

Uncommon Sense

Washington—The defeat of Tony Boyle as president of the United Mine Workers has ended the regime of a preposterous charlatan. The emperor Caligula's appointment of his horse as consul is history's only precedent for John L. Lewis's selection of Boyle as successor. Lewis had led the mineworkers to the front lines of American Labor's greatest battles. He was a ruthless tyrant, but a giant, a self-taught man of letters who could hurl rhetorical thunderbolts that left his adversaries speechless. Boyle, also a tyrant, was in person a pipsqueak, an ignoramus who could barely utter a coherent sentence.

In a matter of years, Boyle reduced the UMW to a shambles. The coal industry boomed anew and the companies, lusting for profits, cut corners to boost production. The miners paid a terrible price in lives and limbs. Boyle did nothing. Corruption became rampant. The union's constitution, never sacred under Lewis, was trampled by Boyle. Union conventions were packed to the walls with hand-picked delegates. Through it all, Boyle postured and preened, basking in the adulation of hirelings.

It was a grotesque spectacle that might have been comical were its consequences not so grim. Seventy-eight men died a horrible death in a mine explosion at Farmington, West Virginia in 1968. Boyle went to the scene and praised the coal company. Thousands of other miners were found to be dying slowly and painfully from the epidemic of black lung disease. Boyle's agents sought to sabotage the rank-and-file effort to gain compensation.

Finally, the miners' patience ran out. During the winter of 1969 they shut down the coal industry in West Virginia for three weeks in an unauthorized strike, forcing the state legislature to grant them compensation for their wrecked lungs. Then Jock Yablonski, a union executive board member for 27 years, broke ranks to challenge Boyle for the presidency, and the burgeoning insurgent miners'

movement closed ranks behind him. Fearing defeat, the Boyle machine rigged the election. But even by its crooked count, Yablonski rolled up 46,000 votes—nearly 40 percent. Three weeks later, in January of 1970, scruffy thugs broke into Yablonski's home and murdered him, his wife and daughter. They had been hired by a pro-Boyle local union president from Tennessee, where violence and loyalty to Boyle were the twin symbols of UMW activity.

Boyle blustered and shrieked that he and the union weren't involved. But the trail of indictments gradually climbed the ladder of the union hierarchy—a local president, a district representative, finally a close Boyle ally on the International Executive Board. The Justice Department expected the indictments to go even higher if those awaiting trial decided to co-operate.

After the murders, the hierarchy suffered a stunning series of courtroom reverses. A suit charging misuse of the miners' pension fund resulted in a huge damage award and Boyle's dismissal as a fund trustee. The Boyle practice of appointing regional officials was declared illegal and elections were ordered. Boyle was convicted of illegally using the miners' dues for political donations, hit with a stiff fine and sentenced to five years in jail. His re-election over Yablonski was declared fraudulent and a new one was scheduled under strict government supervision.

So here was Boyle, a convicted felon and a thumping ass besides, standing for re-election at age 68 with the Yablonski murders and a jail sentence hanging over him. To oppose him, the insurgents nominated Arnold Miller, a soft-spoken and thoughtful 49-year-old miner from Cabin Creek, West Virginia. Miller suffered from black lung and had helped lead the fight for its compensation in West Virginia. He and his running mates—Mike Trbovich, perhaps Yablonski's closest friend, and Harry Patrick, a burly, de-

termined young miner from the busy mining country of northern West Virginia, were able and decent men who would long since have been elevated to high office in any democratic union. Their campaign was professionally organized, well-staffed and adequately financed. In retrospect, it might seem that their resounding victory was inevitable. But no one who stood on that frozen cemetery hilltop in the Pennsylvania coal fields three years ago and watched the coffins of Joseph, Margaret and Charlotte Yablonski lowered into the ground could have believed that a rank-and-file triumph was inevitable by 1973.

Miller, Trbovich and Patrick gathered for the swearing-in ceremony in the basement of the UMW's baronial headquarters—once an exclusive downtown Washington men's club. The room was jammed and the walls, decorated with dozens of editorial cartoons of the great Lewis in his heyday, were ringed with standing miners. Many of these men, who had been fighting the union's dictatorial hierarchy for as long as they could remember, had tears in their eyes as they watched three members from their ranks assume the organization's highest offices. The cheers were deafening.


Miller had promised to turn back to the membership the autocratic power so long exercised by Boyle and his associates. But that process would take time. For now, the power was his and he used it with stunning swiftness. Twenty members of the International Executive Board were fired, and Miller named interim replacements to serve until elections for the posts could be held. The new board met on the spot to approve Miller's actions and to nullify those taken by the old board only days before. The old guard could take the matter to court and argue that they were the rightful board members. But the new officers controlled the union's buildings and its payroll. The once-mighty Boyle organization was at last outside looking in.

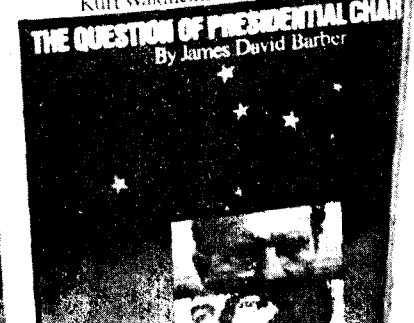
—Brit Hume



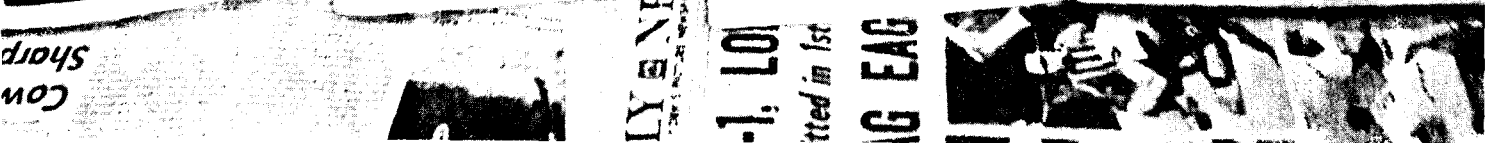
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Perspective

"PEACE IS AT HAND...."

Henry Kissinger

by David Landau

As this is being written, the war has entered another one of its ominous lulls. The raids above the 20th parallel have stopped, and negotiations have resumed in Paris. The White House has spread the impression that the other side will give in and negotiate "seriously." Even so, the likelihood is that the new talks have come about not through a "signal" from the North but rather through the President's desire to assuage Congress, to appear interested in serious compromise and thus head off a new debate on Capitol Hill as to whether there should be an end of funding for the war.

Very few people clearly understood the proposed agreement that Kissinger described on October 26—a circumstance which enabled the White House to get away with its charade. The nine-point draft was not a hard-and-fast set of terms, but rather a vague statement of principle which left many of the central issues unresolved. As Kissinger himself acknowledged, the nine points were based on a separation of military and political matters; in that way, each side could set aside certain of its fixed objectives and "agree not to agree" on the irreconcilable differences of *principle* that had fueled the war.

On the central issue, political power in the South, Hanoi and the NLF were dropping their long-standing insistence that Nguyen Van Thieu be removed before a settlement was signed; the U.S., in turn, would not demand that Thieu remain in power for any period of time longer than roughly 90 days. The political arrangements in the South would be ambiguous; if Thieu were later to be overthrown, Washington could say that the old Saigon regime, and Saigon alone, was to

blame. And if the U.S. carried out its promised withdrawal, along with its tacit pledge not to commit itself further to the maintenance of the Saigon regime, Hanoi and the NLF were sure at some time in the future to realize their own long-standing goal: the removal of Thieu and the birth of an independent, united Vietnam.

Perhaps the most cynical and quietly brutal fact of the Nixon Administration's Vietnam policy is that, for all the violence it has perpetrated, the Administration has never been especially interested in the ultimate fate of the Thieu regime. This is not to deny the American President's considerable admiration of his South Vietnamese counterpart; it is just that Nixon and Kissinger, cold-blooded pragmatists that they are, have long understood privately that Thieu is a lonely, isolated figure in his own country and that no American military effort worth the undertaking can alter that essential reality. The private U.S. negotiating position, conceived jointly by Nixon and Kissinger and promulgated in Paris since 1969, is that there need only be a "decent interval" between any U.S. withdrawal and what is acknowledged to be the inevitable collapse of the Saigon regime. The problem with the decent interval is that the other side, with good reason, has never felt confident enough of U.S. trustworthiness to accept it.

The decent interval is more than anything else a cosmetic device to disguise a fundamental failure of U.S. policy. It has been pursued first in the hope that, if realized, it would make America's allies in other areas of the world less afraid that Washington will stand aside when their turns arrive to be swallowed by the Communist giants. But more fundamentally, even as Vietnam itself may be lost, the decent interval has been intended to redeem the Vietnam *experience*, to exonerate all the judgments and intentions which brought it about. Whatever their private doubts

and failures, the public behavior of a generation of U.S. officials would stand vindicated for all the world to see. No wonder Hanoi has been reluctant to negotiate on this basis. If America is so foolish as not to acknowledge a plain mistake, might it not seek, after a settlement, to turn its decent interval into a form of permanent victory, the fullest possible vindication of its efforts?

Some critics of the war—notably I. F. Stone—find it implausible that Nixon and Kissinger are seeking this "decent interval" as opposed to a "real victory" in Vietnam. But the weight of evidence—Kissinger's private statements to dozens of colleagues and diplomats, Nixon's repeated public declarations that U.S. policy seeks to give Saigon a "reasonable" as distinct from total opportunity to survive, etc., etc.—inclines heavily toward the interval. Moreover, in supposing that the White House seriously believes it can win a military victory, these critics grossly underestimate what is most pathological in the Administration's policy: the Quixotic thirst for "honor and prestige." The point is quite simply that, as a negotiating position, the decent interval is every bit as outrageously cynical as the demand for total surrender. Since 1969, Hanoi has justifiably viewed it as surrender in another form.

The most blatant operational defect of the decent interval has been that it can be negotiated only under conditions of extreme secrecy. For that reason, the interval idea has never gained any concrete expression even in private U.S. proposals, because those proposals, if accepted, were inevitably to become public. Hence the interval could only be explained "informally" to the other side in the private meetings, while the concrete proposals themselves demanded far more humiliating concessions from Hanoi and the NLF, such as withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops from the South and the Communists' acquiescence in a rigged re-election of the Thieu regime. Regardless of substance, the other side