

Mr. Kissinger and the "benevolent hegemony"



ROMANO TAGLIANTI

We met in Milan in 1992 while attending a symposium, and during our conversation we started talking - not by chance, of course - about the subject that, considering today's circumstances, I want to submit again to your attention. Please, don't be surprised of the fact that I want you to be my interlocutor. You are the only influential person I know in the USA and perhaps you are also the only one I really esteem for the great mediation ability you showed when you faced problems such as those related to the détente in USA-USSR relation and to the relationship as well as with China. I also remember that as a result of the Paris agreement you started the peace process to stop the war in Vietnam. Everybody gives a shape to greatness. I believe that in political life the ability to mediate has an overwhelming superiority in comparison to other qualities that only those who master the art of diplomacy, are charismatic and naturally know how to orientate themselves in vast psychological and intellectual labyrinths can honestly become Presidents of a State. During that afternoon of 1992 in Milan I broke a deathlike silence that certainly did not encourage me to take such an unpopular action and I asked you to bring back to America the sense of great confusion of a part of Europe that - after hoping for the positive result of a clever diplomatic action (that is in the "Kissinger's way") - had suddenly seen in Iraq a huge amount of "smart" bombs fall down on its houses, its schools, its hospitals, its hotels. The only fault of this country was that: it was led by an extremely nationalist president but actually he is not considerably more extremist than his neighbours and his adversaries, i.e. Turkey today. Your answers were veiled because of the need to avoid engaging in controversy with me, but they seemed to be honest. I repeat that my words are not those of a dull and extremist pacifist: tolerance surely has its limits and it is useless to turn the

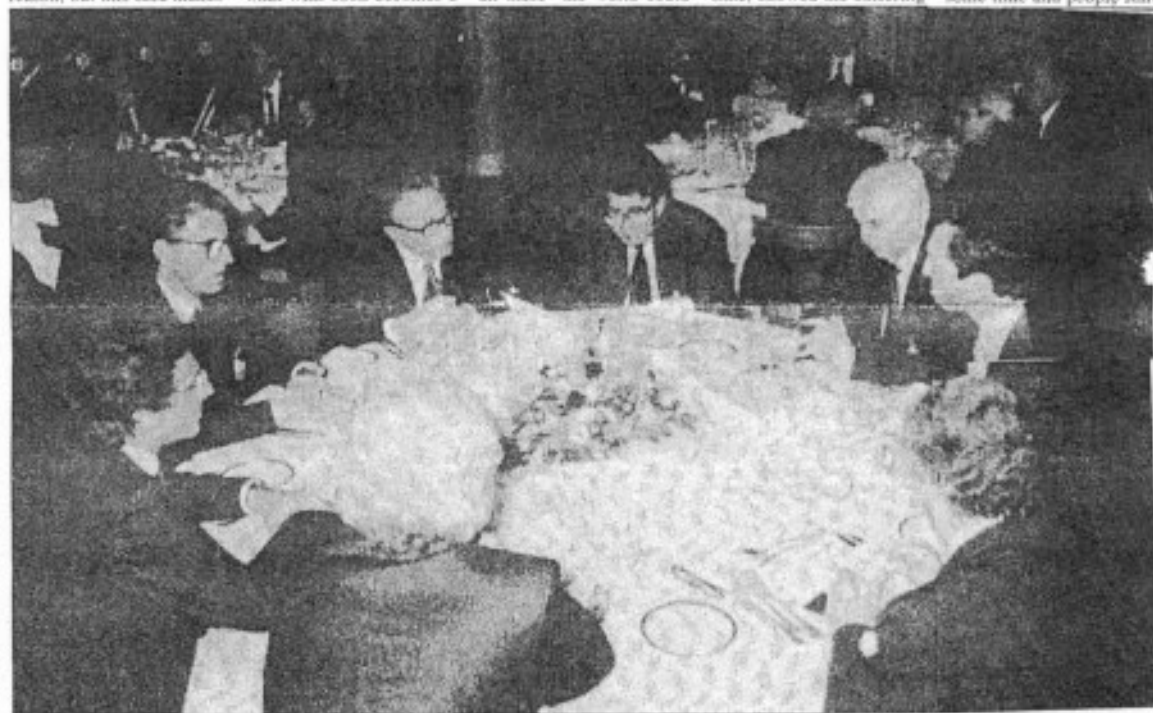
other cheek to one's enemies. Yet, by the way, I have some doubts about the idea of State Logic in general, and since you are Jewish you will easily understand. I am European, and like all the other Europeans I imagine America as a quite extravagant but unquestioned capital of Democracy and welfare. Perhaps this is due to its distance (which idealizes everything), or to the idea that I got when I was a child from Melville's transcendentalist books. In short, European people have a too cinematographic idea of that vast, rich and lucky overseas country. There is not a precise reason, but this idea makes

clever move like the colonial ones of the Romans: our will was not being taken into consideration at all. To tell the truth, few years later only this unpleasant suspect started to be perceived as a kind of irritation. In the meanwhile the poles of attraction were two (USA and USSR, the frying pan and the fire) and they both had an interest in Europe: there was also another way out, the one represented by sovereign national dignity, but this idea disappeared like an empty ship drifting. Therefore, the idealized "concept" of America was the real winner, and not the physical continent. And what wins soon becomes a

was predominant. Only America came out of that experience nearly unscathed: the war took place in Europe. American soldiers came at the end of it, when all the factions were by then exhausted, and they put an end to the war in a masterly manner. But overseas their houses were still intact: their cities and their factories were safe. They passed as heroes on ruins and dead people for which they were not obliged to shed one tear. One only thing was clear: the atomic bomb had destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in one only night 40,000 people had been burnt in Dresda, and after all these the world could

proof of their power, not of their innocence. To tell the whole truth, the USA enacted the German hegemony plan; Americans did it with a different psychological attitude, but with the same arrogance. They built walls and military bases everywhere, they took part in bloody and often useless wars in which they understood that military strength alone is not enough to win a conflict. Korea and Vietnam showed for the first time that a war can be very painful even if it takes place far away. In particular, the barbarous and cruel war in Vietnam, in which the USA lost for the first time, showed the suffering

point of view? In 1945 we were not able to think. If someone - white or red - had come with a basket of bread, we would have given our country in exchange. There was not time for analyses fully and for facts. Now things have changed: almost every family has cars, television sets, a fridge full of food and drinks. We are all less open to bribery. We are no more impressed if someone we know has a Cadillac or a Mercedes. If we see a Marine we do not think of him as the defender of freedom anymore. Perhaps a kind of count-down has begun. Some values disappear after some time and people start



America an emblematic point of reference, a place where values, flavors and smells that have been lost forever elsewhere, here miraculously survive. Therefore it is not strange if we are tempted to reimport these things, as we did at the end of last century when our grapevines were attacked by grape phylloxera. May be, because of the fascination transmitted through the stories told by our grandfathers at the beginning of the century, we have been charmed by that mysterious mirage; despite our at least 40 Centuries-old history, in 1945 we accepted without any rebellion - and sometimes with manifest pride - to be integrated and put under the American influence. We did not have the smallest suspect that what we considered as a generous alliance was actually a

pattern to follow. If we had done a more attentive examination we would have soon realized that some signs of distinction were necessary. Perhaps we would have neither the time nor the will. But if we had done it, if we had observed every particular in a daily critical way, if we had considered what we were offered and in exchange for what, we would have seen the macroscopic American work had the shape of the Horse of Troy. So not all the things we were offered were a blessing. It is useless to dwell upon the ferocity of war: those who fought or were victims of it know that wars are impossible to win: after 1945 every European country had its cities destroyed, its children killed by bombs or slaughtered in death camps, and everywhere the smell of coagulated blood

not be the same as before. That terror, which was probably due to too hurried decisions, destroyed the trust in future all at once and showed how that young American people considered mankind. The pilot that dropped the bomb on Hiroshima passed all the nights for the rest of his life awake, with his eyes opened in the darkness. But all the other Americans did not mind and went on sleeping peacefully. Has somebody ever wondered if everything possible had been done, if diplomacy had really tried to avoid that slaughter? If there had not been an excess of zeal? Those who had ordered to drop the nuclear bomb some time later paradoxically tried German criminals in Nuremberg, without even look at themselves. The fact that nobody put on trial the winners is a

face of a giant that neither Hollywood managed to make up. And neither the Iraqi war in 1992 can be considered as a successful war, notwithstanding the use of "smart weapons". Since then, some legitimate doubts have started to insinuate even into the most pro-American countries. Is it really necessary to solve problems in Serbia with bombings? What is the true reason for all this rage? How much does the presence of petrol and other strategic rough materials influence American decisions? How is it possible that intelligence is totally used to create new kinds of bombs and that nobody is able to see other solutions but a war? Why do Americans try to desperately create this "benevolent hegemony"? Are we really allies of the USA? Until when? What is the importance of our

to think. The day of reckoning can suddenly come: the same slow but inexorable process transformed the powerful Rome of emperors, the cultivated Greece of philosophers and the thriving Mesopotamia (the cradle of civilisation in the territory between the Tigris and the Euphrates which is today called Iraq) in a mass of ruins. Clinton should think and ponder for an entire night. Mr. Kissinger, you are a wise person and in your soul you keep the whole history of your people, destroyed by what somebody has considered as the supreme State logic. Please, Mr. Kissinger, if it is possible, do as Virgil did: take your President by the hand and take him to the place where memories and images still keep their vivid colors.