

Camp David's Unfinished Agenda

Not all the cards have been played from the two-day meeting President Carter held with his staff and cabinet at Camp David this weekend, but there are sufficient clues to tell that the meeting failed to resolve the bitter faction fight that now embroils the Administration. On the one side are the "politicians" who are fighting to centralize policy-making power in the White House,

THE ADMINISTRATION

where it belongs. On the other side are the "specialists," who advocate government by British-style cabinet ministry. Cabinet members such as Blumenthal and Schlesinger have been providing Carter at the last minute with Brookings Institution print-outs instead of policy.

This fight will not be resolved from within the Administration. A national counterpole that combines leading representatives of the private sector with the leading political forces typified by the U.S. Labor Party will have to act forcefully and immediately to provide the leverage to win this fight. That is the lesson of Camp David.

The rise of Robert Strauss to top Administration policy coordinator signals the potential turn within the Administration. But Strauss, Secretary Vance, and the "magnolia mafia"—the inner circle of Carter's Atlanta advisors—will have to do more than "jawbone" if the world's trouble spots are not to blow up into thermonuclear war. They will have to come up with concrete policy initiatives in Africa, the Middle East, in U.S.-Soviet relations, and energy to save this country's superpower status. If the power can be finally centralized within the White House, Carter can move on these matters, but the content of new policies is still the big question mark.

The events preceding the Camp David meeting indicate what the fight is all about. At the beginning of last week Bob Strauss held an unpublicized meeting with a highly select group of individuals; each one of them had been an unofficial advisor to a Democratic President of the United States. The subject of the meeting was how to steer a president through the rough course of political decision-making.

One of those attending was Charles Kirbo, the man who holds that unofficial position today. Kirbo held a meeting of his own immediately following the Strauss meeting, this time with President Carter. Two events then followed: Robert Strauss was named as the Administration's chief inflation fighter, and the meeting at Camp David was scheduled. The only nonofficial attendee at the sessions was Charles Kirbo.

Yet the disappointing results of the Camp David

meeting expose just how limited the "wheeler-dealer" approach of Strauss and his allies is. One of the individuals who attended the "advisors" meeting admitted that he thought more progress would be made at Camp David, but that the problem is that Carter continues to see the problem as one of management, not of policy.

The well-publicized tantrum of Treasury Secretary Mike Blumenthal is related to this situation. When Blumenthal learned of the last-minute decision to appoint Strauss, he literally went berserk. Said one White House aide who watched Blumenthal, "He was climbing the walls." Blumenthal only made matters worse with this episode, and he was forced to eat his words the next day when he shared lunch with Strauss. By last week, as a reliable source reported, the Secretary was "slowly twisting in the wind."

Nevertheless, Blumenthal is still in a position to cripple the drive to expand U.S. exports. A top U.S. Eximbank official, speaking informally during the recently concluded meeting of the Arab-American Chamber of Commerce, reported that the Administration's just-announced export policy is in jeopardy, and that Blumenthal is the problem. The export policy is also at the heart of any solution in Africa, in the Mideast, and in easing of East-West tensions. Ambassador Young, for one, has repeatedly emphasized that credits for development are critical to any solution in Southern Africa.

British Cabinet Government

The well-publicized difficulties of the Carter Administration to "speak with one voice" result directly from the British-style cabinet government for which Carter was profiled. Since the U.S. government only functions when there is a strong executive, Carter's pre-inaugural "decision" to play the role of chairman of a cabinet committee was a critical feature in the British game-plan to wreck the United States. Ever since the days of Andrew Jackson it has been the British faction in this country that has advocated "collective" leadership, and cabinet-level accountability. The latter is simply a code-term to permit the British faction to run wild.

Most recently it was Eugene McCarthy who openly avowed that if he were elected he would institute reforms leading to a British-style cabinet in the U.S. Fortunately, the voters intervened. Whatever his other shortcomings, Harry Truman was on the mark when he made his oft-quoted remark about the presidency: "The buck stops here."

Carter was played by the British-linked press to eschew the image of the "Imperial President," for which both Nixon and Johnson had been driven from office. This soft-core approach to the presidency inevitably resulted in the chaos that has marked Carter's first 15

months, just as the British had planned. The argument has been framed in terms of "technocrats versus politicians," but in fact the real split within the Carter Administration has been between the British types responsible for the insane Brookings-style "policy packages," and the men within the Administration who are trying to make the American system work. The repulsive tirade penned by British commentator Peregrine Worsthorne merely hints at British rage over the prospect of a revived U.S. executive.

Now that there are signs of the potential for an American government in Washington again, two things are needed immediately. First, the British influence in both the cabinet and the White House must be extirpated. This means that National Security Advisor Brzezinski in particular has to go, and the Mondale influence, typified by Stuart Eizenstat, has to be curbed. Secondly, the kind of policy that UN ambassador Andrew Young has been advocating—diplomacy backed up by economic development programs—has to be enacted. This is the unfinished agenda of the Camp David meeting.

—Stephen Pepper

Telegraph Scores Carter "Amateur"

Sunday Telegraph, (London) "A Chamberlain in the White House," by Peregrine Worsthorne April 16:

The lightweight Jimmy Carter was elected President of the United States because the American people, disgusted by Nixon's Washington, wanted their next leader to have had as little experience of government as possible....

As a result, the most powerful nation in the world, on whom this country has become totally dependent, is now led by a fumbling amateur.

Before the Second World War such immature behavior would have been regarded as typically American. Europeans simply assumed that the American Constitution, the whole emphasis of which was to weaken executive power...was such as to preclude great statesmen. The idea of Europe's ever depending on the United States was regarded as wholly inconceivable, since a democracy of that sort, incapable of breeding a ruling class, was thought bound to be erratic and jejune.

After 1945, of course, this patronising view soon gave way to one of great respect, as Washington was seen to be rising so magnificently to the cold war challenge. Nineteenth-century doubts about the United States' capacity for international leadership were replaced by a wholly new confidence, which culminated in the hero-worshipping of President Kennedy. For about a quarter of a century Europeans slept happily at night, secure in the knowledge that a new breed of American professionals were in charge of the world....

One writes as an erstwhile pro-American of long standing, who was even prepared to forgive the

Eisenhower-Dulles letdown of Britain at the time of Suez. So important did the Anglo-American alliance seem then that it was not difficult to overlook one aberration. My pro-American gratitude at that time was so firmly based in general, thanks to the Second World War, Marshall Aid, Korea, the Berlin blockade, that no single disappointment could be expected to shake it.

But the United States today has no comparable reserves of trust, built up by past success, on which to call, since its recent record is incomparably less impressive. There is scarcely a name in the present American foreign policy set-up which commands respect, and several — Andrew Young, for one — which do the opposite. As for the President himself, nothing in his style or manner gives the slightest cause for confidence....

So when the United States shows signs of insanity, as it does in Southern Africa, and of incorrigible bungling, as it has over the neutron bomb, there is far less disposition or reason, to give her the benefit of the doubt. It could be — perish the thought — that these policies are not just aberrations from a fundamentally sound foreign policy — as was the case at Suez — but much more like the tip of a veritable iceberg of misconceptions and follies....

Rhodesia is very much a case in point. To the United States it is a faraway country about which Mr. Carter knows absolutely nothing. His knowledge of that part of the world — or of anywhere else outside Georgia — is on a par with Neville Chamberlain's of Czechoslovakia and Eastern Europe. In these respects the two men are horribly similar, both bounded by parochial horizons — Georgia as against Birmingham — with the same kind of willingness to dogmatise on a basis of ignorance, and the same kind of single-mindedly ignorant proneness to appeasement.

As a result, the Carter Administration, dragging Dr. Owen behind it, is determined to destroy the black-white internal settlement in Rhodesia and to bring about revolutionary conditions in South Africa itself, wholly regardless of the consequences of such evil courses on the economic life, and security, of Western Europe....

The spectacle is truly shocking. Short of sending in tanks, the Americans are doing everything else to bully the white South Africans, and the internal Rhodesian leaders, into surrender....

So perhaps the pre-war generation was correct after all in refusing to rely on the United States. When even pro-American Europeans are compelled to reach this conclusion — as increasingly they are — then surely the time has come for something to be done about it. In fact, the obvious reaction, which may well be long overdue, is for Western Europe to look more and more to its own defences and its own interests, if need be in defiance of the U.S. Such a world could well be intensely dangerous, but even this could be a blessing in disguise. Without the shelter of the American umbrella, Europe might once again find the will — after decades of decadence — to be true to its own destiny.