

from Stokwerck MS

The Kissinger speech.

Ben Rosenthal

March 1975

The Kissinger Speech

"I believe in a more activist, participatory role. I think the country demands it, the country wants it. I think he (Kissinger) misreads the mood of the country and the mechanics of the organization. He says Congress should not be involved in day to day policy. Well, we say the same thing. He said Congress should not be in week to week policy. We say the same thing. The differential ^{is} ~~is~~ we have found by virtue of ^{that} ~~an~~ experience ~~(that)~~ what is day to day, week to week, month to month eventually evolves into a policy which you cannot change without massive legislative, convulsive acts. And we have tried to prevent that from happening. We are in complete agreement that the Congress, as a large body of 435 people, can't run foreign policy the way the executive can. We can make decisions about broad long term policy situations. Should the U.S. be involved in Viet Nam? What shall be our role in the Middle East? Should we support a Greek junta for seven years? Seven years is enough time to understand these things. What I think he objects to specifically or finds difficult is legislative restrictions. Turkish aid cut-off; the Jackson-Vanik amendment; Ex-Im Bank restrictions; no most favored nation to Czechoslovakia. Some of these things I agree with, some of them I don't. But these are things he finds difficult. The way to prevent them from happening is to get Congress in on the kickoff. [What they do--willfully or not--we're excluded until the event has taken place. And then we react the only way we know how--by virtue of the legislative mandate.]"

"Oversight is a tough function in Congress... A lot of legislators don't see themselves as oversight people. They want to be builders of legislation rather than cops."