

Poster

The Game's Name Is Detente When A Job's at Stake

A Commentary
By Nicholas von Hoffman

people in the news business and there never would have been a Watergate scandal.

Yet while Kissinger stills criticism and discourages analysis by answering his RSVPs instead of the hard questions, it is becoming clear that he and Nixon are operating on the proposition that Washington and Moscow can, should and must jointly rule the world. It is the sort of proposition that a couple of raw power boys like N and K would naturally adopt as policy.

Neither of them has come out in public and admitted that they are attempting such an historic turn in the world power line-up, but then one of the characteristics both men share is an excessive love of secrets. Though change has been masked by much talk about our little grandchildren living in peace, the truth is that as yet our pro-Russian policies have netted us zilch.

There is detente but there is no disarmament. In addition there have been a series of not ungenerous military, technological and economic concessions by us that have not been matched by the Russians. They have smiled a lot, and when there has been an international crisis Kissinger has announced that the Ruskies were acting with "restraint."

What's happened is that matters have been allowed

The President is amok among us roving from city to city alternately playing a yoyo and denouncing our European friends and allies. Dr. Kissinger is alleged to be arranging for Egypt's best belly dancer to visit us, and Pat Buchanan, the chap with the thuggish personality who has taken Chuck Colson's place as top White House brute, is arguing that our non-tax-paying non-crook shouldn't be canned because we need his foreign policy leadership.

Under Nixon and Kissinger that policy is more often praised than understood. "The fact is that today no one really knows for sure what the foreign policy of this administration actually is," writes highly regarded conservative Columbia University professor Zbigniew Brzezinski in the spring number of Foreign Policy magazine.

However, you don't have to throw right-handed to see that, even with what the good Kissinger has done in the Middle East, he and his boss peaked some time ago. That the Secretary of State is still described as a genius in the public prints can be traced to journalism's continuing reluctance to criticize those with whom it breaks bread. Thirty or 40 more of the right dinner invitations from the White House to the right

to develop so that Nixon's and Kissinger's domestic political interest in detente now far exceeds our national interest. Those two are holding on with one last argument, namely that only they are clever, knowledgeable and adept enough to bring home world peace. This gives the Russians an opportunity to extract real concessions from us in return for the seeming face of friendship. Thus Brzezinski observes, "Claiming that so much depends on allegedly good personal relations with Brezhnev has given the Soviet side an inescapable bargaining leverage, which the experienced Soviet ambassador to Washington, Dobrynin, has done his best to nurture through sustained personal flattery and courtship of the key individuals involved."

Concurrently, the falling apart of relations with Europe and Japan have progressed from vaguely disturbing to a point of serious concern. Nixon and Kissinger may find it pleasing to call anyone who doesn't believe in them "isolationists," but it is they who have locked themselves up in the Kremlin, increasingly cutting themselves off from our allies and trading partners.

See COMMENTARY, B2, Col. 7

COMMENTARY, From B1

For five years, we have treated our allies to an unending number of snubs, public dressings down and bolt-from-the-blue declarations. The long-needed reconciliation with China was seriously damaged by Kissinger's failure to consult Tokyo before he did it; our relations with everybody were damaged by two dollar devaluations without consultation with anybody, and Kissinger's oil policy speech in London reinforced the impression that our Secretary of State's strongest suit is the weakest kind of press agency.

Right now Kissinger is at work paving the way for another Nixon visit to Moscow, one obviously timed to help him stave off impeachment. More than ever, then, Nixon will be liable to trade real concessions in return for the Communists' help in saving his job. However, if the cost of saving his job is our isolation from the world's major democracies, the rupture of our ancient friendships and the ruin of foreign trade and the international money system for a spurious alliance with these tyrannical Russian mink farmers, then he has indeed committed high crimes and misdemeanors.

© 1974, The Washington Post/King Features Syndicate