

'Wishful Coexistence'

The Kremlin is developing a blind spot where President Ford is concerned, much like the blind spot that caused it to miss the real significance of Watergate.

Because Moscow was committed to Mr. Nixon and saw him as the embodiment of detente, it wanted him to stay in power and refused to believe that he might have to go. In Mr. Ford's case, the same kind of wishful thinking in the Kremlin is causing the Soviet press to play down the sharp edge which shows every now and again in the new administration's pronouncements about the need for big defense buildups and major expenditure on them.

The Soviet press mildly remarked, with some delay, on Ford's "regrettable inaccuracy" in saying that the Soviet Union had naval bases in the Indian Ocean, but all the emphasis in Moscow is on Ford's commitment to Nixon's detente policy, on the continuity represented by Kissinger's control of foreign policy. Pravda observes with delight that Ford sees Kissinger first thing every morning, while such hawks as Defense Secretary James Schlesinger and CIA Director William Colby have to await a summons.

It is not naive that causes Moscow to see only what it wants to see in Ford, but a deliberate tactic. There was a time when Moscow assumed that the "imperialists" always had the worst intentions and, in preparing to counter them, it brought on the very actions it feared. So, for that matter, did the West bring out the worst in Moscow. Now, by ascribing only good intentions to Ford, by granting him the presumption of innocence, the Kremlin is trying to make the wish the father to the thought which begets the action. It is all part of the new pattern of what is wrongly described as peaceful coexistence. Wishful coexistence would be a better term. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you—and they will respond accordingly.

But there is another aspect of foreign policy making in Washington to which Moscow has drawn attention from time to time—the "zigzags" which make the White House veer this way and that, blow hot and cold on de-

"It is not naive that causes Moscow to see only what it wants to see in Ford, but a deliberate tactic."

tente, usually for reasons of domestic politics which have little or nothing to do with foreign policy. The Moscow theory has it that the zigzags, often due to electoral considerations, will make a President take a harsher stance toward the Soviet Union than he might otherwise wish.

Those who take the zigzag view of presidential motivation have warned in the past that the Kremlin cannot just take a new wave of harshness lying down, that it must respond accordingly, and that the mutual buildup of suspicion and hostility could play havoc with detente. The Soviet practitioners of wishful coexistence have now banished any such forebodings from the pages of Pravda. But this does not mean that Moscow's zigzag school of thought has been banished to Siberia—only that its spokesmen, temporarily out of favor, have been told to keep quiet.

If Moscow's surface view of the Ford presidency could be stripped away, it would probably disclose a tangle of contradictions and fears about the future far more intense than the simple-minded confidence it presents in public. An attempt to reconstruct what is underneath, based on past patterns of Kremlin thought and of Kremlinological evidence, would reveal the uncertainty about Ford which is glossed over by the press.

The Kremlin presumably knows as well as most of us how unpredictable the vagaries of the American electoral process are. But it has to draw up foreign policy plans for the future, and it has to make certain assumptions about it. One scenario obviously favored by at least some people in Moscow is a 1976 election fight between what the Soviet press represents as the forces of

darkness and evil, led by Sen. Henry Jackson (D-Wash.), and what must inevitably appear against this somber background as the forces of light, led by President Ford.

This in itself would provide Moscow with very good reasons to give Mr. Ford the benefit of any doubts it might have, as the Soviet press is now doing. But as Watergate must have taught Moscow, the straight projection of U.S. trends into the future is a thankless task, and some of its experts must now be busy drawing up alternative scenarios.

Moscow would obviously want to help Ford against Jackson, and this is something that Kissinger could use to good advantage in the negotiations that lie ahead. But some Soviet leaders feel that Brezhnev has already made too many concessions to Nixon in the past three summits, and that it is high time the White House started paying back. The coming negotiations could be tougher than any in the past.

9/3/74 © 1974, Victor Zorza

Herblock is on vacation.

The Washington Post

EUGENE MEYER, 1875-1959
PHILIP L. GRAHAM, 1915-1963

KATHARINE GRAHAM
Publisher

JOHN S. PRESCOTT JR. BENJAMIN C. BRADLEE
President Executive Editor
Philip L. Geyelin, Editorial Page Editor; Howard
Simons, Managing Editor; Mark Meagher, Vice
President-Business Affairs; Kenneth Johnson, Vice
President-Operations; Gerald W. Siegel, Vice Pres-
ident; Jack F. Patterson, Vice President-Circula-
tion; Thomas R. McCartin, Vice President-Sales.

Published by The Washington Post Company;
1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071

KATHARINE GRAHAM
Chairman of the Board

LARRY H. ISRAEL
President