

But the enormous volumes of sophisticated analysis now being produced within this paradigm still miss the point of what is happening in the new kind of world we are entering. The basic flaw of Mr. Kissinger's vision is that it is founded on a fatally defective conception of power, an "illusion of power," that power is weapons, or technology, or natural resources, or money, or some other tangible factor. We should bear in mind the memorable words of R. H. Tawney, that "[power] is] both awful and fragile, and can dominate a continent, only in the end to be blown down by a whisper." In Vietnam our "power" *was* blown down by a whisper, figuratively speaking. The Saigon government, adequately supported in the early 60's by air, artillery, money and advisors, was defeated by a cleverer foe with none of these advantages, provoking direct American intervention, which was *still* defeated by a foe with incomparably less of the material elements of power. This should have been sufficient to force the most searching reexamination of American strategy, but it has not.

The inescapable conclusion is that all of these material appurtenances may be "nice to have," but they are not *necessary*. What *is* necessary is *people*, or, put another way, power is a kind of influence relationship. As Tawney goes on to say, "To destroy [power], nothing more is required than to be indifferent to its threats, or to prefer other goods to those which it promises." This insight is well known to every student of stratification and inequality, as is its correlate: *the rich and the powerful cannot survive for an instant without the collaboration of the poor and weak.* Yet it is typical of the rich and powerful to fall victim to this illusion of power, and not to tend seriously to the business of cultivating the support of the poor and the weak on whose acquiescence their continued comfort and splendor depend. One can rely only so long on inertia, torpor, apathy, and the seeming automaticity of socio-political mechanisms which tend to preserve stable inequality. Sooner or later they may break down, or more likely simply shift so as not to protect those whom they once protected. History is filled with examples of elitist social structures which have passed from the scene without those who first benefitted, then disappeared, having the slightest idea why.

Adopting this perspective would, I believe, have major implications for the conduct of American foreign policy. First and foremost is the question of where one's true interest lies, or to use the metaphor of earlier pages, what is the main act and what is the background. The present focus of our diplomacy is on competing great powers, or in Mr. Kissinger's idiom, establishing an "equilibrium of power" worldwide and regionally, so as to avoid the dominance of any one power to our detriment. That is, the focus is quite explicitly on the elites of the international system, while the masses (to use the terminology of national stratification studies) are ignored, or given spasmodic attention when they begin to howl. Yet in the kind of world structure which is now emerging, one's focus must be on the masses at least as much as on the elites, since sociological theory suggests that the whole game of elite competition goes on only as long as the masses tolerate it. In our present preoccupation with the competing elite states, the whole game may disappear or be decisively altered. Hence this new perspective would bring about a considerable shift

* For an interesting analysis see J. L. S. Girling, " 'Kissingerism': The Enduring Problems," *International Affairs* 51:3 (July 1975), pp. 323-343.

in the focus of our diplomatic attention.

Second, the kind of calculation which our diplomacy makes would shift. The current calculation revealed in national strategy documents is very much one of "what have they done for us lately," or "what can they do for us based on the present needs of our military technology?" When the technology changes on which our power putatively rests, so does our outlook toward our "friends" of yesterday; we no longer offer the same tangible rewards for cooperation with us, and often do not even maintain much effort at being nice. Yet the relevant body of theoretical literature, namely that on patron-client systems, suggests that reliability of patronage, and not just the volume of rewards from the patron, is a crucial variable in maintaining a following. Clients quite clearly will accept a lower level of rewards if they can be assured of reliability of support. Let us take a specific example, Thailand, a country with which the United States has had a friendly relationship for almost a century and a half. During the mid-1960's, the US provided large quantities of aid to ensure the adherence of the Thai generals to our effort in Vietnam. The war in Vietnam over, the military and economic aid declined dramatically; this much is perhaps understandable. But the new civilian rulers, following the overthrow of the military dictatorship, felt it important to have some endorsement from the US of their path toward parliamentary democracy. This simple endorsement, which would have cost the US nothing, was as a matter of policy never forthcoming, at the same time the US was making approving noises about the governments of Chile, South Africa, and sundry other dictatorships around the world. This and other similar unfriendly acts led the Thai leadership to move off in new policy directions, in which the US was not included. (For example, they ordered the withdrawal of US military facilities which were useful for intelligence and logistic purposes in Asia, the Indian Ocean, and the Middle East.)

There is a related case in which we mistake the background for the main act, the situations in which we insist that we will only continue to collaborate with another country in cases of a "mutuality of defense interest." This policy begins with the valid insight that we should not be more concerned about another country's defense than is that country itself, but it makes the mistake, when carried to a literal extreme, of tying cooperation to a specific set of projects and a specific "enemy." This conception of "national security" now favored by the "defense intellectuals" does not permit the broader notion of general-purpose influence networks, tied to no particular "enemy" among the elite nations, but to the general notion of cooperation itself, which will be necessary in many kinds of fora in the emerging world system, and mostly political and economic, not military.

A third difference deriving from this perspective is in the way an elite state comports itself in the world's councils. Daniel Moynihan's frequently cited article in *Commentary*, "The United States in Opposition," correctly points out that the new world structure is not the same as the old, but the policy prescriptions he gives as a result, however emotionally appealing they may be, are potentially disastrous because they violate many of the basic rules by which the rich and powerful survive, even prosper, in an environment of poverty and inequality. Moynihan notes that we are a minority (of course elites are, by definition), and recommends that we "go into opposition," that it "is time . . . that the American spokesman came to be feared in international forums for the truths he might tell," that "it is time for the United States, as the new society's loyal opposition to [speak] loudly, directly, forcefully." While Mr. Moynihan feels that we do this not enough, on the contrary we do this too much already. We are not in a parliamentary situation of government and

loyal opposition, with an agreed set of rules, and many tactics declared out of bounds, and where one can persuade by logic. We are instead in a situation where all's fair, where there are few rules, and least of all those of distributive justice. Struggles are won in this kind of situation by subtlety in the use of influence, not cleverness in speechmaking, and least of all by speaking "loudly, directly, forcefully." Rather the rules for this kind of engagement are that one is quiet, smiles approval, emphasizes points of agreement, and lines up his forces as shrewdly as he can to protect his interest or to delay the inevitable. When so many of the world's leaders think that the present international economic system is unjust, one does not loudly proclaim that "the present economic system has served the world well," as Mr. Kissinger recently did. This may be true, or it may not, but saying it loudly is tantamount to a self-inflicted wound. (Again, there is a body of ideas about how elites sensibly behave in this kind of situation, but an article of this length does not permit their discussion. To leave the matter with just one suggestive question, how many of the world's ten richest people does one ever see, or see quoted, in the newspapers?)

Fourth, one gets to keep anything at all only by sharing -- the old argument of half a loaf versus no loaf. It doesn't take much, however; in fact, it is pathetic how little it takes to keep so much, as the world's present domestic stratification systems demonstrate. But this niggardly quantity of real resources is too much, apparently, for the US, as the declining real levels of assistance to the poorer countries reveal.

But there is an even more subtle, and even more lamentable, point here, namely that the poor and weak can be won over even by a smile, if one is intelligent and sensitive enough to realize this; and conversely, they can be alienated by a scowl, regardless of what one offers them. Let us go back to the example of Thailand, though other examples abound. During the recent negotiations for the extension of the rights for American bases, a pivotal figure was Anan Panyarachun, formerly Ambassador to the United States and later, at the tail end of the negotiations, Thai Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs. It is well known that Ambassador Anan was very annoyed at his failure to see Mr. Kissinger privately while in Washington as he had desired to do. It is reasonable to believe (in fact many foreign affairs analysts do believe) that this factor, and Mr. Kissinger's failure to speak up for Thai movement toward parliamentary democracy, impelled Anan on his return to Bangkok to place a series of stringent new demands on the United States. (This took place on February 4, 1976; the entire affair was subsequently covered quite extensively in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*.) It took more than a month to receive a reply from the US, during which time Thai-US relations were in increasing turmoil, with widespread rumors of American-supported coups and other nefarious dealings (all untrue, as far as I know), and a great deal of unfavorable comment in the Thai press. Ultimately agreement was not reached by the Thai-imposed deadline, and the American installations were unilaterally ordered out amidst much embarrassment and upset. But the sad fact is that this outcome came about not because the US couldn't agree to the Thai conditions, or was stalling to organize a coup, but because the substantive issues of our relations with an important Third World country with a long history of friendly relations with the US could not work their way up high enough in the bureaucracy to get a decision. Hence the noose tightened one more notch on the US, due to the present unwillingness of the system to devote sufficient *attention and approval* (not even material resources) to a Third World ambassador and to the messages his country was trying to transmit.

There is a fifth and final point, the hardest to communicate, and that is one of attitude, of the requirement for sensitivityto world historical trends, to our special place and to the special way we must behave to survive and prosper. The present failing is apparent in the remark to me of someone at the Assistant Secretary level, when I was discussing the desirability of improving relations with one Third World country. "Let them come to us," he said, "they need us more than we need them." For any *one* country, this may be true, but present policy is conducted as if it were true for all, a fallacy of composition springing from our illusion of power which is empirically wrong, and dangerously so. We are playing chicken with history, and we've lost once already.

V

The present-day Department of State has many critics, from many standpoints. George Ball urges that diplomatic calculations are based on tactical opportunism rather than a body of legitimate principles; John Girling charges that there has been a poor adaptation of means to ends; Daniel Moynihan charges that we have been pusillanimous in defending our principles; Harlan Cleveland chides the Department for insensitivity to the "global fairness revolution."

My own view is closest to Cleveland's, yet I must reemphasize that the wave we are out of phase with started long ago, that we are a part of it and should comprehend it in those terms. Yet our failure to comprehend it is part of a larger problem in the Department of State (though not just the Department of State) which I wish to draw attention to.

As everyone is fond of pointing out, the State Department is an enormous bureaucracy, and the paradox of bureaucracies is that they are formal organizations established to execute policies, *not to achieve insight.* In fact, they are quite resistant to new insights which transcend the assumptions on which they are founded. Mr. Kissinger, being a person of some insight himself, has recognized this and has often written disparagingly of bureaucracies, and especially the State Department bureaucracy. "Great strokes are not done by experts; experts are usually opposed since the expert is one who is at the highest level of the commonly accepted." (Again, my Government 180 notes.)

There is no institutional or structural answer to this problem -- there is simply no solution within the logic of bureaucracies themselves. The only answer lies in special people, "wild cards," brought in from outside to alter the norms of bureaucratic operation and the accepted vision. Mr. Kissinger himself is such a person, and he has indeed succeeded in some ways in altering the views, activities, and work norms of the Department of State.

Unfortunately, the world being full of compromises, we have traded one set of problems for another. Having now experienced the second set for a while, we may perhaps wish to look beyond it to some better approximation of overall effectiveness. Much as we may sympathize with his efforts to tighten up the operation of the State Department and improve the conduct of foreign policy, these efforts have been carried out in violation of some known principles of the management of people and institutions.

First, Mr. Kissinger has brought about a great centralization of authority, perhaps greater than ever before in the Department. This has produced information overload, since his processing capacity, prodigious as it may be, is incapable of managing the affairs of the entire globe. In his own conception this is apparently

not a great problem, due to the view that foreign relations means managing the relations with a few major actors -- the elite of the international system. The Thai case is a good example of information overload: relations between the US and an old and faithful friend were in a crisis state for weeks, but the Secretary was not even told.

Second, aside from the centralization, there has been a conscious effort to leave the bureaucracy out. This produces obvious morale problems; and furthermore, virtuoso one-man "crisis-management" diplomacy by definition slights the day-to-day business of international relations.

Third, Mr. Kissinger's personally arrogant and intellectually intimidating manner, however unintended, has had the natural effect of choking off ideas and initiatives from below. The paradox of bureaucracy, as suggested above, is that this impulse to innovate is usually too weak as it is; but Mr. Kissinger's management style has aggravated this problem even more.

Thus as a new leadership takes over in the Department, focus should be not just on adjusting the operational model of the world to be closer to present reality; it should also be on modifying the distribution of authority, bringing the bureaucracy back in, and projecting a style which will spur as much as possible, rather than paralyze, innovative thinking.

VI

It is apparent by now that we are not going to have world revolution a la Trotsky, nor even a la Lin Piao. The "countryside" of the world is not going to rise up and overthrow the "cities." But this should come as no surprise, for historically revolution is an extreme rarity, not the expected but the unusual.

What is going to happen, though, is a steady erosion of the favored position of these "cities" as the "countryside" begins to waken, and this gradual, not revolutionary, constriction of advantages will in the end decisively affect the life styles of those in the advanced states.

In such an environment we expect the State Department to "protect US interests." Superficially this might appear to mean "keeping the poor down." Yet I believe this will not be possible, and even if it were, it would be inconsistent with the values to which we are committed. (This is of course one of the reasons why it will be impossible.) Our goal *should* be to adjust as gracefully as possible to changes that are inevitable, resisting campaigns to flout the flow of history, as we did in Vietnam and Italy. Better, we should anticipate the inevitable, and try to be a bit ahead of it, rather than always seeming to be bludgeoned into submitting to it. By coming to terms with history, we can apply our limited, but still large, material and intellectual resources where they will really do some good.

The answers to these problems are not forthcoming from the present paradigm, because the questions are not admitted. On reflection, though, this should also come as no surprise, since the paradigm was developed over the centuries to suit a world with properties very different from the one we have been entering with ever greater speed. Hence this paradigm was incapable of predicting one of the most startling and unexpected phenomena of our time: increasing inequalities despite decolonization.

Hence also its present intellectual sterility. The "defense intellectuals" have in the nuclear era uneasily updated "balance of power" into "balance of terror," but the paradigm has become arrested at more and more absurd variations on deterrence theory: the transmutation of physical power into psychological power; the need to appear irrational; the desirability of mutual assured destruction; and the like. For two decades a way has been sought, without success, out of this intellectual deadend. There is none. New insights lie in new directions.

The answer must lie in adopting a new paradigm, which better fits the world in which we live. This is the only way to escape the puzzles and absurdities of the present "national security doctrine," not to mention the foreign policy disasters which accompany it. The details of this new paradigm are not yet known, though as I have hinted, I believe many of its general outlines are, despite the need to go hunting for them in other fields. To gain intellectual access to this paradigm, we already have the necessary "brains," communications, staff procedures; what is lacking is wisdom, common sense, insight, and an alertness to the drift of events.

Speaking of the relations among people, someone once said that folly is more dangerous than malice. This is also true of societies: the worst fate that can befall a people is not to have evil leaders, but foolish ones. So much more is this true of the world as a whole. If Procter and Gamble had been run in the past decade as has been American foreign policy, it would merely be bankrupt. Or had Liechtenstein, it merely would have disappeared in a minor regional ripple, perhaps not even that. But America's leaders head the most powerful nation in the world; they are the captains of the "free world team." For those of us who wish to live in this world, there is no escape from the consequences of their wisdom -- or their insensitivity.

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Jeffrey Race has been an ICWA Fellow studying how the institutions of the past influence people's behavior toward one another today. With this newsletter, JEF-28, Mr. Race concludes his ICWA fellowship.

Mr. Race expects to be traveling to the United States and Europe in the Spring and would welcome the opportunity to lecture before interested university, business, or professional groups on the various topics covered in his newsletters over the past 3½ years.

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535 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017