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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Date 1/11/75

TO: DON RUMSFELD
FROM: JERRY H. ~~JOHNS~~

The attached is forwarded for your
information.

1/11/75
THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN *dy.*

Don R. [unclear]

THE NICK THIMMESCH COLUMN

RELEASE DATE: Thursday, January 9, 1975

SCARE STATEMENTS ILL CONCEIVED

by Nick Thimmesch

WASHINGTON--The well being, even the lives, of American people are toyed with in the silly speculation that the United States might inflict military force on the Middle East oil-producing nations "in the gravest emergency."

Whether Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger fell into a stupid moment or is using his old cunning isn't known yet. Certainly, he is the tail which wagged President Ford on this terrible blunder.

Someone should sidle up to the President, old-congressional-buddy style, and advise him that the United States should never become the selfish, puritan bully to the world. Certainly, we Americans can solve our energy and financial problems in better fashion than storming ashore with guns on the beaches of friends to confiscate their oil.

In the Business Week interview, which started this ruckus, Kissinger said a military action of this sort would be "a very dangerous course."

(MORE)



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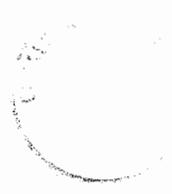
He remarked that it is easier to get into a war than out of one. Kissinger should have stopped there rather than adding that "actual strangulation of the industrialized world" might require such intervention.

That thought led to a spate of inquiries by newsmen, and eventually Kissinger fell back on the explanation that he doesn't make major statements on foreign policy, that the President does, and he was only reflecting Mr. Ford's views. The President then backed Kissinger on the matter.

The howls from the oil-producing nations were expected, especially from Iran which deems itself the Aryan (non-Arab) lord of the Persian Gulf. Kissinger's curiously timed statement seemed brand new to most Americans; actually, it has an interesting array of precedents.

Former Sen. J.W. Fulbright first brought up the notion of a military action in the Persian Gulf, May 21, 1973, and repeated it the following November. In wry manner, Fulbright mused that perhaps the United States wouldn't have to stage the invasion because we had "surrogates" in the area like Iran and Israel.

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Fulbright said a visiting Israeli scholar was worried that Israel would be called on by the United States to invade Kuwait. Finally, Fulbright said he hoped such speculation would be denied and repudiated by the U.S. government.

Well, it wasn't. In fact, both Mr. Ford and Kissinger last fall made hard-line statements that it was regrettable but military force had been used before for economic ends. Now, with Ford-Kissinger ill-conceived efforts to get OPEC's oil prices down, we get the latest scary statements.

The facts are that the OPEC nations, which include several non-Arab states, first raised oil prices 60% in February, 1971. OPEC was ready to more than double prices when the October war broke out in 1973 and, a month later, did so. But it was Iran and Venezuela which pushed for the whopper increase, not Saudi Arabia or the other Arab states.

Ford-Kissinger should also know that the majority of oil imported by the United States comes from Canada and Venezuela, not the Persian Gulf states. Nigeria and Iran send far more oil to us than all the Arab nations combined.

(Paragraph continues)

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But the Arabs, because they are stereotyped in the media and in Congress, are portrayed as our biggest suppliers. They could be one day because of their enormous reserves, but not yet.

Next, Japan and Europe are far, far more dependent on Persian Gulf oil than we are, but they don't indulge in frightening speculation about war for oil. They are mature enough to understand the world's economic realities.

It could be that Kissinger again relies on "bombing," as he and former President Nixon did with the North Vietnamese at Christmas, 1972, to force American will on another nation. This time the "bombs" are words, however remote to reality. But if this "bombing" (invasion) policy were logical, Ford-Kissinger should also threaten Canada, Venezuela, Iran and Nigeria--our biggest oil suppliers. How absurd.

Of course, Ford-Kissinger could now explain that the "gravest emergency" requiring military force would be a Russian invasion of Europe or that "strangulating" oil embargo. But the real purpose of this loose talk, it seems to me, is a coercive effort to get OPEC to lower oil prices, just as that Christmas bombing got Hanoi back to the bargaining table.

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Never, in the worst of Vietnam, did we talk of invading the Soviet Union or Red China to force them to quit supplying the enemy, North Vietnam, which was killing thousands of Americans.

Surely, we can do better than to threaten oil-producing nations with American military might just to insure that our homes will be warm, our gas tanks full and our piggish consumption secure.

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