

When Will We Hear From Moscow?

By JAMES RESTON

WASHINGTON, April 27—The President has now defined his Vietnam policy more precisely than ever before. His policy is not only to get the American troops and prisoners out of there, but to defeat the Communist invasion, and "to prevent the imposition of a Communist regime on the people of South Vietnam against their will. . . ."

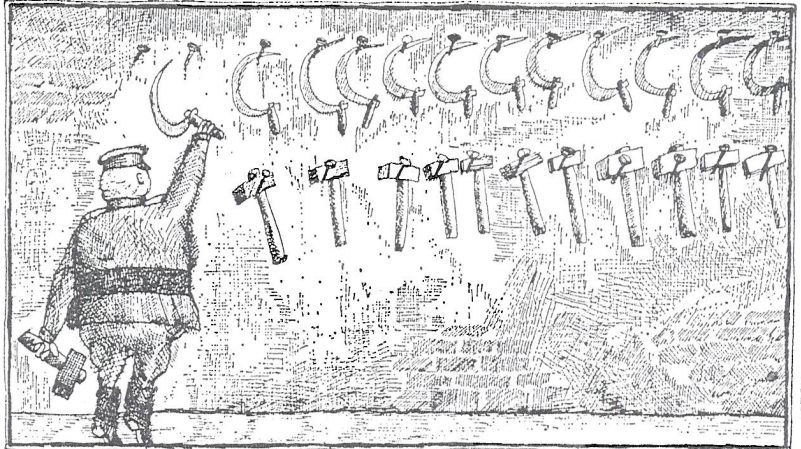
In short, Mr. Nixon will not leave the outcome to a test of arms between the North Vietnamese, backed by Moscow and Peking, and the South Vietnamese, backed by far more arms from the United States.

"We will not be defeated," Mr. Nixon said, "and we will never surrender our friends to Communist aggression." Well, "never" is a long time, especially in an election year, but Mr. Nixon sees the defeat of the enemy invasion and Communist aggression not only as a military issue between the two Vietnams but as a moral issue for America which involves the honor of this nation and maybe the peace of the world, and nobody can say this is not a policy.

In fact, Mr. Nixon has now said, in effect: This is where I stand, and if you want to change the policy, you will have to change the President. This is fair enough, and not a bad offer, but November is a long way off at the present rate of killing, and meanwhile somebody has to find a way out of this trap and try to change the question.

Presumably this is one important reason why Henry Kissinger was sent to Moscow. He was trying to find out whether Mr. Nixon couldn't get a little help from the Soviet Union, which is supplying the modern arms to Hanoi, to bring this war in Vietnam to an end, so that the major powers can get down to the really important world questions of controlling arms, avoiding war in the Middle East, establishing a security system in Europe, reorganizing the trade and monetary systems of the world, and easing the misery of the majority of the human race in the poor nations.

This is a fair question. When are we going to hear from the leaders of the Soviet Union on these larger elemental world questions? They have



Eugene Mihaesco

struggled out of unspeakable miseries and have suffered more than any other people on earth, and have now reached the pinnacle of world power, all in the lifetime of Brezhnev, Kosygin and Gromyko. They have not only survived but triumphed, yet they still seem to be trapped in the psychology of the cold war even more than Mr. Nixon.

Even with the help of Dobrynin, their Ambassador in Washington, the Soviet leaders don't seem to know what has happened in Washington. There was a time when President Nixon, on the urging of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, thought about getting out of the Vietnam war with American bases at Camranh Bay and Danang, which would maintain Western power in the Pacific after the Japanese had regained Okinawa, the British had pulled out of Singapore, and the Chinese had taken over Taiwan and come into their treaty rights at Hong Kong at the end of the century. But this is not the situation now.

Even those of us who have opposed the President's Vietnam policy and his bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong and his commitment to defeat the Saigon regime against aggression, no matter what happens, ought to be fair about his concessions and his limited goals.

Mr. Nixon is asking now to get out without being humiliated. He is asking Brezhnev and Moscow not to push him too far. He is even saying that he was wrong in the past and would like to go on now to the really important questions of world politics, and he is turning to Moscow and arguing that

the "great powers" have a common interest in ending the tragic distraction of Vietnam.

Maybe Moscow cannot control Hanoi, but it has made its point to Nixon that it will not allow the defeat of the North Vietnamese, and now Mr. Nixon has accepted this and is asking them not to insist on settling the struggle by force of arms.

The President is being pressed now by his opponents for the Presidency to make more concessions, and to put the unification of his country ahead of his support of Saigon, and with good reason. But Moscow, as one of the two great power centers of the world, also has its responsibilities and, so far, it has been even less flexible than the President.

The immediate problem is fairly clear. It is to end the killing and the diversion of Vietnam and get on to the really important questions of controlling military arms, population and poverty. What Mr. Nixon has done in his last speech is merely to state the old questions, and dramatize the old confrontation. But he is trying, after his fashion, to get on to the larger questions, and he has asked the Soviet leaders: When are you going to help? When are Washington and Moscow going to get down to the questions that unite the world instead of the secondary questions, like Vietnam, that divide the great powers? The Nixon visit to Moscow next month may very well give us an answer to these fundamental questions.