

taste so savory; immerse them in the choicest grease—it will do no good. After the wireless has been installed and the TVs are in place, news from godless and gorgeous America will wobble every swarthy mullah, every fuliginous patriot, and all the caudillos of Patagonia. Whether a village eminence has a wife as strong as a water buffalo or a dozen nubile daughters to sell, there will still be days when he secretly sighs beneath the burning sun and dreams of discoing like mad in nocturnal Manhattan.

Yes, it is true. Throughout the Third World almost everyone takes pride in his ancient ghosts and goblins. All extol the timeless rhythms of their antique cultures. The corruptions of the foul West are known to every informed rickshaw puller, every bazaar entrepreneur. Yet word of Uncle Sam's Gomorrah remains diverting. People on every rung of the Third World ladder want to know more, and this creates problems. Fundamentally, the source of The Resentment is that question presciently raised by Sam Lewis and Joe Young in the title of their 1919 anthem, "How You Gonna Keep 'Em Down on the Farm After They've Seen Paree?"

The Confusion can be observed right here in America where it addles the brains

of all the mediocre graduate students sent by Third World governments to make off with the American magic. Watching them brood pays a double dividend, instructing us deeply in The Confusion and also giving us a familiarity with many of the future eminentoes of these far-off lands. For once these dolts have spent a quarter of a century or so gaining their M.A.'s in telecommunications and other such pud courses, once they have tired of clipping magazine lingerie ads for their salacious scrapbooks, of plying blonde coeds with coffee in student unions and learning how to masticate chewing gum without swallowing it, all will return home to take up lofty positions in the local establishment or to be beaten to death in Utopia's dungeons. Forty-year-old graduate students from American universities were suddenly the most powerful Metternichs in post-Pahlavi Iran. Then they were on the run. In the Third World, too, there is the proverbial rat race—sometimes dominated by real rats.

I do not want to be misperceived. Certainly not all Third Worlders are mediocrities. Some obviously are men of sound character and high intelligence, but

all the second-raters suffer from The Confusion whether they study at Harvard or Slippery Rock. Apparently the allure of America's trashy pop culture is too much for them. They immure themselves in their dormitory rooms. They meditate solitarily on TV's pish-posh and radio's simian sound. They visit Disneyland and Miami Beach. They suffer all the brummagem sentiments emanating therefrom, and return to jerkwater confirmed in the belief that they have tasted the culture of Einstein and Beethoven, and that they understand. Add to these seminal experiences their attendance at a few afternoon classes where their siestas are disturbed by the occasional rough shouts of an anti-American prof and their minds will forever be abuzz with The Confusion and The Resentment.

The laugh is that our State Department still dreams of participating in the dance of statecraft with these goons. It has yet to occur to the diplomats that Third Worldism seems "to hint at a kind of universal mental retardation." The words are not from the 1960s encomiums of Dr. Myrdal but from Shiva Naipaul, reviewing the Third World politics of the Cooperative Socialist Republic of Guyana twenty years later. □

H.J. Kaplan

KISSINGER II: HENRY KISSINGER AND YEARS OF UPHEAVAL

Only the fanatics will deny it: Kissinger's account of diplomatic life during Watergate is a masterwork.

Early this summer when the battle for Stanley was drawing to a close and the Israelis were tightening their noose around Beirut and the Russians belatedly beginning to growl, I had visions of Henry Kissinger rocketing around the globe again, from Moscow to Peking to Cairo. *Years of Upheaval*,* the second volume of his memoirs, reminds us that diplomacy in the old-fashioned sense can still play a significant role, even in an age of implacable ideologies. Conflict keeps creating new facts, but even after apparently decisive military action, these are variously per-

ceived, ambiguous, impermanent. Everything depends on whether and how they can be put together, the kind of task that

our once and future Metternich, if his memoirs are to be believed, had a genius for solving.

I do believe them. One of Kissinger's critics, unconsciously mimicking the tone and style of his text, remarks that no statesman ever writes memoirs to denigrate his own role. This is a truism, with a sniff of Harvard about it, but the self-serving purpose is hardly achieved if the events are twisted, the reasoning specious, the style (*the man himself*, as Buffon observed) inauthentic. We now have two-thirds of the Gospel according to Henry, and while there is still no sign that anyone has organized a church it is obvious that the News he brings is from On High, the reasoning is compelling, and the style does honor to our culture.

This is the man who once, in an interview with an Italian journalist, described himself as a loner in terms that people thought rather ridiculous at the



*Little, Brown and Co., \$24.95. The first volume, *White House Years*, was published in 1979.

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time, but the fact is that Kissinger was and remains *sui generis*. His memoirs read sometimes like a work of literature, bathed in an atmosphere of historical fiction, with occasional longeurs but carefully plotted and filled with suspense. Only, the world in question is the one we share, the world of current events. The hero is neither an artistic sensibility like Jean Christophe nor a "delicate child of life" like Hans Castorp nor even Lanny Budd. He is Henry Kissinger, a man from nowhere, who appears at a time of great national travail, almost by accident, without authority other than that conferred by his competence and wit, to wield enormous power and conduct our foreign affairs. Of course he had a brilliant staff and the paraphernalia of a superpower (armies, fleets, alliances) behind him; and a little help from his friends—Nixon, Ford, et al.—but the fact remains that he made history almost singlehandedly, in a manner entirely his own.

As I clear my throat and prepare to make solemn noises about this extraordinary performance, I find that the noises I had in mind have been largely preempted by Norman Podhoretz, editor of *Commentary*, and Stanley Hoffmann, a distinguished professor at Harvard. These two gentlemen, who rarely agree on public issues, nonetheless agree that whatever one may think of Kissinger's record he has written an extraordinary book. Podhoretz has a problem with the word "great," being repelled (he tells us) by the fashionable inflation of language; and Hoffmann seems less moved than bemused by his erstwhile colleague's achievement, as if astounded that so ugly a duckling could have evolved into a swan. But their judgment is univocal and clear and appropriately touched with awe: A masterwork has entered the American canon. Podhoretz, with his

customary brilliance and passion, "reconsiders" Kissinger in the June 1982 issue of *Commentary*; and Hoffmann goes and does likewise in the *New York Review of Books* for April 29, only occasionally showing the strain of his determination to give the devil his due.

These are serious, thoughtful, and (each in its way) successful attempts to get "at" the second panel of Kissinger's huge triptych, 1,283 pages of narrative, documents, and reflection on his service as secretary of state during the truncated second administration of Richard Nixon. To be sure, they take issue (again, each in his way) with the author's views: on détente, on the Middle East, on Vietnam, on arms control. They not only doubt the solidity of the "structure of peace" which Kissinger presents as his grand design, but regretfully pronounce it a failure. But both point to the felicity of his portraits, the aptness of his language, his ingenuity as a negotiator—all of which, as pure story, informs, fascinates, and delights the reader. No author could wish for a more perceptive reaction to his work.

But what about the statesman? A friend of mine who is well acquainted with Kissinger insists that he is not primarily a writer; that he would rather be Bismarck than Goethe; and that if you reject his policy you do not console him by admiring his prose. This strikes me as improbable, but if one takes the trouble to be Kissinger why should one excellence exclude the other? What he might wish for, in any case, if he is as insatiable as one surmises from the boundless energy and the lust for power displayed in these pages—and what we all might wish for him and for our country—is not merely agreement and praise but a closer attention to what he is saying. There is little evidence, aside from the two instances I have mentioned, that the appearance of *Years of Upheaval* has changed the terms or raised the level of the

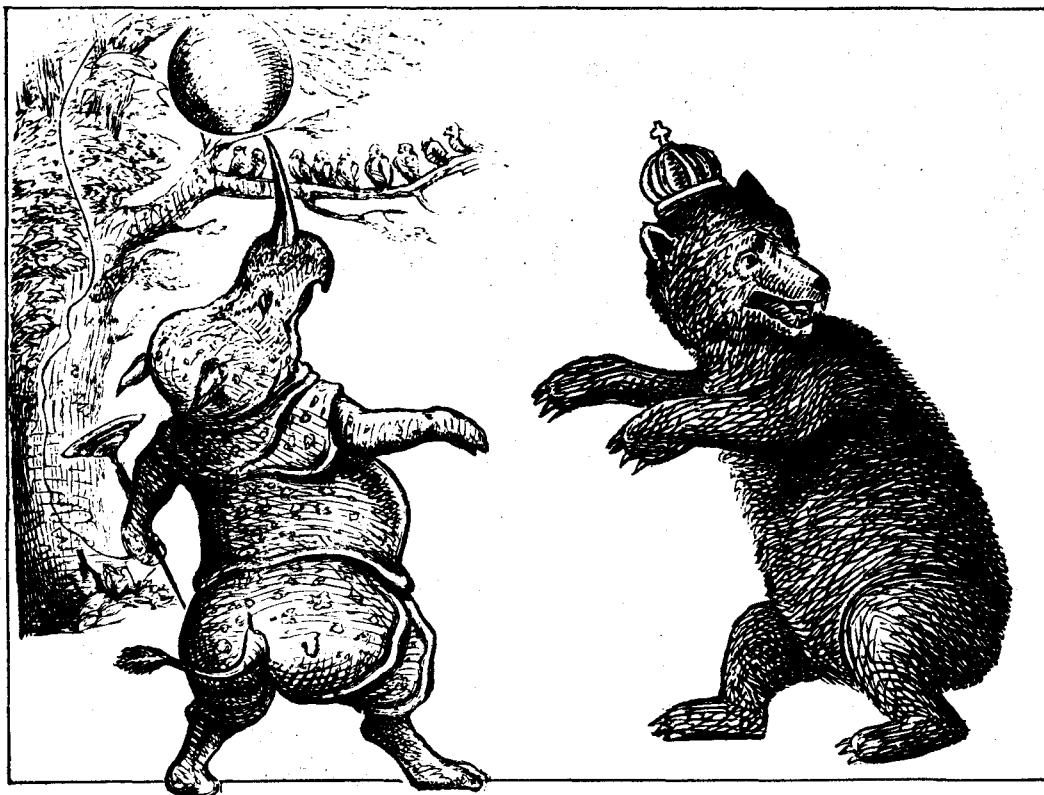
ongoing foreign policy debate among us. Months have passed since publication (on March 25), and though the event was attended by the usual hoopla, I suspect that the book has been more widely touted and bought than read, and that its significance will take many more months, indeed years, to sink in.

In the current atmosphere, this should not surprise us. For one thing, the inside story of Watergate, to which Kissinger adds a bit of pathos, has lost its morbid fascination. For another, today's world is (like yesterday's) too much with us, the background noise is hardly conducive to reflection, and Kissinger's account of his experience raises so many complex issues that people tend to be overwhelmed by it. They "skim" the book or put it aside for a more propitious time, and meanwhile the events so carefully recorded and interpreted recede at a rate approaching the speed of light and Kissinger's monument takes its place—already!—with the memoirs of Churchill, Eisenhower, and De Gaulle in that undifferentiated limbo we call the Past.

Although many of Kissinger's personae have disappeared from the scene, if not from this life—Nixon, Mao, Chou, Sadat, Heath, Golda Meir, and a host of others—the issues raised in *Years of Upheaval* are very much with us. Kissinger is not the sort of memorialist who merely tells us what happened. He is telling us, directly or by implication, what he thinks we should do.

Volume II, which is no less inordinate in size and ambition than *White House Years*, begins on a note of triumph in August 1973, with the author sitting on the steps of the President's pool at the western White House ("The President of the United States floated on his back in the water") and hearing that he is about to be appointed to the highest post this country can offer a foreign-born citizen.† But in this volume the mood has changed. The exhilaration of the mover and shaker is still there, the frank appetite for power and the apparently self-mocking humor with which he doubles as poet and philosopher. Occasionally, as in volume I, he steps back from his story to declare a principle or sketch a portrait; one could make a little anthology of his aphorisms and bravura pieces. In this volume, however, Watergate is constantly looming, at first in the background and then front and center, so that everything is chastened and darkened by the gathering catastrophe that hangs over Nixon and ends by striking him down. The final scenes will send him back to California, presumably to float in that pool again, but this time as a political corpse.

†It should be recalled that upon being named secretary of state, Kissinger continued to serve as national security adviser until November 1975.



It is worth noting that Kissinger has gone out of his way to create this symmetry. The events narrated in *Years of Upheaval* actually begin in January 1973, with Nixon's second inauguration, not in August of that year. We are deliberately led to juxtapose two images—the President floating on his back in the water and the President returning in defeat to the western White House, to float, as it were, face down. In the interim a few little things have happened: visits to Hanoi and Peking, the fall of Allende, meetings with Brezhnev, war in the Middle East, the famous shuttles, the energy crisis, rapprochement with Sadat, trouble with the Europeans—and our hero has been at the center of them all. Incredibly, Nixon seems to have clung to the idea that the ceaseless activity of his secretary of state would help to save him. The last pages, including that eerie evening with Nixon in the White House on the night before his resignation, have a Hamlet-like quality. The President is thinking about his place in history. He seems to be asking Horatio to absent himself from felicity and write his story. So, for one last moment, it is Nixon who has become the hero again. But now, as his helicopter disappears over the horizon, Fortinbras, alias Gerald Ford, observed by the same implacably indispensable eye, “strides firmly toward the White House, his arm around his wife’s shoulder.” *In his beginning is my end.* “Engulfed in anguish” but “feeling an immense relief,” Kissinger—who has also acquired a wife in volume II—prepares to stride firmly into volume III. “Somehow we had preserved a vital foreign policy in the debacle,” our author says, and he prays that “fate would be kind to this good man [i.e., Ford] and that his heart would be stout and that America under his leadership would find again its faith.”

All irony aside, this is artfully done, composed and written with a sensibility and skill that set it apart from even the more distinguished memoirs of our time and make us reach far back for parallels—



to Theophrastus, for example, or La Bruyère, although Kissinger's portraits are not of “types” but of flesh-and-blood leaders. Or to Saint-Simon, for the narrative verve and color, except that Kissinger was no envious onlooker, curdled with scorn and spite, writing his memoirs because he had been denied the employment he deserved. There is a quality in Kissinger's writing that betrays the outsider, nonetheless, the refugee from Fürth, Germany, who can never forget that he is an intellectual, a scholar, not really a typical American man of action, as if the whole situation were some cosmic joke. But the fact remains that the “vital foreign policy” preserved in the Nixon debacle was his own, and we approach volume III in the expectation that he will be allowed to carry it forward, despite the congressional watchdogs who have tasted blood and will now be baying in pursuit.

What, then, was this “vital foreign policy,” and why do Podhoretz and Hoffmann pronounce it a failure? The word seems a bit flat. *Failure?* For the reader who emerges blinking from this prodigiously detailed account of a performance without precedent in diplomatic history, the judgment has a summary—almost comical—ring to it. To paraphrase the master himself: What, in the name of God, is strategic failure? The opening to China, long a gleam in the eye of American Presidents (and an idea that had even occurred, believe it or not, to John Foster Dulles) was finally accomplished, while preserving the freedom and integrity of Taiwan. The Yom Kippur war was concluded without damage to the essential interests of Israel, while preparing the ground for Camp David and helping Sadat free his country from dependence on the Soviets. The war in Vietnam was terminated at last and if the aftermath was cruel (as indeed it was and is) it is at least arguable that Congress, by refusing to allow the President to enforce the terms of the agreement negotiated between Kissinger and Le Duc Tho, was responsible for turning the possibility of an honorable exit into a disgraceful rout.

Meanwhile, relations with the Russians, now solemnly baptized (and ballyhooed for internal political reasons) as *détente*, proceeded in their normal adversarial fashion, only occasionally lightened by Kissinger's sardonic chumminess with Anatol and Andrei and Leonid. Each side won a few and lost a few; no great breakthrough, no “structure of peace” was achieved by agreement; none could be, by any imaginable policy under the circumstances; and nothing notable was lost except—and here is the crux of my difference with Podhoretz and Hoffmann—that which in the nature of things could not be saved. Because the Soviets were willing and able to increase their military spending by some

40 percent throughout the decade, and we were not; because the Europeans and the Japanese were excessively inclined toward accommodation; because OPEC had bared its teeth and the Iranian debacle was approaching—it is also arguable that the world was a more dangerous place for our country when Kissinger left office than when he was sworn in, and that the Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy can and should be faulted on a number of counts, e.g., the neglect or mishandling of international economic arrangements, our European relations, Iran. But does it really follow from this proposition that Kissinger, as his Harvard colleague ends by suggesting, was a “dogmatist” who fell prey to “dubious self-vindication” and to “a kind of cosmic pomposity”; that he was mistaken in fancying himself a “strategist and conceptual thinker”; that he was guilty of displaying “far greater compassion for the petty mischief-makers of Watergate than for the victims of Pinochet”; and finally that “it would be a service to posterity—one that would not have to be paid by anyone's blood or tears”—if he took up another line of work?

Hoffmann's perfidious advice to Kissinger—to become a writer of biographies and so to “indulge his taste for great men”—puts me in mind of a dimly remembered passage in Saint-Simon that recounts the long and laborious journey of a provincial nobleman to Versailles, where he hoped to dazzle the court with his brilliance and play a great role. He scales mountains, fords rivers, endures interminable roads and horrid discomforts, then prepares himself with elaborate care for his presentation at court—to which Saint-Simon (who has described all this in detail and with delectation) devotes exactly two words: *Il déplut.* A marvelous bit, written long after the event about someone who (if memory serves) makes no further claim on our remembrance. But there is something preposterous about applying a similar treatment to the events related in Kissinger's memoirs, as if so many and



many-sided actions, so diversely inspired, undertaken under such ambiguous circumstances, could all be summed up in one cruel thrust: *He flopped.*

Let me hasten to repeat (on pain of being guilty of doing unto Kissinger's critics what they would do unto him) that both Hoffmann and Podhoretz render full and fair homage to the literary qualities of this book: the psychological penetration of the portraits, the brief essays on national problems, the obiter dicta on tactics and the sustained vivacity of the style; and both are generous in their praise of the negotiator who put the pieces together with Sadat, Assad, Brezhnev, and the Israelis after the October War, and worked out the Shanghai communiqué with Mao and Chou Enlai. But none of these operational achievements can alter the judgment of these two intellectuals that the ideas which Kissinger brought to the conduct of foreign policy were mistaken; that his performance was *conceptually* flawed.

Hoffmann cites with apparent approval Kissinger's "spirited defense of détente" (mainly against criticism from the Right) but ends by complaining that a strategy of confrontation *and* negotiation was too complex for the American public to follow, and that such an interpretation and practice of détente "was bound to force the Russians to ask themselves whether there was enough in it to make it worth their while." Besides, by excluding the Russians from the Middle East, Kissinger "contributed to the decline of détente," and this helps to explain why the Russians "tried a few years later to turn the tables on their rivals in Africa and on the periphery of the Middle East." This sounds like *Le Monde*, and the ineffable balancing act of French neutralism: If the Soviets engage in imperialist adventures in Angola and Afghanistan, American policy is not precisely to blame but not without responsibility either. Negatives proliferate

in this view of the world, and so do dichotomies: Kissinger is too confrontational *and* too devious to conceive of a genuine accommodation.

If this gets us into a bit of a muddle, it preserves our options and is intellectually painless. Hoffmann also reproaches Kissinger for failing to understand "the extent to which a state's external performance and strength depend on domestic cohesion and consensus." This, not Watergate, is why Kissinger overestimated his ability to manage an orderly retreat from Vietnam—a not implausible hypothesis, to revert to the style of *Le Monde* again, although Kissinger's frequent references to Watergate would suggest that he was not unaware of it. But for Hoffmann it also explains why Kissinger "reduces liberals to caricature" and "favors rightwing regimes." In the view of a neo-Kantian liberal, domestic consensus always depends on the prevalence of "progressive" policies and ideas. Whatever elections and opinion polls may say to the contrary, legitimacy in this view derives from "being on the side of history," which means in the hills or jungles or wherever the language of the Left is spoken. History has been cruel to this notion, as our good professor must know, but for decent liberal people it remains an article of faith. So Hoffmann can say—of a man who was demonstrably the most popular secretary of state in living memory, and surely the most prestigious on Capitol Hill since George C. Marshall—that "his concept of power was often too crude to be accepted at home."

Too crude—or too complex? Hoffmann seems to want to have it both ways. But it doesn't matter. Add what Hoffmann calls Kissinger's ruthlessness, his personal ambition, and his resort to fantasy (a polite word for prevarication—specifically with respect to the alleged plan to enlist Chou and Sihanouk to save Cambodia from the Khmer Rouge) and what it all comes down

to is that Kissinger failed because he was not a nice guy. In power, he behaved and thought like a man of power, not like a progressive professor of political science.

So much for what one might call Kissinger's Hoffmann problem. The foreign policy elite of which Stanley Hoffmann is at once a spokesman and a critic is the milieu from which Kissinger sprang—an academic arm of the awesome Eastern establishment that Richard Nixon presumably was attempting to disarm and co-opt when he appointed him in the first place. In *White House Years* we learned how Kissinger was not only allowed but encouraged to set up his famous "back channels" to undercut the Department of State and reduce the titular secretary, Rogers, to a figurehead; to handle the press, which he did with consummate skill to the greater glory of the White House and, of course, himself; to staff the national security office with the people he needed even if they were exotics (Democrats, left-wingers, and god-only-knew-what) who would never have been tolerated in the proximity of the Chief had Kissinger's large shadow not screened them from view; and finally—the purpose of it all—to end the Vietnam war and undertake a series of spectacular initiatives: détente, the opening to China, the approach to Sadat, the Nixon Doctrine, which were to constitute the Nixon legacy, a "structure of peace." The establishment, whose thunder was thus to be stolen, suspected Nixon of betrayal from the moment he entered the White House; and for its "progressive" wing, as Hoffmann shows, these suspicions were amply confirmed.

Although Kissinger only occasionally pauses for polemics with bureaucratic adversaries like James Schlesinger or with senators like Jackson, he is visibly sensitive to the criticism of his peers, and not merely because it complicated his task with Congress and the press. It must have weighed on his mind because he keeps complaining of being caught in the middle between the Left, who insisted on viewing foreign policy as "a branch of psychiatry," and the *theological* Right. The latter were not, as one might suppose, premature moral majoritarians or any other element of the non-establishment Right. They were the sophisticated hardliners, from Paul Nitze to Lane Kirkland, for whom détente was a vast mistake.

Exactly who should be included in this category is not clear; people move in and out of it on different issues. But a major culprit is surely Norman Podhoretz, whom Kissinger takes the trouble to chide in a footnote as a critic who moved from one (anti-Vietnam) extreme to another, and whose current aberration is to insist that détente is impossible in the nature of things, that economic exchanges and arms control negotiations can only redound to



the advantage of the Soviets, that American policy must maintain an attitude of unremitting hostility and confrontation in order to mobilize an American people historically "reluctant to support large standing armies, let alone to use them in combat" and "in the absence of some higher meaning . . . to be overwhelmed by the ever-present isolationist temptation." This is the view that Podhoretz expounded brilliantly in *The Future Danger*, and now repeats in his "reconsideration" of Kissinger:

[B]y representing the Soviet Union as a competing superpower with whom we could negotiate peaceful and stable accommodations—instead of a Communist state hostile in its very nature to us and trying to extend its rule and its political culture over a wider and wider area of the world—the Nixon, Ford and Carter administrations robbed the Soviet-American conflict of the moral and political dimensions for the sake of which sacrifices could be intelligibly demanded by the government and willingly made by the people.

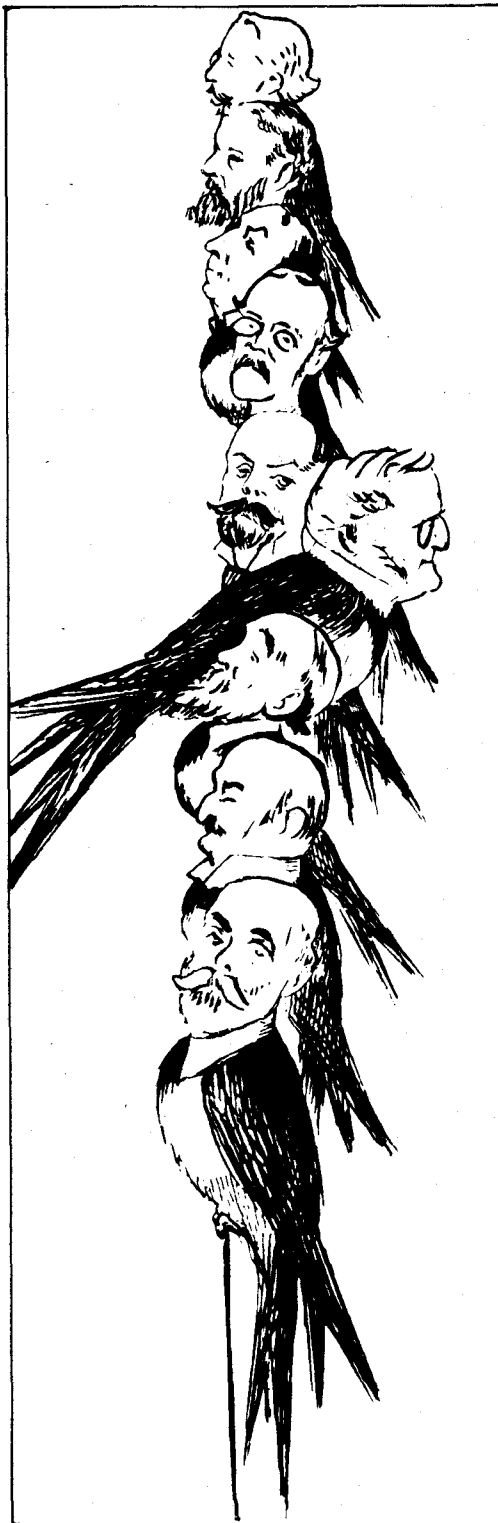
In other words, détente breeds illusion and illusion disarms us, witness the current outburst of unilateralist sentiment in Europe and the growth of antinuclear hysteria in the United States. Furthermore, Podhoretz argues, Kissinger not only created illusions but fell victim to them himself. He was so skillful a negotiator he forgot that some things were simply not negotiable and that given the nature of the adversary the very idea of accommodation was a trap. This was just as true in Vietnam and in the Middle East, wherever, in fact, our policy ignored "the terrible dangers of contriving a negotiated settlement between a party that wants peace and a party that, although it may at certain moments pretend otherwise, wants only victory." So the famous structure of peace was nothing but a mirage. It was, Podhoretz maintains, "based on a misconception of what was possible in the real world."

This strikes me as reductive, much as the idea of détente or almost any other strategic orientation becomes reductive when removed from context and looked at abstractly, as a proposition. Coming as it does after a graceful and sensitive appreciation of Kissinger's achievement as a writer, Podhoretz's sudden plunge into what he calls the "real world" (which is in fact the world of language and logic) astounds us by its rigor. For a moment we are almost persuaded that reality is the propositions we devise to represent it. But only for a moment. Which of the parties in the Middle East wants peace and which wants only victory? The answer may actually be both, or now one and now the other; in any case, the law of the excluded middle need not apply. The real world is not a series of statements, however cogent, but (as the philosopher said) *everything that is the case*. Whether one agrees or not—and I do not—with Podhoretz's (and Hoffmann's) dismissive view of Kissin-

ger's talent for "conceptualizing," the essential political question remains: What did he do?

It may be that the very concept of détente misled the American people. But how much does it really weigh in the balance against the fact that every major crisis we have lived through since World War II—Berlin, Korea, the Cuban missiles, Vietnam, the "red alert" during the October War—involved the Russians on the adversary side? Kissinger uses the term détente quite loosely in *Years of Upheaval*, so that it becomes synonymous with practically all Soviet-American relations. The tactics may not always have been effective but the principle remained precisely what it had been during the coldest days of the Cold War: containment—with the hope (and what American secretary of state has not expressed it?) that someday this too shall pass.

One might have wished in these



memoirs for more attention to the ideological battle; welcomed, for example, a proposal for promoting democratic ideas and practices, such as the one Ronald Reagan presented before the British Parliament early this summer. It may also be true that Kissinger and Nixon aroused exaggerated hopes in the ability of regional surrogates such as Iran to help defend our interests in the Near East and elsewhere, instead of relying exclusively on American military power, assuming Congress would ever have allowed them to do so. But surely it is unfair to blame them and the so-called doctrine of détente for the unprecedented military buildup the Russians undertook during the 1970s. How would Podhoretz have proposed to stop it?

More could have been done, I suppose, to induce the American people to match it. When the alarm was finally sounded there was no unwillingness to accept the necessary sacrifices, only a great confusion about what precisely needed to be done. But that is another story. I am suggesting not that the record is unflawed, but that in retrospect it stands up quite well. To call it an utter failure begs the obvious rejoinder: compared to what? It is not my present purpose to engage in long post-mortems to determine whether Kissinger's tactics were right or wrong, successful or not, in Cambodia, in the Middle East, in the opening to China, on arms control, but simply to point out that in not one of these most visible events was our action misdirected or vitiated by illusions about our adversaries or, for that matter, about any of the other "concepts" that Podhoretz (or Hoffmann) would offer to guide our foreign policy.

I find it impossible to quarrel with the Podhoretz catechism. What he says about the nature of the Soviet state, about the American national character, about the intentions of Jews and Arabs in the Middle East, about the purposes and prospects of our "de facto alliance with China," and so on, generally strikes me as pertinent and true. Most, if not all, of these theses could be aptly illustrated by aphorisms or vignettes from *Years of Upheaval*. But the guidance they offer is necessarily limited. Could any set of general concepts, even if spelled out in greater detail than Podhoretz does, give access to a world more "real" than the one so vividly pictured in these memoirs?

In such a world, profound insight, e.g., into the nature of the enemy, may or may not be as relevant in the short run as some passing circumstance, e.g., the enemy's food supply, or an election at home. The policymaker, in any case, must "stay loose," as our popular language puts it—but this is easier said than done. Without abandoning or betraying his convictions or forgetting what we have learned from the past he must remain aware that the future is open and that—if he is a Kissinger—his book remains to be written. □

John S. Peterson

BIRDBRAINS IN THE PARK

A child-care specialist reports on New York City's antinuke festivities.

Untoward genius must die in a corner. I am ready to believe that these young radicals are geniuses and birds of paradise, as they evidently feel themselves to be; if so their plaints ought to make a beautiful elegy; but it would still be a dying song.

—George Santayana

Friday, June 11th. Like most workaday New Yorkers I had paid little attention to the plans to turn Central Park into a peacenik day-care center. By Friday afternoon, however, there was no denying that the tribes were gathering. Walking up Broadway I noted the influx of backpacks and earnest Hobbit-like faces. Approaching Columbia I observed a film crew in a bubble-top Cadillac panning the faces of William Sloane Coffin and other humanist Brahmins—followed by Buddhist drummers and a band of West Siders marching in San Francisco Mime Troupe hand-meadows. Arriving home I learned that we would be hosting a group of West Virginia communards who were tired of sleeping in a van in Greenwich Village. Yes, the children were all around.

Saturday, June 12th. According to its organizers, the antinuclear rally had no ideological purpose other than "to support the United Nations Session on Disarmament and to call for a freeze on the reduction of all nuclear weapons and a transfer of military budgets to human needs." To believe this—and the mainstream press swallowed it whole—is to believe the moon is made of yogurt. All one had to do that weekend was follow the trail of ideological litter from Columbia to the demonstration tables off 84th Street. Here in the park's Ramble was a scene savoring of Sproul Plaza, Berkeley '67. One didn't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blew:

WAR ON U.S. FASCISTS & WARLORDS
STOP U.S.-BRITISH WAR ON ARGENTINA
FREEDOM COMES ONLY IF YOU TAKE IT

John S. Peterson is a New York writer at work on an essay collection entitled "Social Work & Other 70s Fables."

IRISH DRUMS BEAT FOR ALL THE PEOPLE
REVOLUTIONARY MARXIST SPARTICIST
YOUTH LEAGUE
ATTILA THE HAIG
REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST PARTY
NATIONALIZE BANKS AND INDUSTRY
COMMUNIST WORKERS
EL SALVADOR IS ALL OF US
CLEVELAND INTERNATIONAL
SOCIALIST ORGANIZATION

Yes, although CBS camera crews kept a discreet distance, the Ramble contained every hard Left house pet of the liberal Democratic intelligentsia. Everyone, that is, except the Symbionese Liberation Army and a contingent from Jonestown.

Strolling on, I stopped at the "Goldie Oldie" button table to finger a "Punk Dykes For Piece" medallion, and then to watch an aging, ponytailed freak moon over the "Impeach Nixon" and "Sock It To LBJ" collection. ("Man, those were the days! I got a dozen of these at home on the mantle.") Heading for the Great Lawn, I paused to chat with a pair of not-so-young

blue-jeaned women tending an "Uncle Sam Wants You To Have Babies" banner. Inquiring after their babies' health, I learned that neither of them had any, and wouldn't, either, until the world got its "head" better together. Pushing forward, I arrived at mid-Lawn just as the marchers came herding in to hunker in a field of silver balloons. Soon thereafter, spokesperson Orson Welles stepped forward to call the kindergarten together. "Fellow Children," he boomed, groping for the appropriate reinforcer. "Welcome . . . (H'ray for Orson! Go get 'em Orson!) . . . on the sunny side of the security blanket . . ."

Whatever Welles was driving at, the real security blanket that weekend was the New York City Police Department. In order that the marchers not skin their knees or in any way hurt themselves, Mayor Koch had donated—at taxpayer expense—five thousand cops and all the conservative amenities that keep transcendental rock rallies from turning ugly and sad. And, the June 12th committee was profoundly grateful. Male authority figures had their uses. Every third or so speaker would call for a round of applause—"strokes"—for the persons in blue. In the mainstream press, every editor would call for Bill Moyers-style "people" stories of the lovefest between marchers and cops. But was it that way? Did the police really enjoy babysitting for a few hundred thousand pampered, middle-aged kids? Shortly after Welles's monologue I watched a staff hobbit attempt to sell a rally T-shirt to a beefy sergeant. "They're only six bucks and really great, a T-shirt we can wear all summer." The sergeant, obviously a graduate of sensitivity training, maintained a twinkly Irish deadpan throughout. Only when the lady left did he turn to his squad, roll his eyes, and exclaim, "Oh, I simply *must* have one of those to go with my Calvin Kleins."

From here the afternoon fell into a kind of dreamy Dick and Jane groove. See Pete Seeger, see the sky, hear our children's children cry. Don't feel lonely, don't feel maimed, Bella Abzug here's gonna keep you sane. Watch the balloons go, bye bye

