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3/4/75

DR HAS SEEN

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Don R)

Young's article
is one of the finest - so
perceptive & wise.

Give this to Bob

H... We should use
something like this at
one of our Major Speeches.

[UT 3/4/75 Exec.]

The Politics of Appeasement

By IRVING KRISTOL

We have, apparently, decided to rectify the transgressions of an imperial presidency by subjecting ourselves to the abuses of congressional government. Though the former may have been more egregiously scandalous, the latter might well turn out to be more permanently destructive.

Most of the presidential follies of the last six years had little to do with the presidency as such; they flowed quite simply from the character of Mr. Nixon and his close associates. In contrast, the follies that Congress will inflict on us have little to do with the persons of our incumbent Congressmen, who are presumably no worse or better, on average, than ever before. The abuses of congressional government are fundamental to this kind of government itself, which is inevitably irresponsible government.

One forgets that the reason the Founding Fathers devised a Constitution with a strong and independent President, constituting a separate branch of government, was because they had, in the previous decade, a most grievous experience with legislative dominance at both the national and state levels. This legislative dominance had resulted in the mismanagement of domestic affairs and impotence in foreign affairs. It always does have such effects. Congress, by its very nature, is incapable of taking the longer or larger view of any matter. As the ultimate organ of popular sovereignty, Congress is a creature of popular opinion, which it seeks to appease, never to refine or elevate. This intimate association with popular opinion is its source of strength in a constitutional crisis, but it is a source of weakness when it comes to the business of governing. To take a longer or larger or more comprehensive view of political matters means to defer gratifications, to impose temporary sacrifices, to make decisions about what the nation needs as distinct from what the people at any moment may unthinkingly desire. Not wishing to do such things, Congress is allergic to any perspective which might prescribe them.

"The Social Pork Barrel"

This normal condition has been much aggravated, in recent years, by the development of what David Stockman calls "the social pork barrel." As the federal government has sponsored more and more programs which deliver goods and services for more and more people, each Congressman finds himself more firmly the captive of the particular constituency created by each program. His votes, then, become a series of discrete appeasements, and what they add up to he will not reckon. He really does believe that "What have you done for me lately?" is a legitimate—indeed, the crucial—question which the voters may properly put to him. And since he believes it, the voters naturally believe it, too.

Along with such irresponsibility in domestic (especially fiscal) affairs, there

burdens it places of this or that part of the country, or on this or that sector of the population. What it resolutely overlooks is: that this is a foreign policy program, not a domestic economic program at all. It is not a program to cope with an oil shortage (which does not now exist) or to cope with high oil prices (which it will not reduce). It is a program that has as its purpose the preservation of America's status as a world power, with the capability of conducting a foreign policy free from blackmail by the OPEC nations; as well as by any other group of nations that decides to form a cartel in one scarce commodity or another.

I do not suggest that President Ford's program is the best of all conceivable pro-

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Precisely because Congress sees politics as the art of appeasing various constituencies, it can never be serious about foreign policy, which consists of making one difficult and disagreeable and controversial choice after another.

grams to achieve this purpose. There are other ways of accomplishing this end, and it is possible that one or another may be superior. But what is certain is that all of them will be costly, in the sense that they will represent a voluntary act of economic self-denial on the part of the American people in order to gain political freedom of action in international affairs. And it is predictable that Congress will conclude that such economic self-denial is unthinkable. It will not impose rationing; it will not impose import quotas; it will not even move to increase our oil production in the offshore Atlantic lest it inconvenience New Jersey's summer resorts. It will decide, rather, that we shall all be better off—i.e., more comfortable—with no kind of program at all.

In narrow and short-sighted economic terms, of course, such a decision has its own validity. There is no doubt that all Americans will be more comfortable without an act of self-denial than with it. Now that the sharp increase in energy costs has largely "passed through" the economy, and the initial painful adjustments have been made, it is even likely that if Congress does nothing, the economy will recover its natural equilibrium and proceed along a path of steady (if more modest) economic growth. Some economists think this is so—and some Republican politicians, seeing this possibility, even believe that such congressional inaction will work to President Ford's advantage in 1976.

Recalling the Past

gressional actions and inactions, appeasement is already the order of the day.

It is hardly an accident that Congress' refusal to devise an energy program coincides with an upsurge of speeches and articles and editorials about Israel which remarkably resemble those Anglo-French speeches and editorials about the Sudetenland and Danzig in 1938. Then, as now, small countries whose very existence was threatened by powerful neighbors were urged to be "reasonable"—i.e., to yield to the threat of force—in order to achieve "peace in our time." Then, as now, those doing such persuading promised ultimate support—but opposed an increased military budget because of the urgency of "unmet social needs." Then, as now, smaller and weaker allies were sold down the river so as to avoid the calamity of war. Then, as now, such appeasement only made war more probable, not less.

Though appeasement in the Middle East is now only beginning to take shape, it is already in full swing in Southeast Asia. One would have thought that, after our withdrawal from Vietnam, there could be no question of our moral obligation to provide the South Vietnamese with the military supplies needed for their self-defense. Instead Congress has decided that the South Vietnam government is not "nice" enough to suit our liberal tastes, and that what happens there is in any case not of critical significance to our national interests. But if this is true of South Vietnam, why is it less true of South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia—or, in Europe, of Yugoslavia, Portugal, or Spain? None of these governments is a liberal democracy, in our sense of the term; and, in isolation none of them is of great importance to us. But were they all to end up as members of an anti-American bloc, the shape of world politics would be decisively altered, and to our disadvantage. "Fortress America" might then become an ugly necessity, rather than a squalid fantasy.

It will be said by some that I am being bewitched by a version of the "domino theory," which equates the surrender of an inconveniently situated pawn or two with the loss of the entire chess game. The depreciation of the "domino theory" is always much favored by those who are set for appeasement. But in international politics, as in chess, the "domino theory" is usually more right than wrong. The Russians certainly take this theory seriously; they are not pouring arms into North Vietnam or Syria—or money into the Portuguese Communist Party—because of a primitive inability to read a map.

And, one wonders, what about Saudi Arabia itself? This antiquated and creaking despotism will surely, one of these days, be overthrown by a rebellion of young Arab nationalists, strongly anti-Western in outlook and hence anti-American. The very money it is now expending for its own economic development guarantees that eventuality. What shall we do then, if we have not devised an energy program that makes us and our allies less dependent on OPEC oil? Military action will

take a longer or larger or more comprehensive view of political matters means to defer gratifications, to impose temporary sacrifices, to make decisions about what the nation needs as distinct from what the people at any moment may unthinkingly desire. Not wishing to do such things, Congress is allergic to any perspective which might prescribe them.

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This normal condition has been much aggravated, in recent years, by the development of what David Stockman calls "the social pork barrel." As the federal government has sponsored more and more programs which deliver goods and services for more and more people, each Congressman finds himself more firmly the captive of the particular constituency created by each program. His votes, then, become a series of discrete appeasements, and what they add up to he will not reckon. He really does believe that "What have you done for me lately?" is a legitimate—indeed, the crucial—question which the voters may properly put to him. And since he believes it, the voters naturally believe it, too.

Along with such irresponsibility in domestic (especially fiscal) affairs, there goes impotence in foreign policy. Precisely because Congress sees politics as the art of appeasing various constituencies, it can never be serious about foreign policy, which consists in making one difficult and disagreeable and controversial choice after another. The truth is that Congress profoundly resents foreign policy matters, as rude intrusions in its quest for the popular, and wishes they would go away. Its instinct is to subordinate all matters of foreign policy to domestic (i.e., political) considerations. And it justifies this subordination with much wishful thinking and clouds of moralistic rhetoric.

The attitude of Congress toward President Ford's energy program is a case in point. It persists in focusing attention on the economic costs of this program, on the

people in order to gain political freedom of action in international affairs. And it is predictable that Congress will conclude that such economic self-denial is unthinkable. It will not impose rationing; it will not impose import quotas; it will not even move to increase our oil production in the offshore Atlantic lest it inconvenience New Jersey's summer resorts. It will decide, rather, that we shall all be better off—i.e., more comfortable—with no kind of program at all.

In narrow and short-sighted economic terms, of course, such a decision has its own validity. There is no doubt that all Americans will be more comfortable without an act of self-denial than with it. Now that the sharp increase in energy costs has largely "passed through" the economy, and the initial painful adjustments have been made, it is even likely that if Congress does nothing, the economy will recover its natural equilibrium and proceed along a path of steady (if more modest) economic growth. Some economists think this is so—and some Republican politicians, seeing this possibility, even believe that such congressional inaction will work to President Ford's advantage in 1976.

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But this whole way of thinking about the matter ignores the point of an energy program, which is not to give something to the American people but to take something from them, so as to allow us and our allies to have a foreign policy we can call our own. Without some kind of energy program, American policy toward the Middle East will, in the event of a crisis and another oil embargo, or in the event simply of another sharp increase in oil prices, be limited to two alternatives: (a) immediate military intervention, or (b) abrupt appeasement. Though the former prospect has of late been speculated about, it remains academic for the while: after Vietnam, "intervention" is a dirty word. So appeasement will be the order of the day. As a matter of fact it is clear that, by con-

an anti-American bias, the shape of world politics would be decisively altered, and to our disadvantage. "Fortress America" might then become an ugly necessity, rather than a squalid fantasy.

It will be said by some that I am being bewitched by a version of the "domino theory," which equates the surrender of an inconveniently situated pawn or two with the loss of the entire chess game: The depreciation of the "domino theory" is always much favored by those who are set for appeasement. But in international politics, as in chess, the "domino theory" is usually more right than wrong. The Russians certainly take this theory seriously; they are not pouring arms into North Vietnam or Syria—or money into the Portuguese Communist Party—because of a primitive inability to read a map.

And, one wonders, what about Saudi Arabia itself? This antiquated and creaking despotism will surely, one of these days, be overthrown by a rebellion of young Arab nationalists, strongly anti-Western in outlook and hence anti-American. The very money it is now expending for its own economic development guarantees that eventuality. What shall we do then, if we have not devised an energy program that makes us and our allies less dependent on OPEC oil? Military action will be even less imaginable in those circumstances than it is now, since massive supplies of Russian (or Chinese) arms, along with "military technicians," will quickly pour into that country, and the threat of a Great Power confrontation would be proximate indeed. Moreover, the NATO countries, having witnessed the tranquil way we have "disburdened" ourselves of one small friendly nation after another, are not likely to have faith in any proposal we might then make. They will capitulate; Europe will become a Soviet "sphere of influence"; we shall be utterly isolated.

The Nuclear Threat

A far-fetched scenario? Perhaps. But there is nothing far-fetched in the prediction that, as we move down the ways of appeasement, those of our allies who still have a powerful yearning for national existence, and who have been relying on "the American umbrella," will quickly move to establish a nuclear "umbrella" of their own. South Korea already has taken steps to develop its own nuclear capability. Turkey, as a result of its experience at the hands of a mindless and petulant Congress, will follow suit. Pakistan has every intention of rendering itself less vulnerable to a nuclear India by making its own nuclear bombs. American appeasement means nuclear proliferation on a massive scale. And it is hard to see how much nuclear proliferation can, in the end, mean anything but nuclear devastation (or contamination) of a good part of the earth's surface—and possibly all of it.

This is the world we are in the process of bequeathing to our children, as Congress pecks away at the military budget, inflates spending on social programs, and sanctimoniously sheds one "troublesome" ally (as if there are any other kind!) after another. To those of us who have even the vaguest memories of the 1930s, it is all too chillingly reminiscent.

Mr. Kristol is Henry Luce Professor of Urban values at New York University and co-editor of the quarterly *The Public Interest*. He is also a member of the Journal's Board of Contributors, five distinguished professors who contribute periodic articles reflecting a broad range of views.

Letters to the Editor

A Cautionary Tale

Editor, *The Wall Street Journal*:

I have a tale to tell. For 50 years I have employed someone to prepare my income tax—first, an accountant; later, a lawyer; finally, a bank. To each my instructions were the same: "Avoid arguments if possible; give the government the benefit of any doubt."

Came 1971. The forms were filed on time; the taxes paid. Later a letter informed me that I had paid too much. In due course came a check for somewhat less than \$150. Quiet ensued until 1974 when I was told my 1971 tax return was being audited and that about \$75 more was coming back to me. It did not arrive. It transpired that the audit had been transferred to a higher level.

Trouble began. I owned a few shares of stock involved for many years in litigation. At the end of that remote action I had shares in two companies. To one the government assigned a share value much above its present price. To the other, to my astonishment, it assigned a "cost" to me of zero, though even now it sells for over twice the stock assigned the higher price. All this made no sense to me but I had a job, so was busy and obeyed the maxim "Great is Government and all wise

possessed. The actuarial tables warn me ineluctably that when I cross over Jordan or am rowed across the Styx (depending upon your theology) this credit is one asset I cannot take with me.

I am not complaining of paying taxes. In my remote generation that was a civic obligation. I do complain that the government set an absolutely absurd "zero" cost upon one of my savings. I also think some smart alec Senator thought he was closing a "windfall profit loophole" with that obscure statute. Those are my minor discontents.

My sense of outrage is that the government changed what can with great charity be called its MIND three times in three years on the same tax return, twice in my "favor," and once in its. My fury is heightened by the patent fact that these three reviews and audits cost the government more than it got the first time, the deduction, and then the last (I dare not say final) assessment plus interest.

In short I paid taxes to achieve no purpose whatever except to collect taxes I was perfectly willing to pay in the first place were the government to enact laws that a citizen could understand, at least with the help of a bank.

The tax law is an assault on citizenship.

March 3, 1975

DICK:

For appropriate action.

~~Long Jones
stick into system
for action~~
Dick

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

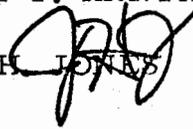
March 4, 1975

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR:

ROBERT T. HARTMANN

FROM:

JERRY H. ~~LOUIS~~ 

The attached material was returned in the President's outbox with the following notation:

-- Irving K's article is one of the finest --
so perceptive and wise.

Give this to Bob H. We should use something
like this at one of our Major Speeches.

Please follow-up with the appropriate action.

Thank you.

cc: Don Rumsfeld
Paul Theis