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FM THE SITUATION ROOM//TOHAK 32//

TO BREMER/COVEY/RODMAN FOR THE SECRETARY

UNCLAS VIA BLACK PATCH WH52489

TOHAK 32

THE NEW REPUBLIC
DECEMBER 28, 1975

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

AFTER THE TRIP
BY JOHN OSBORNE

HONOLULU
HERE IN THE SUN AND GENTLE WARMTH OF HAWAII, AFTER THIS REPORTER HAD LEFT THE AIRCRAFT THAT IN SEVEN DAYS HAD HAULED HIM FROM WASHINGTON TO ALASKA TO TOKYO TO PEKING TO JAKARTA TO MANILA AND THAT ON THE FINAL LEGS FROM MANILA AND HONOLULU BACK TO WASHINGTON HAD COME TO BE MORE LIKE A HOSPITAL PLANE THAN A PRESS PLANE, THE WEARINESS AND MENTAL FOG THAT RESULTED FROM SO JAMMED AND INSANELY SCHEDULED A PRESIDENTIAL TRIP BEGAN TO FADE. A CLEARER UNDERSTANDING OF PRESIDENT FORD'S PURPOSES AND A FAIRER MEASURE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT THAN WAS POSSIBLE AT THE CRUX OF THE JOURNEY IN PEKING SEEMED TO EMERGE. THERE FOLLOWS IN HINDSIGHT SUMMARY, SOME OF IT TRIVIAL AND SOME OF IT OF SUBSTANTIAL IMPORT, WHAT APPEARS TO BE MOST WORTH NOTING ABOUT THE EXPEDITION.

GERALD FORD OUGHT TO RID HIMSELF OF THE ILLUSION, PRESUMABLY IMPARTED OR AT LEAST ENCOURAGED BY MEMBERS OF A WHITE HOUSE STAFF THAT HAS PREVIOUSLY BEEN SAID IN THIS SPACE TO BE THE POOREST IN A FAIRLY LONG MEMORY, THAT HE HAS TO JUSTIFY TRIPS OUT OF THE COUNTRY BY COMPLICATING THEM WITH IRRELEVANT AND TIRING STOPS

***** WHSR COMMENT *****

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ALONG THE WAY, TRAVELING IN MID-NOVEMBER TO AN ECONOMIC SUMMIT CONFERENCE NEAR PARIS THAT THE PRESIDENT AND THE OTHER PARTICIPANTS WANTED THE WORLD TO TAKE MORE SERIOUSLY THAN IT PROBABLY DESERVED TO BE TAKEN, MR. FORD ADDRESSED A BLACK UNIVERSITY CROWD IN DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA, AND TWO REPUBLICAN FUND-RAISING AFFAIRS IN DURHAM AND ATLANTA. ON THE WAY TO PEKING, FOR WHAT WAS INTENDED TO BE AND SHOULD HAVE BEEN THE PREEMINENT FOREIGN AFFAIRS EVENT OF HIS BRIEF ADMINISTRATION TO DATE, HE ADDED TO THE DRAIN AND RIGORS OF THE JOURNEY FOR HIMSELF AND FOR EVERYONE ELSE IN HIS HUGE OFFICIAL AND MEDIA ENTourage WITH A SIDE TRIP IN SNOW AND FREEZING WEATHER TO A WELDING SHOP AND A PUMPING STATION ALONG THE ROUTE OF THAT ECOLOGICAL ATROCITY, THE ALASKA OIL PIPELINE, AN OTHERWISE UNNECESSARY FLIGHT FROM FAIRBANKS TO ANCHORAGE FOR A COUPLE OF REPUBLICAN SHINDIGS AND AN OVERNIGHT STAY COMPLETED THE INITIAL CHARADE. "IS HE TIRED, RONT?" A REPORTER ASKED PRESS SECRETARY RON NESSEN IN HONOLULU. "PROBABLY LESS SO THAN EVERYBODY ELSE ON THE TRIP," NESSEN ANSWERED. "HE HAS THE ONLY BED ON THE PLANE." NESSEN REFERRED TO THE BED IN THE PRESIDENT'S QUARTERS ON AIR FORCE ONE. IN PEKING AND AFTERWARDS, THE PRESIDENT AND HIS WIFE, BETTY FORD, LOOKED VERY TIRED ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS. MRS. FORD STAYED OVER IN HONOLULU FOR SOME 30 HOURS AFTER HER HUSBAND FLEW ON TO WASHINGTON, KEEPING FOR HER USE THE FOUR-JET BOEING 707 THAT WAS RICHARD NIXON'S AIR FORCE ONE BEFORE HE GOT THE NEWER AND EVEN MORE SUMPTUOUS 707 THAT MR. FORD INHERITED BY APPOINTMENT. SECURITY AGENTS AND STAFF ASSISTANTS WHO HAD BEEN FOLLOWING THE PRESIDENT IN THE OLDER PLANE DEBARKED FROM IT IN HONOLULU AND FOUND SEATS FOR THE LAST JUMP TO WASHINGTON IN PRESS PLANES AND IN THE CARGO PLANE THAT HAD BROUGHT THE PRESIDENT'S ARMORED LIMOUSINE AND A SECRET SERVICE CONVERTIBLE TO JAKARTA (THE CHINESE COMMUNISTS WOULDN'T LET THE PRESIDENTIAL CARS INTO CHINA). HONOLULU NEWSPAPERS EXPECTED MRS. FORD TO ATTEND A REPUBLICAN FUND-RAISER AFTER RESTING AWHILE AND THE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE IN WASHINGTON COULD BE BILLED FOR THE CONSIDERABLE EXPENSE OF HOLDING THE NO. 2 PRESIDENTIAL PLANE FOR HER.

MR. FORD SHOWED HIMSELF TO BE AWARE IN A HELPLESS SORT OF WAY OF SOME OF THE ABSURDITIES OF PRESIDENTIAL TRAVEL INCLUDING THE OVERBLOWN MEDIA CORPS' OVERBLOWN HABITS OF SHOPPING AND SHIPPING THE PROCEEDS HOME IN INSPECTION-FREE PRESS PLANE CARGO HOLDS. "I UNDERSTAND THEY ARE LAYING ON A SPECIAL PLANE TO

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TAKE BACK ALL THE THINGS YOU BOUGHT," THE PRESIDENT SAID TO A REPORTER IN JAKARTA. HE WAS JOKING, BUT IT WASN'T A TOTAL JOKE. ONE REPORTER SHIPPED TWO CHINESE BICYCLES ON A PRESS PLANE. HE SAID HE'D DECLARE THEM AND PAY ANY CUSTOMS DUTY DUE. KNOWING HIM, I BELIEVE HE WOULD. I'D BE ASTOUNDED IF SOME OF HIS JOURNALISTIC BRETHREN AND SOME OF THE OFFICIAL FREELoadERS WERE AS HONEST. ON THE FLIGHT FROM PEKING TO JAKARTA WHITE HOUSE TRANSPORTATION DIRECTOR RAY ZOOK BEGGED HIS FRIENDS IN THE PRESS CORPS NOT TO DUMP ANY MORE STUFF UPON HIM FOR FREE AND UNINSPECTED TRANSPORT HOME. HE SAID THE CARGO HOLDS OF TWO PRESS PLANES WERE ALREADY CRAMMED TO THE DOORS. A THIRD JET WAS CHARTERED BY NBC, CBS AND ABC TO TRANSPORT HEAVY EQUIPMENT AND EXTRA CREWS TO AND FROM CHINA AND DIDN'T MAKE THE WHOLE CIRCUIT.

WE CONTINUE WITH THE TRIVIA ONLY IN ORDER TO NOTE A WHITE HOUSE SITUATION THAT CONCERNS THE STATUS AND EFFECTIVENESS OF SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY KISSINGER. THE SITUATION ALSO INVOLVES PRESS SECRETARY NESSEN, WHO HAS BEEN WISHED WELL IN THIS SPACE AND WHOSE DEFECTS OF PERFORMANCE HAVE BEEN BLAMED HERE MORE THAN ELSEWHERE UPON THE GUIDANCE HE GETS FROM SOME OF HIS SENIOR SUPERIORS, BY IMPLICATION INCLUDING PRESIDENT FORD. EVENTS AND ATTITUDES OBSERVED ON THIS TRIP DRIVE ME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT THIS EXPLANATION HAS BEEN UNDULY KIND TO NESSEN. IT IS INTOLERABLE THAT RON NESSEN SHOULD BE KEPT BY THE PRESIDENT AND ONE IS BOUND TO ASSUME KNOWINGLY KEPT BY THE PRESIDENT IN A POSITION TO BAIT, DEROGATE AND SNEER AT HENRY KISSINGER. IN MY OPINION ONE OF THIS COUNTRY'S GREAT AND CREATIVE SECRETARIES OF STATE, IN THE WAY THAT NESSEN HAS DONE AND BY DEFINITION HAS BEEN PERMITTED IF NOT ENCOURAGED TO DO DURING THIS JOURNEY.

THE FOREGOING OBSERVATION IS BASED UPON TWO EPISODES. ONE OF THEM INVOLVED NESSEN'S REACTION TO A NEWSWEEK REPORT CONCERNING HIM, KISSINGER AND RICHARD CHENEY, THE YOUNG WHITE HOUSE STAFF CHIEF WHO SUCCEEDED DONALD RUMSFELD WHEN RUMSFELD BECAME SECRETARY OF DEFENSE. THE THRUST OF THE NEWSWEEK REPORT WAS THAT ON KISSINGER'S PERSONAL ORDERS NESSEN WAS DENIED ACCESS TO THE ASIAN TRIP BRIEFING BOOKS AND THAT CHENEY, WHEN TOLD OF THIS BY NESSEN, ORDERED THE BOOKS GIVEN TO NESSEN AND REMINDED THE NSC STAFF AT THE WHITE HOUSE THAT KISSINGER NO LONGER HEADS THAT STAFF AS THE PRESIDENT'S ASSISTANT FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS. KISSINGER SAID THE STORY WAS AN OUTRAGEOUS FABRICATION AND ASKED WHY HE SHOULD GIVE A GOOD GODDAMN ABOUT RON NESSEN'S BRIEFING BOOKS. LT. GEN. BRENT SCOWCROFT, KISSINGER'S FORMER DEPUTY AND SUCCESSOR AS THE PRESIDENT'S NATIONAL SECURITY ASSISTANT, ALSO DENIED

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THE STORY, THE POINT OF INTEREST HERE IS NOT THE TRUTH OR FALSITY OF THE REPORT, BUT THE GLOATING FASHION IN WHICH NESSEN VERIFIED IT IN PEKING AND USED IT TO SUGGEST THAT HE IS HIGHER IN GERALD FORD'S ESTIMATION AND IS MORE SECURE IN HIS SERVICE THAN HENRY KISSINGER IS.

THE OTHER EPISODE FOLLOWED A BRIEFING THAT KISSINGER GAVE A SMALL "POOL" OF REPORTERS ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE DURING A LEG OF THE ASIAN TRIP. HE KNEW AS HE ALWAYS DOES THAT "THE SENIOR US OFFICIAL" WHO IS QUOTED AFTER SUCH BRIEFINGS WOULD BE ASSUMED TO BE HIM. KISSINGER DECIDED WHEN HE SAW THE TEXT PREPARED BY THE POOL REPORTERS THAT IT CONTAINED SOME INDISCREET LANGUAGE WHICH EVEN IF ATTRIBUTED TO HIM ONLY BY IMPLICATION AND ASSUMPTION COULD HARM HIM, THE COUNTRY AND THE PRESIDENT. HE ASKED THE "POOLERS" TO DELETE THE POSSIBLE HARMFUL LANGUAGE AND THEY DID. NESSEN HELPED ONE OF THE POOL REPORTERS REVISE THE TEXT. HE THEN TURNED UPON THE POOL REPORTERS AND DENOUNCED THEM, SAYING HE WAS AMAZED THAT THEY SHOULD BE SO WEAK AND SHOULD GRANT TO HENRY KISSINGER A FAVOR THAT THEY WOULD NEVER GRANT TO RON NESSEN. THE PRACTICE OF THE BACKGROUND BRIEFING ON PRESIDENTIAL PLANES MAY BE WRONG, THOUGH I DON'T THINK IT IS. IT IS ARGUABLE THAT THE REPORTERS WERE WRONG IN GIVING IN TO KISSINGER IN THIS INSTANCE ALTHOUGH THE UNDERSTANDING IN SUCH SITUATIONS IS THAT THE OFFICIAL IS ENTITLED TO CHOOSE THE WORDS THAT WILL BE ATTRIBUTED TO A GOVERNMENT SOURCE. HOWEVER THAT MAY BE, IT MOST CERTAINLY WAS NOT THE FUNCTION, THE PLACE, THE DUTY OF THE PRESIDENT'S PRESS SECRETARY TO OBJECT TO DELETIONS AND TO DENOUNCE REPORTERS FOR AGREEING TO MAKE DELETIONS THAT WERE IN PART INTENDED TO PROTECT THE PRESIDENT. ACCORDING TO REPORTERS WHO WERE ON THE PLANE AT THE TIME, AS I WAS NOT, AMOUNTED TO A DISPLAY OF VENOM THAT WAS SHOCKING IN ITSELF AND EVIDENCE THAT MATTERS ARE IN BAD DISARRAY AT THE TOP OF THE FORD WHITE HOUSE.

NESSEN APART, THE EPISODES INSPIRE A BRIEF OBSERVATION ABOUT THE SITUATION AND POSSIBLE FUTURE OF HENRY KISSINGER. FLAWS IN THE CONDUCT OF THE PUBLIC ASPECTS OF THIS TRIP, SUCH AS THE FAILURE TO REMIND THE AMERICAN PRESS CORPS IN PEKING OF EARLIER WARNING IN WASHINGTON THAT THERE MIGHT NOT BE A COMMUNIQUE SUMMARIZING THE VISIT, AND THE FAILURE TO PROVIDE ANY OFFICIAL AMERICAN ACCOUNT WHATSOEVER OF PRESIDENT FORD'S MEETING WITH MAO TSE-TUNG, SUGGESTED TO ME THAT KISSINGER MUST HAVE BEEN STRANGELY ABSENT FROM OR INDIFFERENT TO THE DISCUSSIONS OF HOW TO HANDLE THESE MATTERS. THE OFFICIAL STORY WAS THAT KISSINGER CONCURRED IN BOTH DECISIONS, MAYBE SO, BUT ONE MAY SUSPECT THAT HE HAD COME TO A POINT WHERE HE DIDN'T GIVE A HOOT AND PASSIVELY LEFT THE BUSINESS TO THE PRESIDENT'S STAFF CLIQUE. AFTER KISSINGER'S WHITE HOUSE TITLE AND STATUS WERE REMOVED, I WROTE THAT IT WAS INCONCEIVABLE THAT HE WOULD

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EITHER REMAIN INTO ANOTHER TERM IF GERALD FORD WERE ELECTED NEXT YEAR OR THAT HE WOULD DO THE COUNTRY AND MR. FORD THE DISSERVICE OF QUITTING BEFORE THE PRESENT TERM ENDS. WHEN KISSINGER WAS TOLD LATER THAT THIS HAD BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT HIM, HE REPLIED THAT A MAN IN PUBLIC LIFE HAS TO KEEP HIS OPTIONS OPEN.

PRESIDENT FORD IN HONOLULU, ON THE 34TH ANNIVERSARY ALMOST TO THE MINUTE OF THE JAPANESE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR, TRIED TO DEFINE THE PURPOSES OF HIS TRIP AND THE ESSENCE OF WHAT HE FIVE TIMES CALLED "A NEW PACIFIC DOCTRINE" AND "OUR NEW PACIFIC POLICY." IT WAS TOO BAD THAT HE LOADED HIS SPEECH WITH THE WORDS "NEW" AND "DOCTRINE" WHEN IT WAS NEITHER, BUT THERE WAS NOTHING WRONG, THERE WAS SOME VALUE IN RESTATING SUCH FAMILIAR TRUIZMS AS THAT "AMERICAN STRENGTH IS BASIC TO ANY STABLE BALANCE OF POWER IN THE PACIFIC," THAT "THE PARTNERSHIP OF JAPAN IS A PILLAR OF OUR STRATEGY," AND THAT "THE NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA" CONTINUES TO BE THE EVENTUAL OBJECTIVE THAT IT'S BEEN SINCE RICHARD NIXON VISITED PEKING IN 1972. THE ASSERTION, REPEATED TO THE POINT OF STRIDENCY, THAT THE US IS "A NATION OF THE PACIFIC BASIN" AND CONTINUES TO BE A "PACIFIC POWER" REFLECTED A VERY REAL ANXIETY IN THE WAKE OF THE COLLAPSE OF THE ENTIRE US POSITION AND POLICY IN INDOCHINA THAT THE PEOPLES AND GOVERNMENTS OF ASIA MIGHT CONCLUDE THAT THE US WAS NO LONGER A DEPENDABLE POWER AND PARTNER THERE OR ANYWHERE ELSE. THE PRESIDENT'S HOMEWARD STOPS IN JAKARTA AND MANILA AND PARTICULARLY IN THE PHILIPPINES, WHERE US AIR AND NAVAL BASES CONSTITUTE NOT ONLY OUR FORWARD MILITARY POSITION IN THE PACIFIC BUT A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO THE INDIAN OCEAN, WERE INTENDED TO SIGNAL AND FURTHER A BEGINNING EFFORT TO REBUILD AMONG THE NON-COMMUNIST COUNTRIES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA A MODIFIED AND LESS ABRASIVE SUBSTITUTE FOR THE POSITION LOST IN VIETNAM, CAMBODIA, AND LAOS.

THE CHIEF FLAW OF THE HONOLULU SPEECH, APART FROM THE PRESIDENT'S FLAT AND WEARY DELIVERY, WAS SIMPLY THAT IT WAS AN INFERIOR REWRITE AND ADAPTATION OF A MUCH BETTER AND MORE FORCEFUL ADDRESS THAT HENRY KISSINGER HAD DELIVERED IN DETROIT ON NOVEMBER 24. SOME OF THE PRESIDENT'S LANGUAGE AND ALL OF THE CENTRAL POINTS APPEARED IN THE KISSINGER SPEECH, TO DISTINCTLY BETTER EFFECT THAN THEY DID AFTER THE PRESIDENT'S PERSONAL STAFF PRETTIED THEM UP. QUOTING KISSINGER: "THE UNITED STATES IS A PACIFIC POWER, NO REGION IS OF GREATER IMPORTANCE TO US...THE SECURITY INTERESTS OF ALL THE GREAT WORLD POWERS INTERSECT IN ASIA. JAPAN, CHINA, THE SOVIET UNION AND THE UNITED STATES HAVE IMPORTANT STAKES IN THE REGION; ALL WOULD BE AFFECTED BY ANY MAJOR CONFLICT THERE...THUS, THROUGHOUT THE

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FIRST HALF OF THIS DECADE (EMPHASIS ADDED) WE HAVE SOUGHT TO FASHION A NEW ASIAN POLICY-- A POLICY THAT GRADUALLY REDUCED OUR MILITARY PRESENCE AND AIMED, INSTEAD, AT AUGMENTING THE STRENGTH AND VITALITY OF OUR ALLIES." HERE WAS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT KISSINGER'S "NEW ASIAN POLICY" AND MR. FORD'S "NEW PACIFIC DOCTRINE" DATED BACK INTO THE NIXON TIME, A POINT THAT THE PRESIDENT DIDN'T CONCEAL BUT DIDN'T EMPHASIZE, EITHER. KISSINGER ALSO ACKNOWLEDGED, WITH A FRANKNESS NEVER EQUALLED BY THE PRESIDENT ON THE TRIP, THE "WIDESPREAD INITIAL APPREHENSION" THAT THE INDO-CHINA DISASTER "MIGHT SIGNAL--OR, PRECIPITATE-- A GENERAL AMERICAN RETREAT FROM ASIA AND EVEN FROM GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITIES." A MAJOR PURPOSE OF THE PRESIDENT'S JOURNEY WAS TO ALLAY WHAT REMAINED OF THAT APPREHENSION IN ASIA.

TWO OTHER POINTS THAT THE PRESIDENT GOT AT IN HIS SUMMARY SPEECH WERE MADE MORE CLEARLY AND MORE FORCEFULLY BY KISSINGER IN HIS NOVEMBER 24 SPEECH AND AT A PEKING PRESS CONFERENCE. ONE OF THEM IS THAT THE US IS EDGING, NOT AS FAST AS THE CHINESE COMMUNISTS WOULD LIKE BUT STILL EDGING, TOWARD SEVERING ITS DIPLOMATIC RELATIONSHIP WITH AND DEFENSE COMMITMENT TO THE TAIWAN GOVERNMENT WHILE MAINTAINING COMMERCIAL AND OTHER SUB-OFFICIAL TIES WITH IT. THE OTHER POINT IS THAT THE US GOVERNMENT MAY BE CLOSER THAN MOST PEOPLE ARE AWARE TO REARRANGEMENT OF ITS TIES WITH AND RELATIONSHIP TO SOUTH KOREA, KISSINGER SAID: "WE ARE READY TO TALK TO ANY INTERESTED COUNTRY--INCLUDING NORTH KOREA-- ABOUT THE FUTURE OF KOREA, PROVIDED ONLY THAT SOUTH KOREA IS PRESENT."

JOHN OSBORNE
2359

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