

## Documentation

# The policymakers denounce their own policies



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**GEORGE BALL**

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*'We have driven our allies away'*

*Writing in the March 20 issue of the Washington Post, former Undersecretary of State George Ball had the following to say.*

You will find that America is now viewed from Europe and the Middle East—where I have just been—as a bewildered elephant that has lost its way and is stepping on the vegetables. Because our friends and critics are deeply worried, they do not, as in the past, derive malicious pleasure from our discomfort; their comments are no longer bitter, just plaintive....

These incidents have only reinforced Europe's grave suspicion that the Carter White House shapes its policy in the context of a pre-Copernican cosmology, as though the Earth revolved around Washington. Even in that context, it appears to behave with little consistency, backing and filling in a jerky style. Meanwhile, no one can be sure just what line of policy it will follow next, or who is enunciating it....

What reaction could one expect from Europeans living next door to Moscow's military might when the president announced that he had suddenly changed his mind about the Soviet Union and now questions its good faith? How can they follow a leader with no consistent comprehension of the Kremlin's habits and intentions who overnight swings from a preoccupation with SALT and human rights to what they regard as an over-reaction to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan?...

Yet those defections from the American policy line are only the beginning of a process; unless America moves frontally to halt Israel's settlement policy and stops fainting like an eighteenth-century heroine at any sign of Israel's displeasure we shall find ourselves alone with Israel against the rest of the world, while our allies negotiate separate arrangements that destroy any hope of a common Middle East policy.

That is only part of the persuasive disenchantment with America today. If we seem unable to handle our foreign relations with the wisdom expected of a leader, we seem equally inept with our domestic affairs that affect the prosperity of other nations. The dollar has fallen disastrously, inflation is vaulting. We continue to waste several times as much energy as other industrialized nations, and there is dismal feeling that we have lost control of our economic future...

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**McGEORGE BUNDY**

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*This is the outcome of our 'deep mistakes'*

*Washington Post reporter Lee Lescaze wrote on McGeorge Bundy's view of the Carter administration's predicament in the March 20 issue of that daily. We excerpt his comments below.*

"...Jimmy Carter is in danger of repeating the experiences of Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon during their campaigns to retain the presidency, and his political strategy could bring him the same short-term benefits and long-range troubles, former National Security advisor McGeorge Bundy said today.

My present concern is that President Carter, in what he has said and done so far about the Persian Gulf, may be poised uncertainly halfway between truth and concealment," Bundy said in a lecture at New York University.

In his failure to tell the whole truth to people during an election campaign, Bundy said, Carter's "posture is dangerously like Johnson's in 1964 and Nixon's in 1972."

...What Carter knows and has not fully told Americans, Bundy said, is that the Middle East oil problem is only partly a question of U.S. dependence on the oil cartel. What is of far more importance to the American people is the greater dependence of their closest allies—the Western Europeans and Japanese—on foreign oil.

Bundy argued that Carter can still tell the whole truth and, by doing so, win himself eventual political advantage for he would not then run the risk of following Johnson and Nixon to smashing victories followed by an inability to deliver on falsely nurtured hopes.

The foreign crisis of 1980 is authentic, but Americans run the risk of an "essentially inauthentic" presidential selection process because not only Carter but his rivals have not dealt sufficiently and openly with the problems ahead, Bundy said.

This year's political campaign, he said, need not follow the course of the Johnson-Nixon example. After the fall of France, Bundy argued, Franklin D. Roosevelt took strong steps and was not turned out of office. Neither were Harry S. Truman in 1948 after the Marshall Plan and the defense of Berlin nor Dwight David Eisenhower in 1956 after the Suez crisis.

Bundy predicts that Carter—or any other presidential candidate—would prosper this year by telling the truth as best he can.

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## THE NEW YORK TIMES

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### *'How dare these Frenchmen ignore our power...'*

*The following is taken from the New York Times' lead editorial comment on March 26.*

Washington has long since ceased to look to Paris for agreement or even sympathetic advice. These days it would be easier to push Elysée Palace through the eye of a needle than for any French President to be caught aligning himself with the United States. Echoing Charles de Gaulle, President Giscard d'Estaing has offered this explanation: "If France were to align itself with some other country's policy, then French policy would be simple, but it would cease to exist as such. Seen from the outside, France would become the province of a super-power."

Where then, after Afghanistan, does France really stand? In a recent interview, the French President sought

to make his position, in his phrase, "perfectly clear." Yes, he said, France regarded the Soviet invasion as "unacceptable," but no, it could not support the American countermeasures. This was not, however, a "neutralist" position, he added, because France remains a faithful member of the Atlantic Alliance.

This perplexed even the exegetes at *Le Monde*. The newspaper marveled that, by alliance, the President "did not mean alignment, just as solidarity was not incompatible with independence, which moreover should not be mistaken for nonalignment."

Mr. Giscard d'Estaing seemed to say that France was espousing French interests, a thesis neither novel nor shocking. What irritates many Americans, sometimes more than the substance of French diplomacy, is its manner. The French go to inordinate lengths to demonstrate that their courtship of Arabs owes more to the logic of Palestinian claims than to France's dependence on imported oil. French interventions in Africa are painstakingly represented as only disinterested assistance to former colonies. And so forth.

Such lofty diplomatic cant, to be sure, is not a French monopoly. The wavering signals of the Carter administration have themselves stirred doubts among the allies. Yet when Mr. Giscard d'Estaing asserts that alignment is demeaning, he says in effect that Washington can never count on a predictable pattern of support, however wise its course.

It is by the test of interest that the Giscardist design seems most flawed. Granted, France can profit from an "independent" role; by selling nuclear technology, regardless of the risk of proliferating weaponry; by gaining trade rewards from the Soviet bloc; by obtaining preferences from Arab oil exporters. But what gives France freedom to maneuver is the unspoken assumption that the Soviet Union will not treat Western Europe like Afghanistan. Without the security provided by the American connection and nuclear umbrella, there would be no Giscardism.

Even if Europe feels myopically safe, where is the wisdom in open rivalry elsewhere? Will an American retreat—and Soviet advance—in the Middle East strengthen France against OPEC? Does France gain from undermining Camp David and adding to Israel's paranoia? Are France's African interests secure without American attempts, however fallible, to contain Soviet competition?

There is also a more ominous long-term question. Driving an uncertain America into isolation may not disturb the Parisian psyche, but what might it do to Germany's mood and the bonds that tie Germany to France? Precisely to the degree that America is troubled, its European allies and, yes, dependents had best recon-

sider their deepest interests. Those interests could at least be symbolically affirmed if France "aligns" itself with the boycott of the Moscow Olympics. Lacking any such gestures, French negativism will feed an impatience ultimately destructive to the very independence that Mr. Giscard d'Estaing exalts.

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## THE NEW YORK TIMES

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### 'Poor America must produce or collapse'

*The following was the New York Times lead editorial March 23.*

Quick! How do Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan rate the strengths and weaknesses of America for the next four years? What would they do to prevent the deterioration of the Western alliance, or to contain and coexist with Soviet power?

We don't know either. Tuesday after Tuesday, in anointing these two men to vie for the leadership of the free world, Americans have been rewarding a cynical reclusiveness by the one and much simplistic nonsense from the other. You would think the nation's peace and prosperity depend now on Mr. Carter's alleged preoccupation with the Teheran hostages and Mr. Reagan's resolve to increase military spending and Voice of America propaganda. The President runs on a record that has found him on almost every side of every global issue. His likely challenger is a man who would rather fight than negotiate for the Panama Canal and threaten the Russians with every known weapon except a politically inconvenient grain embargo.

We are not now deploring the political process that dignifies this level of discussion; no system alone can guarantee intelligent debate. Nor should the despair of spring be allowed to sap all meaning from the choice next autumn; however drearily, it usually matters who finally wins. For the moment, we wonder only whether Americans are not secretly content with this political pabulum. It saves us all, as well as the candidates, from digesting a hard reality.

The neglected reality is American weakness—but not as measured in missiles, or captured diplomats or bungled votes at the United Nations. If these are significant at all, they are mere symptoms of a deeper infirmity. America is not in imminent military danger. Its economic potential, by almost every standard, remains pre-eminent. It is the most naturally blessed nation. It still

proclaims the most appealing ideology.

But increasingly, America lacks the wealth to satisfy its will. Rich as it is, it cannot afford the material and political ambitions, commitments and values that it embraced a generation ago. The Russians are no longer easily contained because they have matched America in military power. Allies are turning into rivals because some have overtaken America in both productive power and energy dependence. The rest of the world is no longer easy to pacify because it can now choose among rival benefactors, and parts of it are very rich besides.

There exists, in short, an imbalance between American means and ends in the world. That explains the true frustration in Iran, the vulnerability in Afghanistan, the rejection by Pakistan, the fear of imports from Japan. Proclamations of doctrine by Jimmy Carter and of superiority by Ronald Reagan are almost beside the point. So are efforts to distinguish "foreign" from "domestic" policies. Americans in 1980 face an overriding choice: either trim sail abroad and lower the standard of living at home, or rally the society for a mighty new surge of wealth-creating production.

As should have been obvious long ago, America's strength, except in war, depends entirely on its relative wealth. There can be no significant limit in the arms race, no detente and no containment, unless the Russians fear being outspent and outmaneuvered. They will not be outspent or outmaneuvered by the democracies until the allies can afford to curb their rivalries for trade and energy. There will be no stability in the weaker nations, as Mr. Carter asks, or even respect as Mr. Reagan demands, until they are earned with vast new programs of Western aid and investment. And there will be no reliable prosperity in America until all these foreign objectives are served.

An honest campaign would concede that large American ambitions have in fact been compromised in the years of our relative decline. China is now embraced as a virtual brother-in-arms. Indochina, like Eastern Europe, now invites mostly rhetorical interest. But an honest campaign would also recognize the inevitable connections between American freedom and wealth and between wealth and the resources and potential customers of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The wealth of Europe and Japan should count on America's side of the ledger, but the allies are in a mood to accommodate to any oil price, and to other Afghans, unless they get a firmer demonstration of American direction and muscle. We can call them ingrates and go on consuming our wealth and adding to our missiles. Or we can debate the sacrifices required to revive our industrial power, the only meaningful coin in a peaceful world.