

Kissinger Watch by M.T. Upharsin

An excremental contribution is made

At first, it was billed as the "party of the century." By the time it was over, however, it was being derided, in high-society circles and elsewhere, as perhaps the "disgusting spectacle" of the century. And, true to form, if a spectacle is truly disgusting, Henry Kissinger could not be far from the scene.

The event was publisher Malcolm Forbes's 70th birthday extravaganza, held in Tangier, Morocco, over the Aug. 18-20 weekend. Kissinger and wife Nancy were two on a guest list of several hundred, flown in and fêted (or fetid) at a cost conservatively estimated at \$4 million. The tents alone cost several hundred thousand dollars. To add insult to injury, one of Forbes's sons boasted to the press that it was all "tax deductible," and would be written off as a business expense!

Besides the Kissingers, the guest list included Fiat magnate Gianni Agnelli; Elizabeth Taylor (who has a relationship of indeterminate nature to Forbes); New York sleazeball Donald Trump; three scions of the Rockefeller clan; Gordon Getty; Baron Heinrich von Thyssen-Bornemisza; Greece's King Constantine; Sir Jimmy Goldsmith; KGB-linked British publisher Robert Maxwell; Rupert Murdoch; Crédit Suisse-First Boston chairman John Hennessey; and a liberal representation from the "Fortune 500" list.

The super-ostentatious surroundings, garish entertainment, and vast array of food certainly provided a stark contrast to the norm of things in Morocco, where poverty is common. Reportedly, 100 sheep were killed for the occasion, and 600 chickens were served for dinner. Thirty chefs were on hand, 200 waiters, 1,000 entertainers, and at least 2,000 bottles of wine—

although these, some complained, were not enough to drown out the occasion.

Italy's *La Repubblica* daily Aug. 22 summed up the atmosphere at the Forbes bash in a most efficient way. In an article with the ironical title, "The perfumes of Tangier," *La Repubblica*'s correspondent reported that "the festivity was ruined by the stink of the excrement from the camels and horses." The stench was so bad, that Agnelli, for one, left before the dessert was served. The odor, the paper emphasized, was "an affront for people like Liz Taylor," who had spent hours trying to make everything perfect.

The society-conscious *Daily Mail* of London on Aug. 21 ran banner page 15 headlines, "The great Arabian night fizzles into a £2 million fiasco," sub-head "Furious Liz hits roof as bash falls flat."

"From the start of the evening on Saturday, the Arabian dream—billed as the greatest party in the world—descended rapidly into nightmare and farce," *Mail* correspondents Anna Pukas and Paul Palmer dispatched from Tangier. "Ten coachloads of glitzed-up guests spilled onto the red carpeted walkway outside the Palais to a cacophony of drum beating, bell jangling, hoof clapping and chanting from the 600 dancers and 200 Berber horsemen—straight into a two-hour queue for the Forbes receiving line. . . . Fiat car mogul Agnelli, who reputedly keeps a cyanide tablet handy in case of kidnap, was so incensed that he was in danger of biting on it in frustration. . . . He was seen stomping off as fast as his Gucci shoes would carry him."

Matters degenerated so fast and so completely, that even the Kissingers couldn't stand it, and "were among the first to leave," Pukas and Palmer.

Both the *Mail* and London *Daily Express* gossip columnist Ross Ben-

son observed closely the behavior of British Royal Family member Angus Ogilvy, husband of Princess Alexandra and past years' business partner of the Lonrho Corporation's Tiny Rowland. The *Mail* watched his interesting drinking habits, while Benson watched Ogilvy "shamelessly hunting charity cash among this financially overloaded gathering."

Masque of the red death?

Internationally, that Aug. 18-20 weekend saw a contrast of moral and historical importance. While Forbes, whose magazine *Forbes* is self-portrayed as the "capitalist tool," was carrying on thusly in Tangier, the Pope was not far away, in Spain, lecturing on the necessity of a "Christian humanist" renaissance, to a large gathering of Catholic youth. He castigated the prevailing mentality of "neo-capitalism" today, which is no better than the prevailing mentality in the Communist world. In "neo-capitalist" society, the Pope warned, everything has been replaced by a lust for power and "success," particularly to the end of achieving "economic power" which can ensure "subordination" over others.

Obviously a breed of radical "financier-Calvinist," Forbes equates "the good" with "the rich." He told the press Aug. 20: "The people here obviously have the right attitude to life, because they are worth between \$40 and \$50 billion between them."

Maybe the Pope's speech should be made required reading in business schools, together with Edgar Allan Poe's *Masque of the Red Death*, always an appropriate commentary on such gatherings of the decadent friends of Kissinger.