

An Irony of Detente

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YALTA, U.S.S.R., June 30— A coincidence of history has brought President Nixon to the one spot in the world, paradoxically, which he helped to inscribe in Republican political consciousness as the arch symbol of misguided American statecraft.

The President had a choice. Soviet sources insist, as to where he and Soviet Communist Party General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev would enjoy the climate and beauty of a weekend at a Black Sea resort to continue their summit talks.

The sources said there were alternatives to Yalta, the site of the 1945 Big Three conference which greatly influenced the post-war division of Europe and has been sharply criticized for years by Republicans, especially Richard Nixon.

The summit, according to the sources, could have been at Sochi on the east coast of the Black Sea, or Pitsunda, east of Sochi, where the late French President Georges Pompidou was the guest of Brezhnev last March.

The last thing American officials want to do now is to discuss the matter in a way that will put the name Yalta into public print. They indicate, however, that the site options left little real practical choice because spacious accommodations were needed for the several hundred White House staff and backup personnel and 170 visiting newsmen. Most of all, Brezhnev clearly preferred the Yalta re-

He was anxious to show off his companion-site to the Nixon compound at San Clemente, Calif.



Associate Press

Soviet Communist Party leader Leonid Brezhnev and Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko walk to Brezhnev's Black Sea dacha after their flight from Moscow.

In deference to Nixon administration sensitivities, the proud Russian name of Yalta apparently even has been obliterated temporarily from the Russian, if not the American, press. Soviet newsmen have been instructed not to use the word Yalta in their stories, and one Russian reporter was fired just before the summit conference began, according to his colleagues, for violating the ban.

A plan to have the mayor of Yalta give a press briefing to

the visiting American press also was canceled, to conform with the Nixon administration's effort to have history record the summit at Oreanda, not Yalta. But the suppressed official guidebook immediately leaked the secret, Oreanda indeed is in "Greater Yalta," even though Soviet press accounts carry an Oreanda dateline or the ambiguous point of origin, "from the Crimean press center."

The White House's geographic dilemma undoubtedly

Takes Nixon to Yalta

is being compounded, not mitigated, by the futility of its defensive public relations. A sympathetic Soviet newsman observed wryly: "It probably would not matter to American critics of detente where the leaders were this weekend—they would label it 'Yalta,' in any case. We see the problem."

President Nixon's pursuit of detente is ill-served by reawakening memories of the first Yalta conference, subordinates ruefully agree, even though there is no comparison with the circumstances surrounding the meetings at Yalta 29 years apart.

In the 1952 presidential campaign, Mr. Nixon as the Republican candidate for vice president on the Eisenhower ticket, was one of the most vociferous denouncers of the February 1945, Yalta conference where Soviet Marshal Joseph Stalin, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill made critical decisions on the shape of the post-World War II world.

"Yalta," at the onset of the Cold War became a Republican synonym for Soviet duplicity—even though many historians dispute that. Yalta was equated with the Communist control of Poland, the "loss of China," and many other ills.

In the tumultuous events that followed Yalta with often incomprehensible swiftness at the time, nuclear weapons were used for the first time at Hiroshima and Nagasaki to end the war with Japan more quickly than any diplomat anticipated.

The territorial concessions that the United States made to Stalin at Yalta to gain Soviet entry into an expected

prolonged war against Japan, and other concessions to Soviet power, were assailed by some, in retrospect as a very lopsided bargain. Others argued that it was impossible to know that at the time.

Yalta, in retrospect, also supplied an additional, special, personal target for Richard Nixon for years afterward: the U.S. delegation at Yalta included a man named Alger Hiss.

He was to become the central subject of the Nixon pursuit of communism in government and his imprisonment for perjury on a charge unrelated to the Yalta conference was to catapult the Nixon name into national prominence. The term "Yalta" now had another politically supercharged link in American life, regardless of Hiss' minor role at Yalta.

Speaking in New York on Oct. 6, 1952, candidate Nixon said the hope for the "eventual freedom" of Communist-controlled Poland "can be rekindled by our repudiation of Yalta commitments that abet the Communist slavery of nations."

The "Yalta" outcry, a major issue in the Republican 1952 campaign, did not dim with the landslide victory of the Eisenhower-Nixon ticket.

It escalated with publication of secret portions of the Yalta accords by the Eisenhower administration.

Vice President Nixon, speaking in Chicago on March 17, 1955, said the errors committed by the United States at Yalta were "not of the heart but of the head." Yalta, he said, was "no deliberate attempt to sell out" by "loss" of China and "of course it naturally followed that we had a war in Korea and one in Indochina." The reason, Mr. Nixon said, was that in 1945 the Western world "did not know enough about the true nature of communism."

Once more at Yalta there is another kind of U.S.-Soviet test in a completely different atmosphere. Now it is the pace of detente that is under negotiation, and history now has cast Mr. Nixon as the American champion of the search for accelerated cooperation with the Soviet Union.