

1/16/66

## Brezhnev's Reply

The negative response of Leonid I. Brezhnev, head of the Soviet Communist Party, to the peace overtures of President Lyndon Johnson is disappointing. It is hardly dismaying. And it certainly is not surprising.

The Communist Party, at Brest-Litovsk in 1917, introduced its own brand of diplomacy and it has not often parted from the principles then embraced. It is a diplomacy that derived its novelty and originality from two considerations. The first was that it involved, no longer, the objectives of diplomacy of the old order. It was no longer a diplomacy aimed at reconciling the views of nations in general agreement within the old framework of Europe. It was a diplomacy aimed at breaking up the old order, not at preserving it. It was a diplomacy, moreover, conducted not so much between the negotiators as it was over their heads—to the opinion of the world.

The Brezhnev response is faithful to these old Bolshevik conventions. Peace is not something to be sought for its own virtues, but for whatever can be got out of it for communism. Diplomacy is not a matter of negotiating with other heads of state or their representatives but a matter of propaganda.

Still, it is not altogether unpromising. Since the outlines of the nuclear age were made clear in the Cuban missile crisis, Soviet diplomacy has had to put a value on mutual survival as the diplomacy of the world did before World War I. And that instinct has not been abandoned entirely, at this time, in spite of the customary abusive words and epithets that have so often disfigured the expression of Soviet views.

The suggestion that the Soviet Union would like to develop mutually beneficial relations with the United States is worth something—even if the situation in Vietnam, in Mr. Brezhnev's view, now precludes this. Sooner or later, perhaps sooner rather than later, the situation in Vietnam will change. And then the door will stand open for "mutually beneficial" relations.

This country, on its part, should do nothing to close it. The friendly proffer of "peaceful engagement" has been somewhat rudely rebuffed. It will not and of course should not be withdrawn. A "peaceful engagement" will be brought about, one day, through the irresistible compulsion of a sheer instinct for survival. It may never very closely resemble the cordial and fraternal relations that passed as "peace" in some earlier periods when great powers operated within the framework of universally accepted institutions, systems and values. But it will suffice if it prevents destruction. Efforts to achieve such a peace must not flag, even if overtures for peace meet with rebuff a thousand times.