

By ANTHONY LEWIS

LONDON, Dec 26—Under the heading "Richard Nixon's third year," two of the President's lieutenants have issued a long list of claimed achievements in 1971. According to them it was a year of bold, daring, substantial, large, sweeping and historic acts of American leadership.

On the foreign side, the list includes a start on reform of the international monetary system, the reduction in American troops and casualties in Vietnam, the scheduled Presidential trip to China and efforts to find a political solution to the India-Pakistan crisis.

Hyperbole is a wearying trademark of this Administration: Everything is the greatest in history. But in fact the President undoubtedly deserves credit for boldness in foreign affairs on any fair reading of 1971. When J. K. Galbraith praises him, tongue not visibly in cheek, something has to have changed—boldly.

The doubts about American foreign policy today are of a different kind. They go not to its daring but to its sureness, its judgment.

Many of America's friends abroad would say that the outstanding characteristic of her policy in 1971 was the uneasiness it created. Of course some upset is the necessary price of any bold new policy. The question is whether change has needlessly shaken confidence in the course of shaking some too comfortable assumptions.

The monetary crisis exemplified the problem. The Nixon Administration's sudden *Démarche* of Aug. 15 did have shock value. The closing of the door on dollar convertibility and imposition of the surcharge demonstrated that the era of a monetary system based on an all-powerful dollar was finished, and that the United States would act unilaterally in its own interest when necessary.

But after that it took too long for American negotiators to be reasonable. Instead we had John Connally's riverboat gambler act, with a good deal of braggadocio and a change of bargaining demands once a week. It was, as seen here, a high-risk policy: risking a real trade war and surging protectionism for goals that were never clear.

The President himself must finally have decided that there was too much risk in continuing multilateral negotiation, strained feelings and uncertainty. Back in August he evidently thought the foreign side of his new economic policy was much less important to him politically than the domestic wage-price freeze and tax cuts. He learned how vital international monetary confidence can be, and how fragile.

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It is in those terms that the American tactics beginning Aug. 15 will eventually be judged. Have they advanced the prospects for a new monetary order by dramatizing the need, or set them back by recklessly endangering mutual confidence? The answer is not yet clear.

The other major Nixon foreign policy initiatives in 1971 present very different issues, but again one senses here and there a conflict between boldness of conception and insensitivity of tactics.

The initiative toward China, for instance, did some long overdue clearing of cobwebs that had clouded American perception of the world, but it was done in a way that needlessly shook Japan's confidence. And the hopes for the Peking visit must have been one factor that so grievously distorted the Administration's judgment on India and Pakistan that, having spent all those lives for the declared aim of self-determination in tiny South Vietnam, it intervened against self-determination and on the side of brutal repression in a much more populous and significant part of Asia.

With these examples in mind, one British commentator has made a harsh judgment on recent American policy. Joe Rogaly of the Financial Times, London, is an admirer of the United States. In looking at the Nixon record he praised the timing of the withdrawal from Vietnam as "very nearly masterly." But otherwise, he wrote:

"President Nixon's performances in international politicking have . . . for the most part constituted evidence of the rapid decline of the nerve, judgment and self-confidence of his Administration."

Rogaly warned friends of the United States against taking any sneaking pleasure in its failures. "If the United States," he wrote, "has shaken the unity of the alliance and lost confidence in its own productive abilities; if on top of this it has begun to mismanage its relationships with countries as important as Japan while losing diplomatic tricks as important as the recent one in India, then all those who rely upon the missiles carried in U.S. submarines for their protection should feel sorrow rather than joy."

That is as worried a view as can be heard in London; most officials would remain surer of American nerve and judgment. But there is worry, and one hopes that Mr. Nixon takes it into account along with the advertisements for himself.