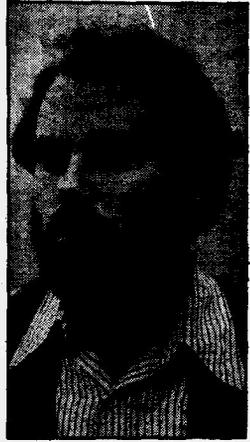


Ralph Keyes



Let's Make a Deal

Like Joe Namath and Hank Aaron, Henry Kissinger has entered the twilight of his superstardom. Down in the polls, Kissinger doesn't seem to be drawing so well on the road, and speculation has begun that our Secretary of State may leave before the 1976 election.

What a waste of talent! Before letting him resign, we at least ought to try trading him. Branch Rickey used to say the best time to trade someone was a year *before* you were ready. He wasn't referring to Secretaries of State, but why not? Why not trade statesmen who have good years left rather than release them without getting value in return?

Had such a system been in effect earlier, we might not have blundered by letting Richard Nixon resign in disgrace at home when his prestige endured abroad. The Soviet Union stayed in our former President's corner till the end, never understanding how we let such talent slip away. But not long before, they themselves waived a countryman of international standing—Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. Had the Russians delayed their writer's exile a bit, we might have made a deal: Nixon straight up for Solzhenitsyn.

But Nixon's gone, Kissinger remains, and still seems to draw well in the Middle East. If Iran won't swap some oil for our Secretary of State, maybe Egypt might go as high as their wide-smiling President Sadat. Egypt's President, however, wouldn't necessarily strengthen our bench, and would certainly pose problems in the Bronx. Golda Meir, on the other hand, would rival Tom Seaver's popularity in New York and, were she still Israel's Prime Minister, might rate a Kissinger. In retirement, we should probably go no higher than Bella Abzug for Ms. Meir.

A POOL OF STATESMEN

Such trading of leaders is only one practice statecraft could adopt from professional sports. In addition, the United Nations could set up a pool of elder statesmen left unprotected by older governments from which new expansion countries could draft entire Parliaments. (Just think of whom we might "regretfully" leave unprotected: Strom Thurmond, James Eastland—possibly even Hubert Humphrey!)

The shifting of government franchises

from one country to another is something else to consider, as an alternative to coups and revolution. Italy's last few Parliaments haven't drawn much fan support, and might do better in Portugal, which is struggling to form an expansion government, but might prefer an established franchise.

This is an area where statecraft could come up with its own wrinkle and not only transfer but exchange entire governments. Argentina, for example, was on the verge of a military take-over just months after Greek civilians replaced their solidier rulers. Rather than send Colonel Papadopoulos et al. to jail, Greece could have sent them to Argentina and gotten in return a whole Parliament of civilians with Isabel Perón thrown in.

STARTING WITH HENRY

But this is getting ahead of the game. For now the prospect of trading individual statesmen seems a plausible first step in the transformation of world diplomacy, and Henry Kissinger a good man to start with.

Rather than seek a comparable superstar, what we should do with Kissinger is see at what position we're weak, then deal him to strengthen our line-up. One glaring American need is for a woman of proven Presidential caliber since none has come up through our farm system—someone along the line of Britain's new Conservative Party leader, the redoubtable Margaret Thatcher. Since a straight-up deal of Kissinger for Thatcher favors the other side, perhaps the pot could be sweetened by throwing in the ex-King of Sikkim, that little monarchy India recently incorporated as a state. Sikkim's former King is separated from an American woman, who now lives in New York, and if a reconciliation could be arranged—the deal might go through.

The monarchy route generally seems fruitful for other governments to explore with us. While countries such as Ethiopia are arresting their kings, America has always yearned for a real live monarchy to supplement its fascination with Monaco's Princess Grace. Which might not be a bad deal: Rainier, Grace and their whole little court in a package deal for our Secretary of State. But what function would Kissinger serve in Monaco? He doesn't gamble.

The monarch we really could go for in this country is Prince Charles of Britain, who made such a good impression on his visit here—rather like a dignified David Eisenhower. Were Britain to guarantee that Queen Elizabeth would step aside so her son could arrive here as a sitting King, and were the proper guarantees made about what robes, jewels and crown would accompany King Charles—he might rate a Ford. (If our President is reading this and has any thought about not running in '76, might I suggest he breathe not a word while we try to make a deal?) Charles hopefully could also bring with him Buckingham Palace, brick by brick, to be re-erected beside London bridge in Havasu City, Ariz., where he could reign.

Although the British might part with Charles (they'd much rather we took his sister Anne), they're not all that keen for Ford in a land where American football is unknown. What England really could use is someone to help mediate the strife in Northern Ireland, a figure with international prestige, proven ability at conciliation and a nice Irish smile. Someone like Edward Kennedy. We might look foolish to sacrifice this glamorous superstar for some half-handsome prince, but the persistent doubts about Kennedy may have crippled his political future here. Since the senator from Massachusetts does have a certain regal quality, once a trade is arranged England might just want to begin a new blood line by crowning Ted Kennedy its first Irish King.

LEADERS UNITED

Something I haven't considered in this modest proposal is how statesmen themselves would react to being traded. Conceivably disgruntled presidents, prime ministers, kings and the like might be rabble-roused into forming a World Leaders' Association and going out on strike, which could pose a problem.

Or would it?

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