

Letter

The perjorative dimensions of the Segal-Spiro exchange (*Issue*, Volume II, Number 2) obscure the importance of the unresolved issues of policy control discussed. Distaste for a colleague's idiosyncracies can distort discussion of his argument, but Spiro does raise two points that deserve more attention.

First, he is right in his view of the State Department's openness; but this is essentially a formal and *de facto* environment, reflected in the extensive distribution network for cables and other incoming and outgoing communications. There remain, even through the Nixon Administration, serious differences about which policies are proper towards southern Africa. Even more important, the openness decreases substantially in inter-agency situations — although shared attitudes and experiences do make for greater candor than the suspicious academic critic might want to believe.

Second, Spiro is right to repeat the truism of the President's formal constitutional role in foreign policy formulation. While I agree with Segal's suggestion of more conspicuous congressional hearings, I see no likelihood either of involving "the American people" (whatever Segal means by that) or of shifting the policy-making focal point very far from the White House. I believe the best focus for critics of policy inconsistencies lies in a closer examination of just how attentively the President himself gets involved with a policy area. Or to put it crudely, the best measure of an area's importance is the amount of presidential attention it gets.

According to this scale, southern Africa has been a minor policy area during the past four administrations. Spiro's lavish regard for the Nixon policy review ought not to be ignored, despite his peculiar conclusion that no policy changes of any sort came of the review. Previous presidential inattention had left a morass of disparate agency activities and emphases, far removed from the simplicities of policy rhetoric. The Nixon policy review carried the presidential imprimatur, although not his direct interest, and could have helped to reconcile rhetorical aims and operational capacities. It has not done so. I cannot share Segal's assumption that the Nixon Administration changed direction in a massive, self-controlled fashion. While that might occur in this second Administration, I trust the evidence which supports the State Department view of a phase of testing *via* communication. The failures were caused by slackened White House interest, once the review was done, and by the inevitable problems of controlling events in the field, however actively involved the President might be.

The pages of *Issue* have been filled with instances of these failures of which Senator McGee's article, "The U.S. Congress and the Rhodesian Chrome Issue" (Volume II, Number 2), speaks most vividly. Let me add two items which speak to the difficulties of control. Prime Minister Caetano dramatized for his own purposes what the State Department had handled as a modest shift in policy in his announcement of a \$436 million financial package, when the amount involved was no more than the sum of all Portuguese development projects approved technically for prospective U.S. support. (Parenthetically,

the State Department had made no secret of the impending agreement. The Department's *Bulletin* discussed it a year before the agreement was signed. The lack of awareness earlier and the apparent surprise to critics suggests some incompetence in following Departmental affairs. In South Africa, Ambassador Hurd's pheasant-hunting foray on Roben Island must be judged along with his continued refusal to attend performances at the whites-only Nico Malan Theatre.

Since 1957, only President Kennedy has taken a direct interest in southern African policy. While I believe the results of his involvement were meagre — because his interest was not sustained, because the efforts involved were essentially symbolic and perhaps cynically motivated, and most basically because the persistence of the South African and Portuguese governments was underestimated — I remain convinced that presidential involvement is crucial to mobilization of the foreign policy establishment.

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