

A DECISION FOR THE AMERICAN PEOPLE:
WHAT MAKES THE WORLD STABLE?

Whatever else one might expect within the U.S. in 1976, national security issues promise both contention and confusion.

The Congress is banning all U.S. assistance to the non-Communist factions in Angola, while Soviet equipment and Cuban troops provide military gains for the pro-Soviet faction. The issue is not whether there will be a U.S. armed presence. Rather, the Congress professes a lack of confidence that the President can control "help" to those Angolans who would choose a different regime if not confronted with Russian guns.

All the anguish of Vietnam is constraining the ability of the U.S. to develop anything other than passive policies toward Communist subversion. The passage of the War Powers Act alerted the Free World and Moscow that the Administration would not have the free hand of the past, but initially there was only conjecture that this might mean economic and military assistance would be halted, or that covert action would no longer be an option. That doubt is now being answered by the U.S. response to the blatant challenge of Soviet force.

The consequence of this unveiling of the limits on American initiative is bound to discourage Third World states who depend for their existence on the balance afforded by U.S.-Soviet competition. In Africa, there will be much more willingness to accept Soviet aid to protect local economies and Soviet influence will grow.

In the U.S., the process of international retrenchment will gain momentum as congressional success in binding national policies leads to the perceptions that less defense is required. The Administration weakened its position on this issue by the Rumsfeld announcement that defense cuts this year are feasible. He made this judgment less than a month after succeeding Schlesinger in Defense after the latter with much more experience was fired for holding an opposite view.

Previous defense reductions already are taking a toll on the use of U.S. power to deter conflict. The number of aircraft carrier task groups in the Western Pacific is being reduced from the normal post World War II three to two, only a few weeks following the Ford visit to Peking. Yet during Ford's talks there, as in the Kissinger discussions with the Chinese leaders which preceded them, Mao made clear his conviction that Soviet politico-military activities were on the rise and Moscow was determined to gain dominant influence in Asia and Africa.

As American naval strength is cut in Asian waters, there will be insufficient strength to continue the pace of ship visits in the Indian Ocean. While not committing the U.S. to any policy, these transits every three months in the past demonstrated American interest and balanced the presence of Soviet sea power there.

These trends of growing U.S. neglect on the world scene present a dichotomy with the way detente is faring. The Russians are all but refuting the Human Rights mandate of Helsinki. There is sufficient evidence to support the charge that Moscow is violating the SALT I Strategic Arms deal of 1972, as it was explained to the Congress and the people. In the

Middle East, the Soviets continue to sustain radical regimes and groups rather than promoting the balanced compromises essential for a reliable peace. Taking these and other factors into account, even the most ardent pursuer of detente must see the end of that era approaching. If detente ends, it will be the result of an explicit lessening of U.S. power and political will - a failure to maintain U.S. power to keep a stable world as it did for three decades.

Viewpoints on the relationship of power to a viable detente differ between some in the Congress and other quarters. This portends an extensive argument on SALT II over the next several weeks. Already, Senators Mondale, Kennedy, Mathias, and McGovern have proposed in a letter to Secretary Rumsfeld that all cruise missiles of a range greater than 600 kms be barred. That proposal coincides with the Soviet negotiating position and is linked to an agreement that Russian Backfire bombers should not be included in the 2400 missile ceiling agreed at Vladivostok. The Senators' letter was received sympathetically by those in the Administration who believe that detente is dead if a SALT II accord is not achieved. The 600 km range limit will permit Soviet missiles to hit U.S. cities from the oceans, but will make it impossible for the U.S. to strike Soviet cities from the oceans. Since the Administration is unwilling to use wheat, technology, or trade as part of its negotiating leverage, there is no way to overcome the Soviet's hard negotiating line to get agreement except by further American concessions or to halt talks and delay SALT II.

Thus far, through the Geneva SALT negotiations and Washington maneuvering, nothing is heard from the JCS. There is little question

that they are concerned with the continuing cuts in U.S. conventional arms and will perceive further compromises by the U.S. to Soviet demands in SALT II as a critical degradation of the American deterrent and international political image. The world's perception of U.S. weakness in Angola and of the willingness to reduce armed power implicit in the Administration's about-face from the defense views of ex-Secretary Schlesinger, will be confirmed in the most vital way. Paul Nitze, a primary SALT negotiator for some two years, warned in the January Foreign Affairs magazine that a U.S. failure to resist the adamant Soviet position on SALT II would encourage Moscow to impose political pressures on the U.S. in geographic areas of contention. If that prospect materialized, the U.S. would face international crises just as its means to deal with them were being weakened.

The points of view of Mondale, et al, and others who would continue detente by compromise they believe to be reasonable, are based on the idea that problems the Soviet Union itself is confronting will restrain adventures elsewhere. They point out that Communist parties in Western Europe are taking a stance independent of Moscow, that the Soviet interference in Portugal is not effective; that the Soviets are not providing the grain needed by their populace; and that Russian economic growth is slowing. The Senate, in particular, believes that world opinion will deter Soviet activity in the Third World, despite the contrary opinion in Peking that Moscow will use the influence of their superior armed power for political coercion as long as no opposing power ^{CONSTRAINS} ~~is raised against~~ it.

As the debate takes form, there are facts contrary to this theory. The Soviets continue to expand their military forces and violate detente

agreements in substantial ways. Americans will have to match these facts to see which of the two radically different views of the U.S.-U.S.S.R. relationship is accurate. There will be a temptation in the U.S. to gamble on less defense and on further movement toward U.S.S.R. demands because of the domestic, economic, and social needs that compete for resources. But, in taking their own stances on these issues, Americans must distinguish between isolated compromises and challenges and the cumulative effects that in time these one-sided accommodations (Vietnam, Angola, SALT II, Middle East, Portugal) will assume. As political success follows political success for the U.S.S.R., momentum is being generated that will affect the policies of all the other countries in the world. Those countries are accustomed to the international political stability afforded by two superpowers, and as one great power withdraws from the competition, there will soon be no option to accommodation.