

The Give and Take

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President Nixon's concessions to the Chinese Communists during last week's summit were less a U.S. surrender than the rectification of nearly a generation of unrealistic American policy toward Peking.

It can be argued plausibly, therefore, that the President and his foreign affairs adviser Henry Kissinger were compelled to yield more to the Chinese than they received precisely because their decision to break two decades of deadlocked relations with the Peking regime was so long overdue.

Ironically, Mr. Nixon himself, in his capacities of Senator and vice-president, was

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among the conservatives who in the 1950s vociferously equated any effort at a reconciliation with the Communists as treason.

So there is a certain justification in the Chinese contention that the United States is now correcting its past "errors." Or as one Chinese official, commenting on the outcome of the summit, said: "We don't owe the Americans anything, but the Americans owe us much. Now they are redressing the balance."

TAIWAN

The President's major concession to the Communists was a public pledge for the first time by the United States to withdraw all American forces and military installations from Taiwan, the island stronghold of Chiang Kai-shek's rival Nationalist government.

Mr. Nixon declared that the "United States acknowledged that all Chinese on

either side of the Taiwan Straits maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China." He further reaffirmed that the Taiwan question should be resolved "by the Chinese themselves," thereby emphasizing that the United States no longer bears responsibility for the problem.

These U.S. positions thus concede to the Communists what they have been requesting for years. Moreover, in a complicated bit of diplomatic sleight-of-hand, the President and Kissinger also shrouded the American defense commitment to Taiwan in ambiguity.

Speaking to newsmen in Shanghai on Sunday, Kissinger asserted that the defense treaty with Taiwan "will be maintained." But this is contradicted by the passage in the summit communique that describes Taiwan as Chinese territory.

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Unless the administration intends to go back to the fiction that Chiang Kai-shek represents all China, which it plainly does not intend to do, the United States cannot maintain a defense commitment to a province of a country.

In principle, at least, then, the President fulfilled the demands put forth by Premier Chou En-lai in a banquet speech last Monday, the day the summit opened in Peking.

In return, the Chinese agreed in somewhat diluted fashion to Mr. Nixon's proposals for scientific, sports, cultural and journalistic exchanges, as well as bilateral trade. They also agreed, more cautiously than the President had anticipated, to receiving a "senior" U.S. diplomatic representative in Peking "from time to time" to discuss these and other subjects.

Although Kissinger warned

reporters against counting "who scored how many points on which issue," the President's concessions to the Chinese clearly outweighed their concessions to him.

The Chinese had the advantage from the start for one good reason. They perceived that Mr. Nixon's intention to turn his China trip into a television spectacular would create expectations at home that he would have to satisfy.

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In other words, they shrewdly calculated that the President would be anxious, after all the electronic publicity he had generated, to bring some kind of accord to Washington. Hence they apparently were able to compel him to acquiesce in their demands in order to leave China with an agreement.

Still, to view the result of the summit as a "sell-out" by the President would be a

mistake.

In the first place, the final communique contains a good many loopholes and escape hatches through which Mr. Nixon can crawl should he regard Peking's future conduct to be disappointing.

For example, his pledge to withdraw U.S. forces and military installations from Taiwan is termed an "ultimate objective." In addition, the communique states that the troop pull-out from the island is contingent upon the reduction of tension "in the area" — a vague phrase that the administration can define as it pleases.

Meanwhile, the Chinese agreement to "facilitate" scientific, cultural and other exchanges is also worded cautiously to permit Peking to improve its relations with the United States in small doses. The same is true for their agreement to receive a "senior" U.S. diplomatic emissary.

This suggests, consequently, that both sides are going to be feeling their way in the months ahead. Kissinger stressed this in his recommendation to newsmen to interpret the communique "in terms of the direction which it seeks to point."

Ultimately, perhaps, there was simply no other way for the United States to reach an accommodation with the People's Republic of China than in the way it did. One side had to give. After more than two decades of pursuing an illusory China policy, the administration had no choice — unless, like its predecessors, it preferred to continue the myth that the Communists did not exist.

Thus the summit should be viewed as a beginning of a process. Despite all the contrived fanfare, it was a tough beginning. But as the Mao poem advised, the President did "seize the hour."