

Pact May Open Ports to Russia

By Drew Pearson and Jack Anderson

The most important negotiations with Soviet Russia since the Test-Ban Treaty are about to be launched by President Johnson. If successful they will lead to the opening up of U.S. ports to European Communist ships, and to a truce in the missile race.



They should also be a step toward achieving the peace which men talk about at the Christmas season but do so little that is tangible to obtain.

In preparation for these discussions, President Johnson went to some pains last fall to select the new American Ambassador to Moscow.

First he talked with various experts, who told him that it was important to get an Ambassador who understood the Russian language and who when invited to spend a weekend on the Black Sea with the chairman of the Communist Party would not have to take his own interpreter along.

The President then asked Secretary Rusk who was the best qualified man. Rusk replied without hesitation that he was Llewellyn (Tommy) Thompson, who had served five terms as Ambassador dur-

ing the Khrushchev regime. Rusk added that it might be difficult to persuade Thompson to take the job, since he has passed retirement age and was looking forward to a more relaxed life with a university.

Late one evening, however, the President got a phone call from Secretary of Defense McNamara, who was familiar with the hope to draft Thompson. McNamara said that he had sat beside Mrs. Thompson at a dinner party. He asked if her husband would be willing to go back to Russia. Mrs. Thompson replied that her husband is a patriotic man and joked that if he didn't go back when the President asked him she would leave him.

Next day the President called Thompson to the White House, asked him to serve in Moscow once again. Thompson lived up to his wife's prediction. He accepted.

He is now preparing to leave shortly after Christmas—first to undo some recent blunders in Soviet-American relations; second, to put across an all-important agreement.

U.S. Blunders

He will have to tackle Chairman Brezhnev, Premier Kosygin, and Foreign Minister Gromyko at a time when these top leaders of Russia are miffed at the United States. They are miffed because of inexcusable blunders as follows:

1. The recent space treaty

agreed to between the United States and the Soviet was supposed to be announced simultaneously in Moscow and Washington. Instead, someone at the Texas White House jumped the gun. The Kremlin was sore.

2. Kremlin leaders are irked because we are escalating the war in Vietnam at the very same time we have announced that we want to improve our relations with Eastern Europe. They've been asking how it is possible to improve relations with the Communist countries at the same time we are increasing our bombing raids over the Communist country of North Vietnam.

3. A leak from the Johnson-Gromyko discussions regarding Soviet concern over the Chinese border. The leak was immediately denied by the State Department, but the story was accurate and caused consternation in Moscow. The last thing the Russians want is to have the rest of the Communist world know that they have talked to the United States about the possibility of protecting the Soviet-Chinese border. To have the United States involved, even remotely, in coming to the aid of Russia against China at the time we are fighting Asians in Vietnam tends to drive Asian countries over to the side of China.

U.S. Open Ports

The State Department is

now trying to make up for these blunders.

In the first place, we have assured the Kremlin that for the time being we are not getting into the race for an anti-missile system—at least not until Ambassador Thompson can discuss the whole matter and try to arrive at a treaty.

Second, the United States plans to open all but two or three ports in the United States to European Communist ships. At present, Communist ships can enter only two American ports, and even so it takes them one month to get clearance.

In the future, however, Communist ships will be able to enter all American ports except for those such as Pearl Harbor which are fortified.

President Johnson is fully aware that such a move will bring an outcry from the right wing in the United States, and from maritime unions. Politically it will not be a popular move.

The third important move which the United States is making to improve Soviet-American relations is to help smooth relations with West Germany.

President Johnson has been consistent in recommending to the Germans that they try to ally Russian suspicions and work together.

Drew Pearson will quote some of the pages censored from the Manchester book at 6:40 p.m. today over Radio WTOP.

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