

Why Nixon Won His Moscow Gamble

I. F. Stone

Washington

To speak plainly, the chief running dogs of US imperialism now seem to be Brezhnev and Chou En-lai. This is how it must look from Hanoi. Ignominious as Hitler's appeasers were in the Thirties, he was never dined as an honored guest in Paris, London, or Washington while he bombed Guernica and destroyed the Spanish Republic.

Nixon has won his gamble. He has mined North Vietnam's harbors and stepped up the bombing of Hanoi, Haiphong, and the supply roads leading into China, with no more than toothless protest from either of Hanoi's great allies. The Soviet Union did not call off the summit, or even postpone it, nor did Peking call a halt to its rapprochement with Washington.

Quietly but unmistakably Nixon has made the Soviet Union look like "a pitiful helpless giant" on the eve of the Moscow summit, as he did China on the eve of the one in Peking. On the eve of the Peking meeting, the US Air Force, from December 26 to 30, made 1,000 massive strikes against North Vietnam, by far the heaviest since the bombing halt of November, 1968, on the excuse that this was necessary to stop a huge build-up of supplies for an invasion of Cambodia and South Vietnam.¹ The Soviet Foreign Ministry on December 28 protested these bombings and jeered at the Chinese for keeping "silent, evidently not wishing in any way to darken President Nixon's forthcoming visit to Peking." The Chinese Foreign Ministry on December 29 then expressed "utmost indignation." Nixon reached Peking on February 22 with guns blazing; there were sixty-seven "protective reaction" raids on the North in January and February of this year as compared with 108 in all of 1971 (the December raids were "specials" not counted in the "protective reaction" category). But they did not cool Nixon's welcome from Mao.

Nixon gambled that the Soviet Union, too, would swallow almost any

¹Testimony by Secretary Laird in Part 3 of the House Appropriations Committee hearings released on May 20 makes one wonder to what degree the raids were psychological warfare, designed to show North Vietnam the weakness of its ally to the north. At a hearing behind the closed doors of the committee on February 23, Laird did not take very seriously the propaganda campaign he himself had been waging to prove that the raids were urgently necessary to stop an invasion. Representative Sikes (D., Florida) echoed this campaign when he told Laird, "There is a threat of Communist attacks, possibly on a very large scale, in an effort to embarrass the President on his trip [to China]" and asked what the US would do, "Send troops back, or will we let the country go down the drain?"

Laird replied (pp. 377-8) that the other side had been forced to switch from main-force to low-level guerrilla activity because of the "buildup of the South Vietnamese forces" and could not "conduct a large-scale military operation for a substantial period of time" because "they do not have the logistic support" or the "personnel." This prediction five weeks before the current offensive began must rank as one of the top intelligence boo-boos of the war. The air raids did not stop the offensive but they certainly served the purpose of humiliating the Chinese.

bitter pill rather than give up a summit. Nixon went to Moscow without giving the Kremlin the slightest shred of a face-saver. The story that there had been a secret understanding in advance of the mining was laid to rest by Kissinger in Salzburg. The mines could have been timed to deactivate on Nixon's arrival in Moscow, and a story leaked to the Pentagon reporter of the *New York Times* a few days earlier said that they had been; this also turned out to be untrue. The bombing could have been suspended during Nixon's talks in Moscow.

Nixon must have been encouraged to go on bombing by the way the

leave for Moscow, the North Vietnamese broadcast the news that the US had bombed another Soviet freighter on May 10, killing one Soviet seaman and wounding two others.² The Chinese Foreign Ministry on May 9 publicly protested that US planes had bombed and strafed two Chinese freighters in a North Vietnamese harbor, injuring crew members and port workers. Moscow's failure to file a public protest over either of the two attacks on its own ships and its failure to mention them in its controlled press must have delighted the hard-liners in Washington.

Nixon won his gamble because of two serious weaknesses on the other



Russians tried to hush up the news of US attacks on their freighters. The first disclosure that a Soviet freighter was sunk in the April 15 air raids on Haiphong came not from Moscow but from Washington. Buried in a dispatch in the *New York Times*, May 3, from William Beecher, its Pentagon correspondent, often a conduit for leaks from the military, was this:

Diplomatic and government sources revealed that a Soviet freighter had been sunk during the air raids on Haiphong April 15, but that Moscow had not publicized the event. . . . Neither Hanoi nor Moscow has publicly protested or even mentioned a sinking. . . .

The leak was one way of rubbing it in and seems to have forced Moscow's faltering hand. On May 18, two weeks later, the State Department refused to confirm or deny a report by Richard Reston in that day's *Los Angeles Times* that the USSR had protested the attack in a "pretty stiff" note but with no threat of countermeasures.

Apparently Hanoi, too, had been placed under wraps by the Soviets. But on May 21, as Nixon was about to

side, one political, the other economic. The political weakness is that, in a showdown, the two big Communist powers are more concerned with their mutual hatred than with the fate of an ally. The ultimate root of this weakness lies in the rude and crude Russian way of treating satellites; China is too big for Czech-style treatment. Even now when joint Sino-Soviet action may be a necessity for Hanoi's survival, *Pravda*, just before Nixon's arrival, coupled a moderate welcome to the President with a sharp attack on Peking's leaders as "hostile to socialism."³ *Jenmin Jih Pao* the same day lumped Moscow with Washington as the "arch-criminals" of our time.⁴

²UPI from Tokyo in the *Washington Post*, May 21. *Facts on File*, which helped me on this, also has the record of a North Vietnamese newspaper disclosure on May 18 which named the ship, the *Grisha Akopian*, and the port, Campha, and said one boatman was killed and the captain seriously injured.

³AP in the *Baltimore Sun*, May 22.

⁴Toronto *Globe and Mail* dispatch from Peking to the *New York Times*, May 22.

Aviation Week (May 15) in an enthusiastic survey of Nixon's mining and "round-the-clock" bombing said the White House and the Pentagon hoped this might have "a psychological impact on the Hanoi leadership." The North Vietnamese have proven extraordinarily cool under renewed and intensified bombing, as is testified by Anthony Lewis's dispatches to the *New York Times* and Claude Julien's to *Le Monde* from the besieged capital. The real blow must be to see the friendly reception accorded Nixon in Moscow as earlier in Peking.⁵ A rare glimpse of the other side's true feelings was provided in a brief AP dispatch from Paris which ran in few US newspapers in spite of its agonizing significance.⁶ It said:

Paris (AP)—The Rev. Daniel Berrigan conferred with North Vietnamese and Viet Cong officials for six hours yesterday and described them as "intensely worried" about President Nixon's coming visit to Moscow. Father Berrigan, who is on parole from a prison term for burning US military draft records, held a news conference after talks with Mrs. Nguyen Thi Binh, Viet Cong Foreign Minister, and Nguyen Minh Vy, deputy chairman of Hanoi's delegation. . . .

From diplomats so discreet and seasoned, this can only be read as a signal to Hanoi's supporters abroad that Washington is not the only capital to which protests should be addressed.

True, without Soviet and Chinese supplies, the North Vietnamese and the NLF would soon be forced back to low-level protracted warfare, as they may be in any case if the bombing and blockade continue long enough. But without the enormous resolution and courage of the Vietnamese, what would Moscow and Peking have to offer Nixon, what would they have to sell? Peking bought its admission to the United Nations, bought its way out of containment, with the blood of the Vietnamese people. The same commodity—in such plentiful supply—has brought Nixon to Moscow. All those bright hopes of expanded US trade and credits which Nixon emissaries have been dangling before the Kremlin since Secretary of Commerce Stans went there last year rest on Nixon's desire to buy some Soviet "restraint" on Hanoi. If it were not for Hanoi, Moscow too would have little to sell.

The mining of North Vietnam's ports and the resumed strategic bombing of the North did not confront Moscow with a choice between a nuclear crunch or surrender. Had Moscow canceled the summit, or postponed it, the shock effect in Europe and elsewhere, including the United States, would have put Nixon under pressure. After all, the response to his May 8 mine-and-bombing speech was almost universally unfavorable, even in Japan, England, and West Germany. To call off the summit would have hurt his election chances and made it impossible for him to pose as a messenger of peace in Moscow even while raising the stakes of Vietnam

⁵"Hanoi's news media," Reuters reported from Hong Kong to the *Washington Post*, May 21, "have so far not reported Mr. Nixon's visit to Moscow." The Chinese press, too, has not mentioned Nixon's trip to Moscow.

⁶*Washington Star*, May 18.

from a peripheral to a global conflict. He had converted a test of Vietnamization into a test of Americanization. More foolhardy than the military escalation⁷ was the political and emotional escalation. Suddenly it became a test abroad of America's will and the *Pax Americana*; and at home, even more alarmingly, a test of patriotism. Nixon preaches "restraint" to Moscow but shows no readiness to practice it.

Apparently one of the counter-moves Washington expected was a mine-sweeping operation. The Soviets with their huge coastline and defensive psychology have the world's biggest fleet of minesweepers; *Jane's Fighting Ships, 1971-72* credits the USSR with 320 minesweepers, as against 152 for the US. The new peace-oriented Center for Defense Information here in Wash-

⁷This is substantial. The latest weekly figures from Saigon as this is written (UPI from Saigon in the *New York Times*, May 23) show that withdrawals were down to a net of only 200 for the week ended the previous Thursday, May 18, though 2,600 a week net must be withdrawn to meet Nixon's goal of 49,000 by June 30. The Pentagon's latest figures show that since the week ended March 30 when the enemy offensive began, the number of US troops "in country" has fallen by 30,700 while the number offshore in the Seventh Fleet (now 41,000) and on Thai air bases (now 45,000) are up 39,000. We now have more than 150,000 troops engaged in the Far East.

ington, headed by Rear Admiral Gene R. La Rocque (ret.), says the Soviets have thirty-eight to forty ocean-going minesweepers in their Pacific fleet within six to eight days sail of North Vietnam; the Chinese have ten minesweepers in the South China Sea; North Vietnam has four.

Vice Admiral Mack, the retiring commander of the Seventh Fleet, told newsmen (UPI from Oklahoma City in the *Washington Star*, May 23) that sweeping the mines "would take great skill and expertise and proper equipment." He said the North Vietnamese do not have that capacity but the Soviet Navy does.⁸ The admiral also said the Soviet Navy had a "sizable" force of warships "several hundred miles away" from North Vietnam in the South China Sea, but "they haven't tried to embarrass us in any way." Never has Russian behavior been so "correct."

What we are seeing in Moscow could turn out to be one of the smoothest sellouts in diplomatic history. Without "linkage," without any obvious package deal, without discussion "directed against any other country"—as the Soviet spokesman Zamyatin said—Moscow has given Nixon the green light to escalate the air war and carry

⁸A *Toronto Globe and Mail* dispatch from Peking in the *Washington Post*, May 24, said China had "apparently balked" at allowing Soviet freighters to use its ports and suggested instead that the Soviets clear the minefields.

out the blockade as he pleases. The Russians are even "insisting privately that Vietnam is an 'American problem.'" ⁹

A series of prepared agreements are emerging, including apparently one on the SALT talks, but the point to watch is the trade negotiations. This is the main "business" and this is where the sale of Vietnam may take place.

The facts are that fifty years after the revolution the Soviet economy, though giant, is extraordinarily backward and wasteful, especially in the misuse of manpower on the farms and in the factories. The same bureaucratic heavy-handedness and stuffy conservatism that frustrate the arts and the intellectuals also hobble the economic managers. "The newer and more revolutionary an aspect [like computers] of an economy is," Sakharov protested in his manifesto *Progress, Co-Existence and Intellectual Freedom*, "the greater is the gap between the United States and ourselves." The Soviet Union needs technological modernization desperately but it has little to trade for it: its shoddy consumer goods and outdated machine tools, with some exceptions, cannot be sold in Western markets for hard currency; they sell only in the captive markets of the Soviet bloc and in Third World countries. Even Soviet consumers prefer to save rather than buy them; this is reflected (according to a survey from ⁹George Sherman from Moscow in the *Washington Star*, May 23.

Moscow in *Forbes* for May) in a pile-up of 53 billion rubles in Soviet savings banks, an amount equal to almost half the Soviet Union's wage bill. The USSR's main export hope, like any other underdeveloped country's, lies in the sale of basic raw materials. Its biggest potential market in the energy-starved West lies (like Algeria's) in natural gas.¹⁰

But it would take several billions in credit to tap the Siberian sources, to liquefy the gas and transport it to US markets. The Soviet Union could use billions in credits for advanced technology and to develop and market Siberian raw materials. Credits on this scale would amount to a virtual Marshall Plan for the Soviet Union. "The magnitude of credits the Russians want," an unnamed US official told the *Wall Street Journal's* Robert Keatley (May 18) in a discussion on the trade talks, "is mind-boggling." Credits on any substantial scale would depend on a transformed political atmosphere, a complex series of financial, congressional, and administrative actions in the United States, and therefore on very good Soviet behavior indeed, while Nixon tries to destroy North Vietnam from the air. □

¹⁰See *The Fuel and Energy Export Potential of the USSR Through 1980*, the most comprehensive study available, based wholly on Soviet sources, by three experts in the Division of Fossil Fuels, US Bureau of Mines, reprinted in *Combustion*, Jan., 1972.

The Big Three

The Classical Style:

Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven

by Charles Rosen.

Viking, 467 pp., \$12.50

Alan Tyson

Charles Rosen is a brave man. In this long, exuberant, and well-illustrated book he has undertaken a formidable task: first to describe and then to explain and trace the development and maturation of what has so far proved the richest stylistic achievement in Western music. He has done it in such a way and on such a scale as to make it hard for anyone who cares about the music characterized here to remain without illumination. At times, indeed, his effect on readers is likely to be positively penitential, as they discover to their shame how inattentively they have been listening to the works they thought they knew best.

There are at least two reasons for the accessibility of Rosen's message. The first is obvious: his book is written with great clarity, sharpness, and wit. A judicious balance is maintained between detailed illustration and generalized comment, and though the technical language of music is used freely (how could it be avoided in a discussion of style?), there is nothing in these pages to dismay readers who can find their way through Einstein's *Mozart* or Tovey's *Beethoven*.

But the second reason is linked to matters that are more controversial. Rosen, as his title indicates, has chosen to describe and exemplify the development of the classical style almost wholly by discussing its three most familiar—and of course far and away

greatest—figures. Since we are dealing for most of the time with well-known works, this is easy and attractive. We are not obliged to struggle with dynasties of "interesting" historical figures, but are instead conducted through the exhilarating world of *Figaro*, the Op. 33 quartets of Haydn, and the *Hammerklavier* Sonata. Nevertheless there are some dangers in exploring a stylistic galaxy by focusing only on its brightest stars.

These dangers, it is fair to say, are anticipated by Rosen; and he shrugs them off in a characteristically robust Preface:

I have not attempted a survey of the music of the classical period, but a description of its language. In music, as in painting and architecture, the principles of "classical" art were codified (or, if you like, classicized) when the impulse which created it was already dead: I have tried to restore a sense of the freedom and the vitality of the style. I have restricted myself to the three major figures of the time as I hold to the old-fashioned position that it is in terms of their achievements that the musical vernacular can best be defined.

Even with this restriction there is a vast amount of music that falls into his net. The main part of the book, in fact, consists of detailed discussions of the contributions that the three composers have made within the major genres in which the classical style was worked out. Haydn is first investigated in relation to his exploration of the string quartet and the symphony. After an examination of *opera seria*, a kind of artistic cul-de-sac, three chapters on Mozart follow which are concentrated

on three pre-eminently Mozartian art forms, the concerto, the string quintet, and comic opera. A second section on Haydn's last years (after the death of Mozart) pursues the use that he made of the "popular style" through the last symphonies and quartets, reviews his little-known piano trios in considerable detail, and hangs a discussion of church music onto an account of the classical style in Haydn's late masses and the last two oratorios.

Beethoven is left to a final section. Rosen is content to show his links with Haydn and Mozart and to sketch in a general way the transformations of the classical style in its last effective years; the illustrations are taken mainly from the late piano works (especially Op. 106). The short Epilogue deals with the discontinuity between Beethoven and the succeeding musical generation; drained of its vitality, the classical style was allowed to run down in the sonata form works of Schumann and Mendelssohn.

The above loose summary omits the first hundred pages. They form a necessary though exacting introduction, since it is there that one will find most of Rosen's arguments concerning the sensitive relationships between language, form, and style. None of the three terms can be discussed productively without reference to the others. No doubt it is form that is easiest to describe, at any rate superficially; certainly treatises on classical sonata form far outnumber analyses of the classical style. But that does not make form the best guide to what composers have in common; in any case, sonata form was not defined until it was moribund, and

although the sonata structure can be regarded as the most characteristic form for the music of the classical period, it does not serve to demarcate it. The problem accordingly becomes one of determining what it is that Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven have in common but that is *not* shared by Schumann or Chopin (or except occasionally) Schubert, even when these choose to write in classical (or "classicized") forms. And it is their common style that binds them:

What unites Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven is not personal contact or even mutual influence and interaction (although there was much of both), but their common understanding of the musical language which they did so much to formulate and to change. These three composers of completely different character and often directly opposed ideals of expression arrived at analogous solutions in most of their work.

It is true that we may feel that the style has traveled a long way in the half-century from the end of Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony (1772), where the two violinists puff out their candles, to the end of Beethoven's "Choral" Symphony (1824), in which millions are embraced. Yet the fundamental stylistic unity of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven was (as Rosen shows) recognized by perceptive critics at the time (though they did not of course call it "the classical style"). The musical language of the late eighteenth century that sustained the style was doubtless something that the same critics took for granted. Nevertheless that language had recently undergone a number of fundamental changes—the result of

The New York Review