A Celebration of Hope

NYTimes MAY 30 1972

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Special to The New York Times

KIEV, U.S.S.R., May 29—The summitry ended in the glittering St. George's Hall in Moscow's Kremlin, with what was, after all, a celebration of atmosphere, emotion and hope. In their smiles, in their banter and above all in their proclamation of new principles of good conduct and collaboration, these adversaries of two decades were yielding to the temptations of trust.

News Analysis

President Nixon came to the Soviet Union a week ago scorning the customary "froth" of summit conferences; and his host, Leonid I. Brezhnev, eagerly endorsed the emphasis on mere "business."

As their communiqué reported today, they talked through their conflicting interests in Vietnam and in the Middle East, merely reviewed their progress and agendas in European affairs, concluded one major treaty on arms limitations, promised to work harder for more trade and signed several other arangements to expand their contacts in many fields.

But when "The Star Spangled Banner" reverberated in that grand palace chamber, when the Kremlin orchestra struck up "Oh, Susannah!" and when Mr. Brezhnev practiced his new word—"O.K."—and bade farewell in a four-handed clasp, there sprang to life again the hope that a new relationship was beckoning at last.

Henry A. Kissinger, the impresario of so much of this Administration's foreign policy, defined it as a hope of "transformation from rather rigid hostility" to a new behavior of "restraint and creativity" that would not only dampen dangerous crises but perhaps avoid

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them altogether.

"We are not children," the President's adviser on national security continued, conceding that the hope might be dashed and soon. The lofty and lengthy definitions of desirable relations in the declaration of principles was a Soviet idea, he said, and it was no "cookbook" prescription of what needs to be done in Vietnam or anywhere else next week. But the President would not have signed, Mr. Kissinger added, if he did not perceive a reasonable chance that the two nuclear giants were ready for a more mature cooperation than any so far.

That is the perception by which this summit meeting must eventually be judged and it is based not merely on the temper of the disagreements or the range of agreements over the last week, but on the attitudes that were exchanged and the atmosphere that a handful of men possessing awesome power were able to create.

Mr. Nixon and his aides left Moscow in good spirits first of all because an American President had finally heard those notes in the Kremlin, after three others had tried to get there and failed.

Moreover, they were going home with what they felt to be a good treaty, full of promise for further limits on the arms race.

They left confirmed in their judgments that the Russians were dead serious about rapid development of their country and wanted respite from crisis and access to American markets and goods.

They found the Soviet leaders, and notably Mr. Brezhnev, both flexible and politically strong enough to help overcome the serious obstacles in the arms negotiations — apparently over some vigorous opposition in their own ranks. And they found Mr. Brezhnev apparently eager, as he had already shown in allowing Mr. Nixon to come, to let neither Vietnam nor any other indirect conflict of purpose interfere with this attempt to codify a more stable relationship with Europe and the United States.

The Russians, of course, contend that these have always been their objectives and that it is the United States that must be restrained in the world and helped to back off its global involvement to a more modest position. Mr. Nixon brought them the ultimate tribute of nuclear "equality;" this, combined with the West's acceptance of the existing frontiers in Europe, seems to them a handsome diplomatic achievement.

Americans tend to think that the Soviet leaders seek relaxation because of an obsessive fear of China and a desperate need for commerce and technology. Russians tend to think that the President needs accommodation because of American exhaustion in Vietnam, considerable economic and social disorder at home—and the American election campaign.

But in any case, both sides sense this to be one of those rare moments of equilibrium—in the arms race and in the desire to avoid new Vietnams and new Cubas. And it was to test these assumptions, as expressed in policy over several years and in their many private communications over 24 months, that Mr. Nixon and Mr. Brezhnev met and wrote their pledges of moderation.

The President can still only hope that from a better understanding of his peace terms for Vietnam, the Russians might find a way to goad Hanoi toward a deal to end the war. There appears to have been little tangible progress at the summit beyond the arms treaty and other agreements that had been largely worked out in advance.

And Mr. Brezhnev can only hope that his nonresponse to the mining of North Vietnam's harbors and general willingness to compromise on a number of important issues will soon be recompensed by an end of discrimination against Soviet goods in American ports and markets and by generous American credit arrangements.

Both sides have hedged their bets for the future and cautioned their domestic audiences against exaggerated expectations. Mr. Brezhnev took refuge in protocol on departure as on arrival and let his colleagues offer the airport farewells without him. Nor did he allow his people to show any real enthusiasm or tribute for the President.

But if the festive and relaxed Kremlin celebration on this final day meant anything, and if the "basic principles" are indeed more than rhetorical boasts, then Mr. Nixon and Mr. Brezhnev achieved something more than the sum of the various agreements inscribed on parchment in the seven days.

They appeared to be saying, to each other and to an anxious world, that although their suspicions and their differences remain intact, they were able to reaffirm face-to-face in fairly candid conversations the conviction that a better way can and must be found to manage the world's most powerful military and economic establishments.

Among the Kremlin celebrators today were scores of Russians who are already developing what the President and Mr. Kissinger call a "vested interest" in more and better relations with the United States. One of the foremost among them was asked whether he did not regard some of the concluding statements as merely empty words and he offered an interesting reply, in two parts: First, he said, "It can do no harm."

But secondly, he added, the affirmation even of generalities, when taken together with some down-to-earth agreements, "will do a lot of good here."

He implied that in this ideological Communist country, the line is the line, and, vague though it may be, a good line will give those who favor negotiations, arms control, contact with the West and even some trust of the United States a license to show their convictions openly.

On his final day in China three months ago, Mr. Nixon said that he had just lived the week that "changed the world," and many Russians as well as Americans laughed out loud.

In effect, the President is thus far claiming only that his week in Moscow has cleared the air. And the Russians were smiling with him this time.