

Keeping Nixon for Detente's

By Fred Warner Neal

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IT IS NEVER very comfortable to be in a minority, but with the cries to oust President Nixon reaching a crescendo, it is important, I believe, to say that such a step would be a serious mistake.

This out of no love for Mr. Nixon, whom I have voted against for many years. I consider his administration inept, venal, and in many ways disastrous. But Mr. Nixon has also presided over what I consider the most significant change in foreign policy since the end of World War II, the ending of our Cold War policy.

It has been said that the Cold War might have ended anyway as the result of what the Soviet Communists call "objective forces"—the burden of the arms race, difficulties of military ventures, unreliability of allies, environmental problems and other factors. And yet the same thing could have been said on at least three other occasions during the past 15 years, and the Cold War, instead of ending, waxed hotter. This was by no means all the fault of the Russians. The United States was so committed to continuation of the Cold War, both institutionally and psychologically, that any opposition to it was always pitiful and ineffective.

Certainly Richard Nixon, the coldest of Cold Warriors, is the last man on earth one might have thought would move to liquidate the Cold War. On the other hand, given the American milieu, where to be accused of softness toward communism and the Soviet Union once meant political death, only a man of Richard Nixon's impeccable anti-Communist image could have taken a decisive turn away from it.

If the new foreign policy began with the Nixon visit to China, the real turning point came with the agreements signed in Moscow, especially the declaration of principles indicating basic changes in foreign policy concepts on both sides. For the United States, the declaration was for the first time a commitment to the idea of coexistence enunciated by Khrushchev in 1956, and it signaled an end to our rigid assumption of the danger of Soviet military aggression. For the Soviet Union, it was for the first time a pledge that support for nationalist liberation movements and socialist regimes does not involve military intervention in American core interests or preclude mutual abstention in neutralized areas. For both, it was a

pledge to end the Cold War and engage in peaceful cooperation as well as competition.

The Mideast Crisis

WHETHER THE declaration of principles will actually result in a meaningful American-Soviet detente is still uncertain, but it was the essential first step. Already it has led to joint acceptance of accords on Berlin and Germany, a conference on European Security, discussions on mutual military reductions, preparations for

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new talks on nuclear arms control and intensive plans for bilateral trade.

The possibilities—as well as the limitations—of the new American-Soviet relationship are illustrated by the Middle East crisis. Here was a definite conflict of interest, with dangerous military overtones. Both sides acted strongly on behalf of their respective client states, which exacerbated the crisis. But both sides also were careful to avoid action which might result in military confrontation, and both sides clearly pressured their client states to come to terms. Both sides did cooperate, inside and outside the U.N.—however begrudgingly at times—to end the fighting. Soviet acceptance of U.N. peacekeeping was especially significant. It is by no means certain but it is entirely possible that some kind of meaningful peace can now be established in the Middle East for the first time. On balance, the Middle East crisis strengthens the possibilities of real detente more than it weakens them.

On the other hand, the Nixon policy of detente is full of contradictions. The most obvious is the administration's insistence on a bigger military budget than ever. This would seem to imply that Mr. Nixon sees Soviet cooperation resulting primarily from American military might and feels we must bargain from positions of strength—concepts which could always justify more armaments, no matter what. Our MIRV system—built to counter a Soviet ABM system which never materialized—already gives us "bargaining chips." To insist that by having still more we can

force the U.S.S.R. to accept permanent nuclear inferiority would be destructive of both detente and coexistence as well as futile.

The explanation for this apparent contradiction may be found in domestic factors. For a detente policy to be accepted by the public, it must have the support of three crucial elements: the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the military-industrial complex generally, and the conservative right wing. Until now, despite their obvious reservations, these groups have either been silent about the new Nixon foreign policy or have endorsed it. It may be that asking for the vastly expanded arms program is the price Mr. Nixon has to pay, or thinks he has to pay, for their continued acquiescence.

"Policy Paralysis"

IN SPITE OF the contradictions, it seems to be increasingly clear that Mr. Nixon is truly committed to achieving detente with the Soviet Union. For one thing, having claimed it as the biggest accomplishment of his administration, he is stuck with it. For another thing, the real architect of the new policy, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, has come to occupy an extraordinarily powerful if not invulnerable position. Although he lacks a political constituency of his own, Kissinger now appears in the public mind as the one solid rock of incorruptibility and expertise among a group of second-raters of dubious honesty.

While many of his opponents view Mr. Nixon as a man without principle, willing to take any position that pays off, Kissinger sees him as a pragmatist, able to change his mind as his perception of the realities change. This is the image the President himself seeks to project. Of his foreign policy shift, he wrote in U. S. News and World Report on June 26, 1972, that on taking office he decided "one of the most dangerous elements in the world" was the "policy paralysis" in U.S. relations with the Soviet Union and China. He saw that rigid hostility to the Communist powers was working against our interest, he wrote, and he discovered that the U.S.S.R. and China had "accepted the idea that their best interests would be better served by negotiation than by confrontation." He added: "We held the same view concerning the best way of serving American interest."

Why Mr. Nixon moved toward detente is essentially unimportant compared with the fact that he did so. The explanation of the New Left, for example, is that the whole development is simply a move of the two great imperialist nations to divide up the world in their own interests. Like most New Left positions, this is far too simplistic to be taken seriously. But even if it were true, one might ask, "So what?"

Sake

The important thing is to get the Cold War ended — first and foremost, of course, to reduce the dangers of thermonuclear war.

But, additionally, it is the Cold War which has produced the extreme distortions of both our foreign and domestic policies generally. These did not begin with Watergate. From the Truman administration on, the shibboleth of "national security" has covered one deprecation after another while our economy, our foreign trade and our reputation—to say nothing of many of our people—suffered. Only achievement of a firm detente with the Soviet Union can put an end to the Cold War and to the situation which permitted and encouraged all this.

The Jackson Amendment

THE REAL DANGER to detente, and thus to ending the Cold War foreign policy, does not come from the New Left, however. It comes from a combination of other forces, including hard-line Cold Warriors like Sen. Henry Jackson, Zionists and well-meaning liberals. Their efforts currently are directed at maintaining trade discriminations against the U.S.S.R. unless it eliminates emigration restrictions and grants more individual freedom. It looks as though they will succeed, at least temporarily. The movement toward detente, on both sides, may survive such rebuffs for the time being, but ultimately it cannot. As Secretary Kissinger has put it: "Opportunities cannot be hoarded; once past, they are usually irretrievable."

Commenting on the concern of Sen. Jackson and his strange assortment of allies for civil liberties in the Soviet Union, Sen. Fulbright said recently: "If we wish to apply pressure for democracy and human rights, would it not make more sense to start with Chile, or Brazil, or Greece, all of whom are vulnerable to American pressures and none of whom are, like the U.S.S.R., essential partners for maintenance of world peace?"

The answer is, of course, that democracy and human rights are not the primary consideration for most of the supporters of the Jackson amendment. Their primary concern is to block detente with the Soviet Union. In this Sen. Jackson is at least consistent. He has always been an ardent Cold Warrior. As for the Zionists, they fear detente will mean less American support for Israel.

One may—and should—condemn many policies of the Soviet Union and hope they will change. But as far as these concern Soviet internal affairs, it is not our business to try to force change. More practically, we can't do it.

If we are genuinely interested in the rights of Soviet citizens, what we can



By Maxwell Silverstein

Brezhnev contemplating the bust of Nixon

do is to contribute to world conditions which may make it possible—and more likely—that the Soviet Union will develop domestic policies to which we can be more amenable. We can do this only by continuing the policy of detente and making sure the Cold War is over once and for all. This means opposition to the Jackson amendment psychology. It also means, I think, support for the continuation of President Nixon in office for the remainder of his term.

Three More Years

TO MANY, this poses a grave dilemma. President Nixon has used, or permitted his subordinates to use, devious and sometimes illegal means in ways which jeopardized the delicate democratic constitutional fabric on which our liberties rest. Were it not for the Nixon policy of detente, one could make a strong argument for getting rid of him forthwith. But the question that must be asked is whether achievement of detente is worth keeping Mr. Nixon in office. I believe that, on balance, it is.

First, we are now probably safe from any further funny business from the White House. These people almost certainly will be disinclined to try again what they have gotten so badly burned at, and the country is now on guard in a way it was not before.

But whereas Mr. Nixon is perforce committed to detente, it is questionable whether the detente policy could survive were he to be replaced. Vice President Ford, for example, doesn't have Mr. Nixon's background, his finesse, his national constituency or

his personal investment in the detente policy. He is much more open to being swayed by the powerful Cold War forces still at work in the country. The words of Sen. Jackson and his fellow opponents of detente are what our people have been hearing for 25 years, whereas the words of Kissinger, Fulbright and others in support of detente are not. There is a ready-made public against detente, which explains the popularity of the Jackson amendment; there is almost no conscious, organized public for it.

It is ironic, indeed, that one has to turn to President Nixon, the former Cold Warrior par excellence, as a guarantee against a return to Cold War policies, but that seems to be the situation.

If detente can be made to work and to persist for the next three years, it is unlikely to be reversed. In such a case, we can at least concentrate our energies wholeheartedly on the problems which face us at home, and the chances for a meaningful peace—not a perfect peace but a workable one—will be at hand. The U.N. can function again, and real disarmament will be in sight.

None of these goals are certain even if we have detente. But without it they have no chance at all. They are goals for which, at least as of now, I am willing to put up with President Nixon for three more years, because I am convinced that in the existing situation it is he—with Kissinger—who is most likely to foster conditions for their achievement.