

United States and France: I

By C. L. Sulzberger

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

PARIS—The petulance now featuring United States relationships with France is ridiculous and unnecessary. From certain remarks attributed to Henry Kissinger one must conclude he should never be indiscreet in private, which he now inferentially acknowledges. It is one thing to use the calculated public leak for policy purposes but it is quite another to blow off steam and have it surface in a cloud of embarrassment.

Mr. Kissinger was quoted in a pro-American London paper Feb. 10 as having told a small group that Europeans are "craven," "contemptible," "pernicious" and acting like "jackals," to say nothing of appraising Saudi Arabia's King Faisal as a "religious fanatic," which neither helped prospects of trans-Atlantic amity nor facilitated ease of the anti-U.S. embargo.

On March 6, the normally American Paris Figaro reported the Secretary of State as saying the United States knew better how to choose enemies than friends and it was easier to treat with the former than the latter. These alleged opinions added to those publicly enunciated raised hackles.

One result is that recent U.S. policy has proved counterproductive. The Washington petroleum consumers' meeting, at which France was the odd-man-out, was swiftly superseded by a European Community policy that excluded America. And French Foreign Minister Michel Jobert, who administered Mr. Kissinger's person more than his current views, has recently taken a rubbing mustard into U.S. irritation. It is even reported that Washington has begun re-examining policy toward

France, which I take to be nonsense since things are certainly in no more critical state between the two countries than frequently in the past and it would be folly to heat up the situation. Mr. Kissinger has for years been a dash of French nationalism at the number of Gaullism, the philosophy represented today by President Pompidou and Mr. Jobert. Indeed, Mr. Kissinger—then a Democrat—had been brought into the Kennedy Administration early as an adviser on nuclear strategy and European matters.

He was often used as a secret messenger between President Kennedy and Chancellor Adenauer, an ardent Gaullist and Francophile, and once was dispatched by the former "to find out what's gone wrong with our German policy." Mr. Kissinger replied: "That will be easier if you'll tell me one small thing: What is our German policy?" The present Secretary of State broke with Mr. Kennedy over France, especially on the question of de Gaulle's so-called force de frappe. He argued there was absolutely no escaping the existence of a French national atomic force. Subsequently, he became a Republican policy expert, first for Nelson Rockefeller, then Mr. Nixon.

Now, one might ask, just what is French policy as applied by the man who seemed an early U.S. Gaullist and in the name of that avowed reference, our two nations have always remained friends, naturally and spontaneously. I see no reason why this should not continue."

can't the situation, not exacerbate it. Mr. Kissinger certainly knows that foreign policy for one country means internal policy for another. Thus Mr. Nixon has been accused of seeking political coups abroad to strengthen his sagging situation at home. Likewise, with Mr. Pompidou in Soviet Russia this week, it was reasonable to expect his journey to be preceded by a dash of French nationalism at American expense.

Now that the French President is home one can anticipate a switchback, even if he isn't going to change his mind on dealing with the energy crisis, a subject viewed differently in fuel-poor France than in fuel-rich America. But the old French-American friendship retains plenty of vitality.

In 1965 de Gaulle received Hubert Humphrey and told me afterward: "You know, in our conversation, Vice President Humphrey and I were in agreement on this point—our countries, the United States and France, have often been in disagreement over the last two centuries. Certainly we were not in agreement over Mexico one hundred years ago."

And from 1914 to 1917 the United States had relations with Germany while we were at war. After the Versailles Treaty, the United States failed to join in the League of Nations and opposed reparations for France. In 1940 the United States was not ready to go to war to protect France and England.

We have often been in disagreement and Humphrey shared my view that it doesn't matter. Despite our differences, our two nations have always remained friends, naturally and spontaneously. I see no reason why this should not continue."