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Richard Nixon's position on Communist China, 1949-1960: The evolution of a Pacific strategy

Speer, Glenn Michael, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1992

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Richard Nixon's Position on Communist China, 1949-1960:
The Evolution of a Pacific Strategy

by

Glenn Speer

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty
in History in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of
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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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To My Mother and Father

Abstract

Richard Nixon's Position on Communist China, 1949-1960:
The Evolution of a Pacific Strategy

by

Glenn Speer

Adviser: Professor Herbert S. Parmet

This dissertation focuses on Richard Nixon's view of Communist China from the 1949 Revolution through the 1960 presidential election. There is also an extended epilogue examining his position on the issue in the 1960s prior to his election as president, and a discussion of the opening to China in 1972.

It is, in essence, an attempt to trace Nixon's "education," so to speak, in the foreign policy arena during his early career--a "gestation" period, if you will, for his presidential China policy. This is discussed within the context of the Cold War and the never ending melodrama of domestic politics, in which Nixon played a vital role.

The thesis is that Nixon's approach to the Communist China question was far more consistent than most historians and journalists have recognized. The Nixon that emerges is pragmatic rather than ideological. He was a politician sensitive to the domestic political considerations of the emotional China issue. He was phenomenally adept in appearing bellicose before hard-line groups while offering hope of a modus vivendi when he addressed audiences not in lockstep with the China Lobby. Nixon was not a Janus nor should he be

considered simply in terms of the tired images of "new" and "old" Nixons; rather, he was a complex, multifaceted politician who could be scurrilous on the hustings while pensive and far less partisan in private musings on foreign affairs.

Nixon's opening to China has usually been portrayed as a volte-face. The supposed "turnaround" has been emphasized rather than the maturation of Nixon's vision of China as an integral part of a "Pacific strategy" that served the interests of both nations. Nixon was hardly a conventional Republican right-wing politician because he was a staunch internationalist who backed Truman's Europe policy. In addition, he supported foreign aid as congressman, senator, vice president, president and "elder statesman."

Finally, there was far more consistency and continuity between Nixon the vice president and Nixon the president instead of the melodramatic metamorphosis that other historians have portrayed.

PREFACE

When I began to look for a dissertation topic, I decided I wanted to write about one of the post-World War II presidents. I had also lived in Japan, and travelled briefly to the People's Republic of China, and this experience sparked an interest in Asia, especially America's relations with the countries of that continent. I wanted to find a president to study and write about who would best offer me an opportunity at the same time to delve into the evolving United States view of Asia. I also had a working background in journalism and wanted very much to interview the subject of my study.

I chose Richard Nixon, in part, because I hoped to get an interview with him. Alas, that hope has yet to be fulfilled. But like thousands of other "political junkies," I have a fascination with the rise and fall, and rise and fall again (not to mention yet another "comeback" in the so-called "post-presidential years") of Richard Nixon. Coupled with my interest in Asia, Nixon seemed the obvious candidate for a dissertation. One had heard so much in the 1970s to the effect that "Nixon was the only one who could go to China" because of his previous hard-line position against Peking, or that Nixon had made some dramatic turnaround and transformation that enabled him to deal with the aging men in power in the "Forbidden City."

I have always been a bit skeptical of such pat, conventional wisdom and I began to wonder, if indeed, Nixon had truly changed on this fundamental Cold War question of

Communist China. Was there, in fact, consistency throughout his career in his position toward Peking? To answer this pivotal question, I had to thoroughly examine Nixon's public speeches, his private papers and declassified government documents that ultimately rendered a fuller, more complex portrait of Nixon's view of the China issue. I found that what was particularly striking about Nixon's stance on China was his consistency, and that to portray it as a volte-face was off the mark.

Like any dissertation, mine is mostly derived from an abundance of primary sources. I used documents from the Los Angeles Branch of the National Archives (actually located in Laguna Niguel, California) where the Nixon Pre-Presidential Papers are housed. Any sources from this collection are referred to in the endnotes as NARA-LA, Nixon Papers. In addition, I came upon some revealing material concerning Nixon at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, Kansas. I make extensive use of minutes from Cabinet and National Security Council meetings as well as numerous Nixon speeches from the period. Materials quoted from the Eisenhower Library are abbreviated in the endnotes as DDEL. The bulk of the sources from the Eisenhower Library come from the Ann C. Whitman File. Mrs. Whitman was President Eisenhower's secretary. On second reference in the endnotes, material from this collection is called ACW File. There are also instances in the endnotes when I refer to The New York Times as NYT.

I have also tapped the John Foster Dulles Papers at the Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library at Princeton University where I found correspondence and detailed memoranda of conversations between Nixon and Dulles. The memoranda of conversations actually were first housed only at the Eisenhower Library but now for the convenience of reserarchers, copies of these particular papers are also available at Seeley G. Mudd. Occasionally in the endnotes, I refer to the John Foster Dulles Papers as JFD. In addition, I draw on the Adlai Stevenson, Arthur Krock and Karl Lott Rankin Papers, which are also located at the Mudd Library. Any material from these various collections are published with the permission of the Princeton University Libraries.

I was most fortunate to have as my mentor, Professor Herbert S. Parmet. We both share the same enthusiasm for American political biography. I could not have had a better or wiser adviser. There are graduate students who often complain that they have trouble gaining access to their major professor. Not so with Professor Parmet. If I ever had a question regarding research or writing, he was readily available whether it was during his office hours or involved calling him at home at night, weekends, or even on holidays. I would submit a chapter of my dissertation to Professor Parmet and by the next day he had not only read it, but had written extensive comments on it. He was particularly generous in giving me access to the notes of his own interviews with Richard Nixon and with the late Meade Alcorn,

who was Republican National Party chairman in the late Eisenhower years. Professor Parmet also took an interest in my future and has always been available to advise me and go the extra mile in helping me in my effort to establish myself as an historian. He encouraged me to write in a less formal style than most academics. I hope I have succeeded in achieving the clarity and flow of language that I aspired to. In addition, I served for two years as Professor Parmet's researcher and editorial assistant. I worked with him on his recent book, Richard Nixon and His America. This proved to be invaluable experience as I learned how a work of history is put together.

I also want to thank the other members of my committee, Professor Hans L. Trefousse and Professor Thomas Kessner. I had the pleasure of studying the Civil War and Reconstruction with Professor Trefousse, and American immigration with Professor Kessner. They also were available for questions and advise and were very encouraging about my work.

Professor Stuart Prall, the chairman of the History Department of the City University of New York Graduate School deserves special thanks for granting me financial aid. I am also grateful to his predecessor, Professor Abraham Ascher for awarding me a fellowship at the beginning of my studies at the Graduate School. Mrs. Betty Einerman, program assistant for the History Department, was a tremendous help in setting up the dissertation defense. I know I speak for all students and faculty in the department when I say that Mrs. Einerman keeps

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order in academic circumstances that could easily crumble into chaos.

The late Robert Gilleece, director of financial aid, was always kind and exceedingly generous, finding the funds to underwrite my research assistantship for Professor Parmet as well as providing a special grant that enabled me to travel to the Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, Kansas. Mr. Gilleece's successor, Matthew G. Schoengood also enabled me to earn my way through the program by providing me with College Work Study. Mr. Gilleece was a political biography fanatic and we frequently spoke about Nixon and other prominent politicians. He, like myself, was obsessed with American politics. His untimely death was a loss to all of us at the CUNY Graduate School and we will always remember him.

I also received financial support from the Scheuer Family Foundation under the auspices of the Federation Employment and Guidance Service of New York.

As usual, any dissertation's acknowledgements would be incomplete without doffing one's hat to the knowledgeable librarians and archivists who steer naive and often misdirected graduate students to the proper sources. My warmest thanks goes to Mrs. Jean Holliday of the Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library at Princeton University who spent several days guiding me through the John Foster Dulles, Adlai Stevenson, Arthur Krock and Karl Lott Rankin Papers. She is a delightful person with a keen sense of humor. I also want to thank Fred Klose who gave me considerable expert assistance

while I went through the Pre-Presidential Papers of Richard Nixon at the National Archives Branch in Laguna Niguel, California. Jim Leyerzapf, archivist at the Eisenhower Library, put me on the track of some vital and extraordinary documents concerning the young Mr. Nixon's stance on Communist China. I had a very lovely stay in Albilene, Kansas, taking the train out and back. During my sojourn there I stayed at the home of Homer and Doris Jury who were wonderful, friendly hosts. I'll never forget that they drove nearly 70 miles during a torrential prairie thunderstorm to meet my train at 4 a.m. in Newton, Kansas. It was the kind of hospitality that would warm anyone's heart. I also want to thank Mrs. Judy Waldman, the dissertation librarian at the CUNY Graduate School, for her patience in answering my many questions regarding the final form and style of the manuscript.

Martin Dorn, the director of the Computer Center at the Brookdale Campus of Hunter College, patiently instructed me so that I eventually established the semblance of computer literacy. He also granted me unlimited access to the facility which was most convenient since I lived nearby.

When I was growing up I had the good luck to know the late political reporter, Mr. Stephen C. Flanders. He instilled in me an appreciation for both America's political past and the beauty of the English language. His widow, Carol Flanders, and their two historian sons Steve and Carl, who share my consuming interest in politics and history, always managed to keep up my morale.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to Rabbi Jeshua Schnitzer, who has been my rabbi since I was a small boy when my family joined Congregation Shomrei Emunah in my hometown of Montclair, New Jersey. Rabbi Schnitzer's spiritual guidance, steady counsel, patience and amazing ability to motivate me have helped me through many experiences above and beyond this dissertation. I can never properly thank him for all his help that he has unselfishly given to me and my family for over 30 years.

But above all, I want to thank my mother and father, to whom this work is dedicated. My mother is the best literary critic I know and she went through portions of the manuscript and corrected my numerous grammatical errors. You see, in her generation, students actually learned English grammar in the public schools, something that is apparently considered too radical and controversial for American schools today. I envy her that precious knowledge. My father was also very encouraging, imparting to me his respect for the inherent worth of graduate studies, and never doubting for a moment that I was on the right track. He especially inspired me from an early age to take an active interest in American history and led me to my fascination with political biography. Words alone cannot thank them appropriately for all they have given and taught me.

Richard Nixon's Position on Communist China, 1949-1960:

The Evolution of a Pacific Strategy

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CHAPTER 1: MR. NIXON GOES TO WASHINGTON

Who was Richard Nixon? Was he the darling of the Republican Party's "Old Guard?" An "Asia Firster" with Anglophobic contempt for the Old World of Europe? Did he side with the isolationist wing of the GOP or did he favor an internationalist role for America in the post-World War II era? Was he a staunch member of the "China Lobby" who took his marching orders from the "Soong Dynasty"? Some historians and journalists have harped on the idea that there were many Richard Nixons, old and new. But on the paramount issue of Communist China, close examination reveals a surprising consistency in his views from the time of the Chinese Revolution to his opening to China as president as well as to his comments and writings in the years after his fall from power.

Nixon made an early name for himself as a vitriolic critic of President Harry Truman and his secretary of state, Dean Acheson. But as a young California congressman, Nixon actually supported Truman's program in Europe across the board. He voted for Greece-Turkey Aid, for the Marshall Plan and for the establishment in 1949 of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).¹

But even more significantly, Nixon was the only freshman congressman chosen to serve on the 19-member Herter Committee, headed by Representative Christian A. Herter (R-MA) who went on to become President Dwight D. Eisenhower's secretary of state in 1959. The Herter Committee toured ravished postwar

Europe and came home with a strong endorsement of the Marshall Plan.² In this instance, Nixon put some distance politically between himself and the Old Guard for whom further involvement in Europe was anathema. Nixon looked upon his service with the Herter Committee as the most instructive during his time in Congress.³

But American foreign policy in Asia was a different matter altogether. Nixon, along with the majority of Republicans in Congress, ultimately broke with Truman over China, making much political fodder over what they never tired of terming "the loss of China" to the Communists.

The China Issue or The Open Door Slams Shut

The domestic political rift over China can be traced back to Yalta and the subsequent American effort to mediate the Chinese civil war after the defeat of Japan. Most historians agree now that the Soviet and Chinese communists were far from "monolithic," even in the closing days of World War II and the Chinese Civil War. Michael Schaller argues that Joseph Stalin displayed a "curious attitude" toward foreign Communists, especially the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Behind the facade of support for international revolutionary Communist movements, Schaller claims that Stalin was more than a little cautious about his relations with the CCP. The Soviet leader realized that the Chinese Communists under Mao's leadership in no way accepted him as their master. At Yalta, Stalin assured President Franklin Delano Roosevelt that he would support the

Nationalist Chinese regime of Chiang Kai-Shek once Japan was defeated. But in keeping with Russia's historical desire for concessions in Manchuria, Stalin insisted that the Soviets be granted special rights and a share in the control of the railroads and ports of that region. Although FDR was later castigated for his concessions to the Russians in the Far East (a "payment" for Stalin's pledge that Russia would join the war effort against Japan), FDR did not "give" anything that the Russians would not have taken on their own initiative. Schaller shrewdly points out that what Stalin and FDR did not take into account was that the Chinese Communists were independent and were not about to give up their quest to rule China just because the United States and the Soviet Union might not give them their blessing.⁴

When Truman succeeded to the presidency after FDR's death, he was surrounded by Roosevelt's advisers who were far more anti-Soviet than the president had been. The United States Ambassador to China, Patrick J. Hurley, was a rabid anticommunist. Without the benefit of having read revisionist historians, Hurley understood the Chinese Communists as mere puppets of the Kremlin, although foreign service officers such as John Service argued that the Chinese Communists should be seen as a nationalistic movement rather than a mere appendage of Moscow.⁵

Indeed, by the summer of 1945, Hurley was openly siding with the Nationalists against the Chinese Communists. To complicate matters further, negotiations between the two sides

in Chungking broke down when Chiang refused to share power or territory with the Communists. By autumn 1945, Mao Tse-Tung's army had gained strength and the United States was put into the position of deciding whether to give additional aid to Chiang or to leave his fate in the hands of the Communists. General Albert Wedemeyer reported to Truman that Chiang had little or no chance of unifying China without direct American military intervention. Even with this pessimistic assessment of the situation in China, Truman and his foreign policy advisers believed that the major challenge facing America was the perceived threat that the Soviets posed to the stability of Europe. China was given low priority and by November 1945 the Truman administration concluded that the rapidly deteriorating military situation in China could only be turned around through another American attempt at mediation.⁶

Hurley promptly resigned and blamed the Nationalists's decline on "traitors" in the State Department, a charge that was to be echoed all too many times after the eventual "loss of China" in 1949.

In an effort to counter Hurley's charges and more significantly, to try to preserve some American influence in China, Truman appointed General George Marshall to lead a new peace effort. The Marshall mission arrived in China in December 1945 and stayed in the country until January 1947. Although Marshall arranged a ceasefire in July 1946, it became unravelled by the end of the year. The Communists wanted to share power while Chiang was adamant in insisting that they be

disarmed. Neither side could accept any compromise and Marshall was summoned back to Washington in January 1947 by the president to become secretary of state. The failure of the Marshall mission essentially marked the end of American efforts to provide a solution to the Chinese Civil War.

The Nationalist position continued to deteriorate as the Communists gradually took control of China. In August 1949, the State Department published the historic White Paper in response to criticism from Chiang's supporters and to argue that the United States had done all it could to prevent the Communist victory. The White Paper also made an issue of corruption among the Nationalists. Nevertheless, in an attempt to appease the nation's anticommunists, Acheson thought it prudent to attach a "cover letter" to the report which contradicted much of what the White Paper said (What was ironic was that Acheson was a dedicated opponent of communism, no matter how his Republican critics portrayed him.). In the letter, Acheson called the Chinese Communists villains who had renounced their ancient Chinese heritage and were subservient to Moscow.

And just where did Nixon stand on the historic events taking place in China in 1949? There is scant material on his views on China from this early period in the Nixon Pre-Presidential Papers. In fact, Nixon was not a leader in any sense of the word on this issue at this time in his career, choosing instead to focus on internal Communist subversion and basking in his new found fame garnered from the

Alger Hiss case. The Republicans who actually took the lead on the issue were California's Senator William Knowland (often referred to half in jest as the Senator from Formosa) and Representative Walter Judd from Minnesota who had been a medical missionary to China when he was a young man.⁷

However, Nixon did speak out on China and rose in the House to attack the notion that the Chinese Communists might develop a "Titoist" distance from Moscow. On May 11, 1949, at the time that the crisis over Allied access to Berlin was temporarily resolved, Nixon insisted that developments in China might ultimately be of more importance than the European situation. He warned the House not to "overlook the fact that the Communists are winning a great victory in the Far East, a victory which may in the end far overshadow any of the recent developments in western Europe." He then castigated what he called "apologists" for the Chinese Communists "both in and out of the State Department" who were "taken in by the fallacious theory that the Chinese Communists somehow are different from Communists in other countries." For Nixon, Mao was no mere "agrarian reformer." Nixon, like Hurley, saw communism as a monolithic force. No one could accuse the young Californian of being a pre-revisionist, so to speak.

Nixon then inserted into the Congressional Record an article from the May 7, 1949 issue of the New Leader entitled "Mao No Tito." The congressman concluded that "the article erodes the myth of the independence of the Chinese Communists effectively and completely."⁸

War in Korea and the 1950 Senate Campaign

The China issue was to erupt domestically in the form of the Korean War, which brought home the tenuous geopolitical situation in Asia. Of course, Korea could not be discussed without regard to the Chinese Revolution. Communism in Asia and the Korean War were no small issues in the infamous 1950 California Senate race between Nixon and Democratic Representative Helen Gahagan Douglas. Nixon, himself, perceived the election as a referendum on the Truman-Acheson foreign policy in Asia, most notably what he and his fellow Republicans loved to call the "loss of China."⁹

Ralph de Toledano, the future Nixon biographer then covering the election for Newsweek, wrote that Nixon campaigned on the theme that while the United States had been victorious militarily in World War II, the nation had managed to "lose the peace." Nixon claimed that while American foreign policy under Truman opposed the "international Communist conspiracy" in Europe, it fostered appeasement of the Communists in Asia. The candidate blamed the Truman administration for the Communist takeover of China and attacked the State Department under Acheson's secretaryship for having been naive about the intent and nature of the Chinese Communists. Throughout the campaign, Nixon persistently called for the ouster of Acheson, something he was to continue to do after he entered the Senate (In fact, Nixon was obsessed with Acheson and continued to make him an issue long after the secretary was out of office. Nixon

harped on Acheson in the campaigns of 1954, 1956 and 1958 as if the ultimate pin-striped diplomat still reigned over Foggy Bottom.). As for his treatment of Mrs. Douglas, Nixon scored points politically by making an issue of her voting against Truman's proposal for unilateral aid to Greece and Turkey in 1947, which Nixon had supported.¹⁰

Mrs. Douglas had attacked Nixon for not voting for aid to Korea in 1949. But Nixon and other Republicans had voted against the bill as a protest because it had omitted aid for Taiwan, although Nixon later voted for the bill when the funding provision for assistance to the Nationalists had been included. Nixon, and other Republican advocates of Chiang had used the Korean War as a pretext for pressuring the administration to support the Nationalist Chinese.

In an interview with U.S. News & World Report after his victory over Douglas, Nixon pointed to the Truman foreign policy in the Far East as the primary reason for winning the race. The senator-elect said the differences between Douglas and himself had been "clear-cut" and that she had even gone so far "as to defend in every respect the Yalta agreements." Nixon explained that although he believed American policy in Europe had been successful and he had supported it, he had opposed the Truman policy in Asia. He told the conservative newsweekly that during the campaign, he had pointed out "that if it had not been for the fall of China, the Korean war would not have happened." This was to become a recurring theme in Nixon's speeches on Asia in the years ahead.

Nixon argued that the Communist invasion of South Korea would never have occurred unless China had gone Communist since the North Koreans "would never dare to move south unless they had a friendly government on their northern border." Nixon echoed the remarks he had made the year before in the House when he gave the State Department ultimate blame for the "fall of China" since, he argued, the department had accepted the advice of a "clique who assumed that Chinese Communists were different from Communists in other parts of the world." He charged that the State Department had misperceived them as "agrarian reformers" and "liberals" and had maintained that "it did not make any difference whether China was under a Communist government or even a bad non-Communist government." Nixon accused the department of making a "fatal error" leading to China's "loss" and in turn to the invasion of South Korea.¹¹

It is particularly interesting that Nixon should cite the issue of Communist China and the Korean War as providing the impetus for his Senate victory rather than the perceived threat of communism emanating from Stalin's Kremlin. The temptation is to categorize young Nixon as an Asia Firster, but he must be considered in a separate category. Nixon actually spoke for Asian parity with Europe in the formation of American foreign policy aimed at fighting Communist expansion, and he consistently noted his support for Truman's European program. Yet, Nixon echoed the Asia Firsters by demagogically blaming the "loss of China" neatly on a "clique"

of foreign service officers who in his view were naive in misreading the intent of the Chinese Communists. His contempt for the careerists in the State Department was obvious. Once ensconced in the Senate, Nixon was to continue his assault on the Truman-Acheson Asian policy. He rapidly rose to be one of the Republican Party's leading spokesmen against the perceived threat of Communism from Moscow and, not necessarily less important, from Peking.

Nixon returned to Washington as the youngest senator in the newly convened 82nd Congress. During his first months in the Senate, Nixon depicted the battle with Communism as an "ideological war." More importantly, Nixon stated that the United States was losing that war. Nixon warned that American military and economic strength were not enough to defeat communism and that the United States could "lose through its ideological defeat." The California senator used this as a rationale for calling for the enlargement of congressional power to conduct internal security investigations.¹² Indeed, as proved in his zealous and successful pursuit of Alger Hiss, Nixon wanted to battle Communist subversion not only in Asia and Europe, but at home as well.

Yet, Communist China remained of paramount concern to Nixon. After all, the issues of internal security and "ideological war" were integral to the perception of a Communist threat and the "loss of China." Throughout 1951, Nixon spoke of "The Great Debate" then taking place in America on foreign policy. The debate was not whether or not to fight

communism. Rather, it centered on how and where to fight it, and whether in the conflict with communism, Asia should be considered of equal, if not more, strategic value than Europe.

Yet, Nixon early on recognized the limits of American military power acting alone in the world. In a March 1951 speech in San Bernardino, California, he clearly equated the struggle with communism in Europe to the conflict against Communist domination in Asia. Nixon, like many American politicians before and after him, liked to project a virtual Wilsonian sense of America's mission as the world's great defender of democracy. However, he displayed a shrewd awareness that the United States could not single-handedly carry the weight of responsibility for defending the "Free World."

He told his fellow Californians that in order to maintain peace, America had to remain stronger militarily than the Communists. But he warned that "we must also recognize that the United States cannot do the job alone" since "we do not have the men nor the resources to wage a successful struggle against all the rest of the people of the world." To Nixon, one step toward a solution was for the nation to develop as many allies as possible, both in Europe and Asia.¹³

But here again, in a distinction from the Asia Firsters, Nixon chose to describe the conflict with communism in terms of global struggle. However, in April 1951, Truman's firing of MacArthur led Nixon to join the Asia Firsters in a call for a total military victory in Korea and again for the United

States to give equal attention to its foreign policy in Asia and Europe. It was in the midst of the MacArthur controversy that Nixon, in speeches on the floor of the Senate and around the country, rallied to the flag of the Republican Party's "Old Guard" and forcefully stated his antagonism for the Communist Chinese and his enthusiastic support for Chiang's regime in Taiwan. Nixon made political hay against the background of the ouster of America's Number One Asia Firster, General Douglas MacArthur.

The MacArthur Episode

Herbert S. Parmet makes the point that the MacArthur episode signified the time where Nixon moved from one who had been primarily identified with internal security issues to someone who became a prominent GOP spokesman over how to handle the war in Korea. Although Nixon had supported Truman on the American intervention in the Korean peninsula, he broke with the president over MacArthur and in opposition to the concept of limited war.¹⁴

Roger Morris has called Truman's firing of MacArthur "an act by which eras are marked." For Morris, it initiated a period of setting a deliberate limit upon postwar, postcolonial conflicts which "gnawed at the boundaries of the the U.S.-Soviet rivalry in the nuclear age." The sequel to this, he claims, was an era mired by frustration and division in American politics over "unwon but costly little wars of peripheral struggle from Korea to Vietnam."¹⁵

The MacArthur dismissal also marked a turning point for Nixon's career. He emerged as the general's leading defender in Congress and was at the vanguard within the Republican Party in speaking out against the Truman policy in Korea. His being out front on this issue served to further catapult him to national attention. The young upstart who had "gotten" Alger Hiss, and whose campaign tactics against Jerry Voorhis and Mrs. Douglas were so distasteful to his critics, further secured his claim as a rising Republican star with his defense of the "Old Guard's" hero, MacArthur. He clearly enunciated his view on the conduct of the Korean War, the primacy of the issue of Communist China, and the urgent need for America to shift from what Nixon considered a Eurocentric foreign policy to one which would place parity on relations with Asian countries. Nixon also took advantage of the controversy to outline his view of how America had seemingly lost its dominant position in the world over the few short years since the surrender of Germany and Japan.

On April 11, the day of the dismissal, Nixon issued a statement which said, "The happiest group in the country over General MacArthur's removal will be the Communists and their stooges. They have been doing a hatchet job on him for the past ten years and now the president has given them what they have always wanted--MacArthur's scalp."¹⁶ Nixon, ever with his ear to the political ground, may well have been aware that Truman had been burned in effigy back in his home state of sunny California.

Stephen E. Ambrose points out that Nixon, at heart an Anglophobe, found as his scapegoat Truman's "Europe-first" policy and its supposed desire "to appease the Labour government in Britain." For Nixon, Truman's crime was not just that he had "lost" China or somehow appeased Moscow and Peking but perhaps even worse, he had appeased that ancient American enemy, John Bull. Ambrose also observes that the MacArthur firing set off a second phase of the "Great Debate" between those on the right who wanted to destroy Communists in Asia and those who more realistically sought their containment.¹⁷

Nixon rose on the Senate floor on that April day not only to defend the five-star general but to underscore the importance of Asia in the battle against communism. The senator rejected the notion that "Asia is not the place to defeat communism in a war" and repeated his view expressed after his election to the upper house that China's fall to the Communists had been made possible by the erroneous judgment of the State Department under Acheson. Nixon said, "Asia may not be the place to defeat communism in a war, but Asia is a place where we can lose to communism without a war, and it is a place where we can lose to communism with a war--either way."¹⁸

The Californian then lambasted the Truman Asia policy although he took a moment before his harangue to state that he had supported the president in Europe. Even at this pivotal time for Asia Firsters and the China Lobby, Nixon was still

distinct from the "Old Guard." But Nixon reverted to his critical voice, lashing into the State Department for having believed that the "Chinese Communists were agrarian reformers and liberals, and therefore it did not make any difference whether China went Communist." Nixon dragged up his oft-repeated charge that the North Koreans never would have "dared" to invade South Korea if they had not had the "friendly" Communist Chinese government on their northern border. China's falling under Mao's control made the Korean War "inevitable," while it simply could have been avoided if the State Department had not been taken in by naive, idealistic foreign service officers and if the United States had backed Chiang to the hilt. Nixon said further that those who had advocated such policies in the past, meaning Acheson and the coterie of China specialists in the Foreign Service, should be removed from their positions rather than MacArthur being ignominiously dumped.

At this juncture, Nixon was resolute in his perception of the Communist Chinese as orthodox, Kremlin-directed Communists and not as Chinese who used communism as a major part of their expression of Chinese nationalism. MacArthur was not really the issue for Nixon--the Acheson State Department was. During this debate, Nixon even suggested that the Chinese Nationalists might still have been able to wage civil war in China had not the United States withdrawn support from Chiang after World War II through the Marshall mission, although Michael Schaller has pointed out that the Kuomintang (KMT, the

Nationalist Party) did in fact receive military aid despite Marshall's arms embargo. Nixon believed, or at least he said, that if Chiang could still be fighting the Communists on the mainland, it may have altogether prevented the Korean War. Fawn Brodie has categorized this line of thinking in Nixon as a reflection of the China Lobby's influence on his position on China. But as Nixon told Parmet in 1988, he hardly needed to be "won over" to the Nationalist Chinese point of view. Parmet also shows convincingly that Nixon was not under the "control" of the China Lobby and that it was consistent for him as a conservative Californian to oppose Mao so adamantly. It was a position he would have taken whether or not there had been a China Lobby. Many more politicians were far more widely identified with the China issue than Nixon was despite a two-part article in The Reporter magazine in April 1952 which sought to identify Nixon so strongly with the China Lobby. Parmet rightly believes that China was just one of several issues for Nixon and although the MacArthur episode broadened Nixon's concerns and political appeal to the right, his Number One issue was still internal security.¹⁹

By this time, Nixon and the "Old Guard" virtually had a Pavlovian response that Acheson's "defense perimeter" speech of January 1950 was also responsible for the mess in Korea (Acheson had placed Korea outside of the defense perimeter of the United States, which ironically, MacArthur had also done the preceding year. Yet, not surprisingly, there was no criticism of MacArthur from the right on that.) Nixon's

obsession with Acheson is akin to his distaste for Hiss who he felt was a condescending, sneering, Eastern aristocrat. As a middle-class Californian, he loathed Hiss and felt resentment for what Acheson represented to people of Nixon's ilk from Southern California: the snobby, Eastern, ivy-league, "striped pants" diplomatic set. Nixon called MacArthur's ouster a victory for the Acheson policies.

Nixon's criticism that day was not just reserved for Democrats and Foggy Bottom. Nixon advocated a trade embargo against Communist China and felt particularly bitter that, as he saw it, war materiel and other products were able to reach Communist China through the British colony, Hong Kong. There was already tension between the United States and Britain over China since the British had recently recognized Peking and by far and away took the softer line on Korea. Nixon understood well the undying hatred on the part of the "Old Guard" for the British and the remnants of the British Empire. Nixon cited news reports that said that the British advocated returning Formosa to China which Nixon decried as just the first step toward United States recognition of Peking and its admission to the United Nations. Nixon termed such recognition and U.N. admission as "bare-faced appeasement."²⁰

Nixon further charged that Truman had "lined up with the British bloc of appeasers in the United Nations against the overwhelming majority of the American people" and demagogically theorized that Truman had dumped MacArthur so that the president "would be free to make a deal with the

Chinese Communists along the lines proposed by the British." Nixon made it sound as if the United States, or at the very least the Truman administration, was under British rule.

As he was to do throughout the furor over MacArthur, Nixon drew the bottom line in terms of what he felt to be "politically acceptable to the American people." He clearly believed that Americans did not want a foreign policy tinged by what would be construed as undue British influence. The distrust of the Old World and an ancient enemy lived on in the 1950s. It would seem that as far as the Anglophobes were concerned, America never "resolved" its feelings toward the mother country.

During the Senate debate, Nixon also offered his rendering of the "domino theory" long before it was expressed by Dwight D. Eisenhower. He applied it to Asia as well as Europe and left no doubt that Asia was as strategically important as Europe to the defense of the interests of the United States. He warned that it might not be possible to defeat the Communists in China, but that America "may lose to communism" there "either with war or without a war." But his concern did not end with the Communist regime in Peking. His vision of falling dominos prophesized that should Formosa "go" and then Korea "go" that "it means Japan becomes untenable and all Asia goes." And then, the Californian predicted, war would be inevitable, not necessarily immediately but within a matter of a few years. But Nixon, ever the internationalist, used the European analogy of the debate over "U.S. troops to Europe"

and said that it was previously and correctly reasoned that America had to send aid to Europe because if Europe were to "fall" to the Communists, it would mean a war in which the West would be undermanned and eventually lose.²¹ The senator was essentially trying to scare the country into supporting his position.

Nixon also contended that the U.S. was carrying more than its fair share of the burden than other members of the United Nations. He advocated the use of Chinese Nationalist forces from Formosa against the Chinese Communists on the mainland and in particular supported the use of KMT guerrilla forces to harass the Peking regime to divert the Communists from their fighting in Korea. But Nixon was sure to hold back from suggesting that American servicemen be sent to fight on Chinese soil.²² There were domestic political constraints over how far even Nixon could go in his support of Chiang.

Yet, this did not mean Nixon parted from MacArthur's quest for complete and total victory in Korea. The day after the dismissal, April 12, he issued another statement backing MacArthur and attacking the president. He categorized MacArthur's military approach in Korea as "realistic." He further disagreed with what he considered Truman's reading of the general's plans for widening the war as a "choice...between a little war in Korea or a much bigger war in Asia." Nixon called that a "complete distortion of the facts. The choice is not between a little war or a big war; the choice is between continuing the Korean war with no real

hope of ending it or of adopting a new policy which will allow our commanders in the field to end the war with a military victory." To Nixon, MacArthur's plan to bomb supply depots in Manchuria, cut off all trade with Communist China, and make use of Chiang's forces would bring the war to a "decisive military conclusion" which was what the senator believed the American people wanted. The young senator had no doubt about the domestic political implications of the MacArthur incident. He believed that the "overwhelming majority of Americans were and are behind the realistic policy of General MacArthur to win and end the war decisively and not behind the Truman-Acheson policy of prolonging it with the desperate hope that the enemy will on some distant day give up."²³ The enemy, of course, was the Communist Chinese, not merely the North Koreans.

Nixon also introduced Senate Resolution 126 which demanded the restoration of MacArthur to his command in Asia. In the resolution, Nixon said that MacArthur's removal reflects a policy of appeasement to the enemies of the United States." The resolution, of course, never had any chance of passing and was just a symbolic gesture. It was referred to the Armed Services Committee, where no further action was taken.²⁴ But Nixon's accusations of appeasement aimed at Truman and Acheson were not to die, let alone fade away.

In another debate on the Senate floor on April 27, Nixon repeated his unqualified support of the Nationalist Chinese regime and scored opponents of aid to Chiang by comparing the

Republic of China's position in 1951 to that of Greece on the eve of the Truman Doctrine. He observed that some members of Congress voted for aid to Loyalist Greece despite the belief by some congressmen that the regime there was weak and corrupt. Nixon added that those who opposed aid to Chiang charged that his government was also weak and corrupt but that they used that as a rationale to vote against aid to Taiwan.²⁵ Nixon's reasoning here was undeniably cogent. Nixon can hardly be accused of applying a double standard considering that he lent his support to Truman over the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan.

During this debate in the Senate chamber, Nixon called for the removal of the United States Navy's Seventh Fleet from the Formosan Strait, joining the chorus on the right of those who yearned for the "unleashing" of Chiang. At the outset of the American intervention in Korea, Truman had ordered the interposition of the fleet in the strait not only to protect Taiwan from invasion but his critics argued, to prevent Chiang from invading the mainland and thereby widen the war. The fact that Chiang's true military capabilities ruled out any realistic hope for successfully "regaining" the mainland was not addressed by Truman's opponents. But Nixon was at least a little more down to earth than much of the Old Guard. His point was that even the possibility of invasion of the mainland by the Nationalists would divert Chinese Communist forces from Korea.²⁶ (Although by 1953, after President Eisenhower had removed the Seventh Fleet from the strait, the

Nationalists were able to mount some guerrilla attacks, they never really made any strategic difference.)

Nixon brought his case for change in United States Asian policy to a national radio audience on the May 1, 1951 broadcast of America's Town Hall Meeting of the Air originating in Toledo, Ohio. He shared the podium that night with Senator John Sparkman, the Alabama Democrat, destined to be the vice presidential candidate of his party in 1952 against the Eisenhower-Nixon ticket. The subject for that evening's discussion was "How Can We End the War in Asia?"

In his opening statement, Nixon commented that the war in Asia could be ended in one of three ways. First, the United States could "get out of Korea"; second, the United States could "win the war through a military victory on the battlefield"; and third, the U.S. could end the war by a "political settlement at the conference table." Nixon rejected the first option on the grounds that America's abandonment of Korea "would be the greatest possible encouragement we could give to the Communist aggressors in Asia and would probably result eventually in the fall of all Asia to the Communists and then a Third World War." Nixon rejected a political settlement of the war because he believed the Chinese Communists would "insist that such a settlement must give them a seat in the United Nations and control over the Island of Formosa. To agree to such conditions now or in the future would be outright appeasement, and this course would lead to World War III." The hawkish senator concluded

that the only feasible option for the United States to pursue was exactly what MacArthur had been advocating: to "win it (the war in Korea) on the battlefield."²⁷ And the only way to win was to dramatically escalate the war.

Nixon stated that "Victory on the battlefield is not possible under the present restrictions which have been imposed on our field commanders and fighting forces by the United Nations." The Californian then proposed five steps which he believed would end the war in Korea "with victory, and not appeasement." First, he recommended that all trade with Communist China be stopped along with this stab at the island nation ally across the Atlantic: "including the billion dollars worth of goods which the British are shipping into the port of Hong Kong annually." Second, Nixon insisted that United States commanders be given the "right to establish air reconnaissance over the mainland of China so that we can at least prepare for the offenses which they are mounting." Third, he repeated his pet point made just days before in the Senate, that "restrictions" on the Chinese Nationalists on Taiwan be removed "so that Communists will have to divert some of their troops from the Korean battlefield, in order to defend against the threat of the invasion from the south." Fourth, he once again called for more help from "the other allies on the Korean battlefield" who "have as great an interest in bringing this war to a successful conclusion as we have." Fifth, and finally, Nixon urged that the U.S. "warn the Chinese Communists that unless they cease sending troops

and supplies into Korea by a certain date, our commanders in the field will be given the authority to bomb the bases from which those troops and supplies are coming."²⁸ Nixon left his national audience with no doubt that he was a staunch MacArthurite, willing to win in Korea no matter what the ramifications of widening the war.

Nixon brought in an element of lawyerly shrewdness to the MacArthur debate and not a small bit of legerdemain. Less than two weeks later, he portrayed the general's dismissal not as a repudiation of his position on the war but ironically as nothing less than a victory for all those who supported MacArthur's emphasis on Asia and a hard-line posture in favor of Chiang. While the MacArthur hearings were being conducted in Washington, Nixon told the Ohio State Bar Association on May 12 in Akron that no matter what happened in the hearings, "MacArthur had already won a decisive personal victory over his critics in the great debate." Nixon saw victory in apparent defeat and painted Truman's ouster of MacArthur as inducing the administration to have a Far Eastern policy where none had existed before. Of course, Nixon was lost here in the hyperbole of political argument but allowing for the political version of poetic license, Nixon discerned that the administration was actually shifting toward encompassing much of what could be called the Asia First program. Nixon detected a change from the recent history of "appeasement" he understood as emanating from Yalta, but did not think this so-called shift would have been possible without the public

uproar over Truman's firing of MacArthur. Yet, Nixon was hardly praising the administration. "For the first time since the Yalta conference," he said, "the weasel statements, double talk, the outright appeasement, which have too often characterized our State Department's Far Eastern policy, are being gradually replaced with policies that have elements of firmness and decision" although Nixon remarked that there was still a "considerable distance to go" before that policy would be satisfactory to him and his political kindred.²⁹

Nixon then credited MacArthur with having been ultimately responsible for what Nixon perceived as a change in administration policy. Most importantly, he detected an altered attitude by the administration on the issue of Communist China and Taiwan as proof of a new look to the administration's program in the Far East. Nixon cited recent statements made on behalf of the administration by that hitherto bete noire of the Asia Firsters and Old Guard, General George Marshall, then secretary of defense. As Nixon portrayed them, the Marshall remarks were nothing less than a complete vindication of the Asia Firsters and China Bloc's (those in Congress who were devotees of the Nationalist Chiang) rendition of the causes of the "loss of China" to the Communists.

Nixon said that Marshall now recognized that Taiwan was essential to American defenses and "that it will not be turned over to the Chinese Communists." But the partisan Republican in Nixon just could not let up as he charged that "Attempts

are now being made to cover up the past record by claiming that this has been the policy of the Administration all along but the record is exactly the contrary."

The senator then pointed out that Marshall had also now said unequivocally that Communist China should not be admitted to the U.N. and that the secretary of defense indirectly admitted that it was a "mistake" to try to arrange a coalition of the Nationalists and Communists in China during the Marshall mission from 1945-1947. But perhaps most important from where the Californian stood, in the aftermath of the MacArthur incident the administration had been "forced to recognize the basic importance of defending Asia as well as Europe from Communists" although he quickly added that the Truman policy still placed more emphasis on Europe than Asia. One has to wonder if Nixon did not have his tongue in his cheek since after all, the president had immediately responded to the North Korean invasion by committing United States military forces to the defense of South Korea. Perhaps Nixon was merely pointing out what he considered to be a qualitative difference in the administration's approach to these two strategically and geopolitically vital continents in the world.

Nixon also claimed that progress had been made in trying to establish an economic blockade of Communist China and that the British had to concede to American criticism and "tighten up on their shipment of strategic materials to China." He also said that now, after months of inaction, the American

delegation to the U.N. was looking toward an embargo by that international organization of arms to China. Nixon exulted in pointing out that an American military aid mission had been sent to Taiwan and that U.S. commanders in Korea had been given authority to bomb Manchurian bases in the event of Communist air attacks.

He noted that our delegates to the United Nations were then busily engaged in trying to obtain reinforcements from American allies in the organization, all as a result of the fallout from the MacArthur incident. And Nixon could not let the opportunity pass before this Ohio group to take a stab at his nemesis, Dean Acheson, the Mammon in the Paradise Lost of the Republican's vision of an Edenic era prior to Democratic control of foreign policy. "Even the staunchest Administration supporters in and out of Congress have finally come to the conclusion that Secretary Acheson must go," Nixon claimed, calling the secretary's resignation "inevitable."

Finally, Nixon explained that the administration now had been forced to concede that the only way to bring the war in Korea to a conclusion was with "victory on the battlefield" and that additional authority had to be granted to American commanders in the field, although not as much as MacArthur had desired.³⁰

All of this was so much wishful thinking on Nixon's part. He was far too discerning and intelligent a politician to have believed that Acheson was on the verge of stepping down or that the Truman administration would ever adopt MacArthur's

remedy for the war on the Korean peninsula. But he knew what his growing constituency wanted to hear and he also knew how to make the most political capital out of the golden opportunity that the sacking of MacArthur presented. The truth is not always what makes political gain but the artfulness of argument can score points for the opposition. Today the political swamis might term Nixon the first "spin doctor" for putting a winning spin on the MacArthur debacle.

On May 24, Nixon repeated many of the points he had made in Akron to a meeting of the American Iron and Steel Institute in New York. He again spoke of the necessity of the United States maintaining its military power but he was realistic enough to say that "we must be as strong militarily as we can without irreparably damaging the economy of the country."³¹

But just two days later, on May 26, Nixon was back on the offensive against the administration in a speech before the Republican State Central Committee in Charleston, West Virginia. He was his old vitriolic self as he charged that the Truman administration had "reached an all-time low in political hypocrisy in its efforts to confuse the real issues in the MacArthur controversy." The young Republican took the low road and went right for the Democratic jugular when he accused Democratic spokesmen of using the "'big lie technique' in a way which would have turned Hitler green with envy" and he refuted the Democracy's charge that the GOP had "no foreign policy." He rebutted this statement by hitting back hard, running through the litany of Democratic sins in foreign

affairs, especially Asia. "Look who's talking!," the Californian countered. "The record shows that the question before the country now is not between MacArthur's policy and an administration policy, but between MacArthur's policy and no policy at all," he added. Nixon seemed to have conveniently forgotten his stand of just a couple of weeks prior that the administration had actually adopted much of the the general's policy in the wake of the MacArthur hearings. "We do not know from one day to another what administration leaders are going to say on such vital issues as the admission of Red China to the United Nations, the defense of Formosa, the character of the Chinese Communist movement. Secretary Acheson, Dean Rusk, Secretary Marshall, President Truman and other administration spokesmen have made completely contradictory statements on all these major issues within the past two years."³² It is not so much that Nixon was politically inconsistent, because in essence, he really was not, but he simply could not resist pandering to this Republican audience in a way that he would not have addressed the ostensibly nonpartisan Ohio Bar Association. After all, boys will be boys and politicians will be politicians. Nixon, himself, in his latest book In the Arena is fond of saying that politics is an art and not a science and in the 1951 MacArthur episode, he was the painter with the broadest and most colorful strokes.

Any good politician is by necessity an ambitious politician and the tenacious Nixon never suffered from

diffidence over any efforts to move up the ladder. He already was looking ahead to the 1952 presidential election when the long-awaited, much-hoped-for Republican Restoration would take place. In this West Virginia speech, some 16 months before the election, Nixon was already speaking about the repercussions of the MacArthur controversy on 1952. He stressed that the furor over the dumping of MacArthur indicated that the public's attention was now focused on what the Republicans considered to be the Truman administration's failures in the Far East. Indeed, Korea and the inevitably linked China issue would emerge as a central theme of the Eisenhower-Nixon campaign as the GOP successfully placed the Democrats in exile from the White House and removed them from control of the Congress.

Nixon's Strategy for Republican Victory

Nixon revealed his strategy for a Republican victory in 1952 on June 28, 1951, when he addressed the Young Republican National Federation in Boston. In this speech, called "The Challenge of 1952," Nixon represented the Republicans as "true one-worlders." (Nixon had cast his first presidential ballot for Wendell Willkie in 1940 and as a young Whittier lawyer, had spoken in behalf of the GOP nominee in the Los Angeles basin during that campaign.) In this Willkiesque turn of phrase, he was actually finding another way to incorporate the China issue in his criticism of the Democrats, albeit on a higher plain than he had exhibited earlier in the year during

the MacArthur incident. "We can develop a policy which will not have in it the seeds of the error which curses our present policy; the error which led to the fall of China," he told the future leaders of the GOP. But being a "one-worlnder" for Nixon in 1951 meant that he could reinvigorate his pet theme of parity between Europe and Asia for American foreign policy. "We have consistently been true one-worlders insofar as military and diplomatic policy is concerned," the Senator continued, "and not half-worlders, and for that reason we can and will develop a policy and a program which will have the best chance of keeping both Asia and Europe on our side in the struggle in which we are engaged."³³ Nixon again further distinguished himself from the Asia Firsters with a rallying cry for One-World First, if you will--a clarion call for the United States to deal equally with both Asia and Europe. Nixon left this collection of young party stalwarts in the bastion of Republican Eastern Establishment-style internationalism with no doubt that he was committing himself to an ardent world posture for the United States rather than the "Gibraltar" or "Fortress America" poise backed by the Old Guard wing of the party, led by Ohio Senator Robert Taft and former President Herbert Hoover.

The following February, Nixon returned to the Bay State to give a Lincoln Day address in Springfield in which he defined what the major issue should be in the upcoming 1952 national election campaign. He rejected out of hand "prosperity" as an issue for the Republicans arguing that the matter of bread and

butter was transcended by the threat of communism "at home and abroad" to the "survival of the nation itself." That was the issue that demanded the full political energy of the party.

Before this partisan audience, just as he had the year before, Nixon presented himself clearly as an internationalist imbued with the idealistic Willkie "One World" rhetoric. He argued that the United States had to be concerned with maintaining the liberty of foreign nations because "a threat to the security or the liberty of peoples any place in the world is a threat to our own security and our own liberty." He added in a tone all too reminiscent of Woodrow Wilson, and yes, even Franklin Delano Roosevelt, that "If we are to have peace and if we are to continue to enjoy our liberties we must assume the full responsibilities of world leadership." The senator was on the high road here and his statesmanlike pronouncement differed little with the sense of the Truman Doctrine. Was Nixon, in reality, a "Me Too" Republican on foreign policy? He clearly saw the need for collective security and was thoroughly convinced, like Eisenhower, that America could no longer stand aloof from events anywhere in the world. And as already discussed, he wanted even a greater American commitment to freedom in Asia.³⁴

Despite his well-earned reputation as the hardest-hitting partisan Republican this side of Senator Joe McCarthy, Nixon could read the bottom line. He was a political realist who understood all too well that a Republican could not be elected to the White House in 1952 without the votes of millions of

Democrats, just as he had won his Senate victory in 1950 by garnering Democratic votes in California where Republicans made up a minority of the registered voters. Back in his home state on April 29, Nixon invoked a militaristic rhythm to his political rhetoric when he urged a "Republican Preparedness Dinner" in San Francisco to seek Democratic votes as the party readied itself for its great crusade to liberate the White House and the halls of Congress. Nixon realized that the Democrats would have to compromise on civil rights if they wanted to be assured of the support of the "Solid South." It seemed that Nixon was writing off the South at that juncture. Perhaps he did not expect that even Eisenhower would do so well as to carry Virginia, Tennessee and Texas in 1952 nor did Nixon envision his own later successful attempt in presidential politics of Republican realignment through his own controversial "Southern Strategy."). But the senator believed that the key to electing a Republican to the White House would lie in the candidate's ability to "carry the great industrial states of the North, like California, where Democrats are substantially in the majority."³⁵ And for Nixon, the "security" of the nation against the perceived Communist threat seemed to be just the issue that the political doctor ordered to try to seduce Democratic voters over to the Republican column.

On the Ticket

With the notoriety Nixon gained from the Hiss case, his

victory over Mrs. Douglas and his high visibility following the firing of MacArthur, it was not surprising that speculation began to mount that he might be the choice for the second spot on the 1952 Republican national ticket. What might be surprising to those who categorize Nixon as predominantly Old Guard is that his biggest booster for getting him on the ticket with General Eisenhower was none other than the nemesis of the GOP right-wing, the twice-defeated party nominee for president, Governor Thomas Dewey of New York. When Nixon was finally selected as Eisenhower's running mate, he was not perceived to be in the pocket of the Old Guard, although he was certainly more than acceptable to it. James Reston actually pointed to Eisenhower's choice of Nixon as proof that the general was indeed a "middle-of-the-road-Man." Reston wrote in The New York Times that Eisenhower had spurned a request from some advisers that he try to mollify the defeated Republican right wing by selecting a running mate identified with the Taft wing of the GOP. Reston added that Eisenhower decided against asking Illinois Senator Everett Dirksen as his running mate after Dirksen had attacked Dewey in a speech at the Chicago convention, melodramatically accusing the New Yorker of having led the party ignominiously down to defeat twice before. The general was not about to pick someone who showed that kind of insubordination to the very man who had so vigorously espoused his own candidacy. The Times also observed that Nixon's selection was, again not surprisingly, influenced by his "fame

as a Congressional anti-Communist" who was somewhat distanced from the extremism of McCarthy. The newspaper also pointed to the attraction of Nixon's youth (he was only 39) as well as the geographical appeal of his California origins to nicely balance the ticket. Not unnoticed was Nixon's extraordinary capacity as a vote-getter in his landslide victory over Douglas for the Senate seat.³⁶

As for the the Republican platform that year, it clearly indicated at least a rhetorical victory for the Asia Firsters calling the Truman foreign policy one of "Asia Last" contrasted with the Russians's own view of "Asia First."³⁷ This was all just so much political bombast because it is clear to historians today that in 1952, and even before, Stalin was first and foremost concerned with extending Soviet influence in Europe and felt a certain unease with the reality of another Communist giant just south of the border sharing a 4,000-mile boundary with Mother Russia. But the important thing to the Republicans was that they thought, and rightly so, that they could make political hay over Asia because of the reality of Americans engaged in hostilities on that continent against the North Koreans and their Communist Chinese allies. This was the sine qua non for Nixon throughout the campaign as he emphasized foreign policy, particularly towards Asia, over domestic issues.

On July 26, Nixon flew to Denver to meet with Eisenhower to plan campaign strategy. At an impromptu news conference, Nixon told reporters that foreign policy was "potentially" the

"big issue" of that election year. The vice presidential nominee then contrasted the approach he believed Eisenhower would bring to foreign affairs with what he expected from the Democratic choice for the top spot, Illinois Governor Adlai E. Stevenson. He employed his standard charge that foreign policy had been the biggest failure of the Truman administration and ever the punster, said that the Democrats had picked "some new faces but the same old deal." Nixon made the obvious point that Eisenhower could "offer new leadership" in foreign affairs while Stevenson had to accept the Truman foreign policy, that the Republican nominee bore no responsibility for past errors of the administration in the Far East and that Stevenson would be forced to defend the Democratic record in Asia.³⁸ For Nixon, the fact that Stevenson was a Democrat was enough to taint him with the onus of all that the GOP considered as Truman's failings.

At the beginning of the campaign that August, Nixon attacked Stevenson as the candidate of the Democratic "bosses" and challenged the governor to repudiate Truman and his policies. This was a shrewd way of trying to associate Stevenson all the more with the politically damaged goods that, in essence, was President Truman in 1952. Nixon made these remarks on Stevenson's home turf at the Illinois State Fair in Springfield August 13. Later that day he told reporters that as far as the Korean War was concerned, Eisenhower would criticize the Democrats for being responsible in the first place for the events which led America into war

in Korea. But the senator tempered the criticism somewhat by saying that the general would not criticize Truman's initial decision to intervene and, Nixon reminded the newsmen that he, too, had supported Truman over sending American troops to Korea. However, he still insisted on the theme that virtually had become a Greek chorus in any of his political remarks, that the party of Truman would have to take the blame for what had started the war in the first place: the "loss of China" to the Communists. Here, in the midst of his first national campaign, he repeated his MacArthuresque critique of Truman for not fighting through for a military victory in Korea.

Nixon was sure to elaborate on China in this give and take session with reporters. He asserted as he had so many times before that the very least the United States could have done in Korea was to blockade the Chinese coast and remove what amounted to the Seventh Fleet blockading Taiwan and Chiang's troops. He again advocated American bombing of Chinese installations within Manchuria, stating that these actions could change the course of the war. However, when newsmen pressed Nixon as to whether or not Eisenhower would follow MacArthur's proposals for the conduct of the war or simply continue the policy of containment supported by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the vice presidential nominee retreated. He did not want to give any indication that Eisenhower would take one side or the other and said the general would address that issue later in the campaign. Nixon added that the tactics and strategy of the war, distinct from the Truman foreign policy,

ought not be discussed in the campaign. This was a rather peculiar position for the man who had spent most of the last year and a half rampaging up and down the country about the dangerous shortcomings of the Truman administration's military strategy in Korea. Yet, Nixon was quick to point out that if debate over the Democrat's foreign policy was excluded from the campaign, "the security of the United States would be in peril."³⁹

In September, Nixon was forced to fight for his political life as he became embroiled in a personal "crisis"--the scandal over the so-called "slush fund" set up by some California businessmen to help him meet some of his political expenses not covered by his Senate salary. The nationally televised "Checkers" speech, in which Nixon attempted to vindicate himself and save his spot on the ticket is now part of American political folklore (although nearly four decades later his unrelenting critics still consider him unredeemed from this particular imbroglio).

The historian Robert Divine claims that the "Checkers" scandal "transformed Richard Nixon into a political celebrity in his own right" while at the same time strengthening the ticket by assuring both the Old Guard, who were afraid the party would be lost to Dewey's people, and the Eastern Establishment. The Taftites, Divine argues, now believed they had their man on the ticket and he adds, Nixon spoke out more forcefully on foreign policy for the duration of the campaign.

Divine is really only half-right. While not exactly the

embodiment of a personality cult, Nixon had a distinct following within his party that went back to the Hiss case. And although Nixon did indeed speak out vehemently against the Truman administration, the tone was no different than the one he had taken during the "great debate" over the MacArthur ouster. Nixon had proven time and again in his brief six-year political career that he was equally capable of taking either the low-road or high-road. His critics seldom, if ever, gave him credit in their diabolical rendering of Nixon for anything that might even resemble the smallest budding of statesmanship. Also, although the Taftites had found Nixon more to their liking, as pointed out previously, Nixon was never one of them. He never appeased the Old Guard by retreating from his belief in the full American commitment to the defense of Europe. Nixon was in essence, as he might well have put it, a "one-worlder." Willkieite One-Worlders do not make good Old Guard, right-wing, midwestern, Taftite isolationists.

Divine points out that Nixon retreaded a lot of his old, standard charges with new embellishments earmarked for Stevenson. Nixon again lambasted Truman for "losing" 500,000,000 people to communism and had a field day in suggesting that Stevenson's support of Hiss was indicative of the Democratic nominee being soft on communism (However, Nixon discreetly omitted any mention that the architect of "liberation theology" himself, John Foster Dulles, had once served as a character reference for Hiss. "Liberation" was

the Republican rhetorical policy rejecting the Truman-George Kennan notion of "containing" communism. Containment, Dulles and his followers argued, was simply not enough in the face of the atheistic evil of communism. Only the complete rollback of communism in Eastern Europe and China, leading to the liberation of all of its peoples, would be acceptable. Of course, once ensconced in power, the Eisenhower administration soon discovered that the rhetoric of liberation was far easier than making it reality. In fact, historian Gordon H. Chang argues in his recent book, Friends and Enemies: The United States, Soviet Union and China, 1948-1972 that Eisenhower and Dulles wound up adopting the containment policy of Truman despite all the liberation and rollback rhetoric.).

In perhaps his lowest attack of all during that campaign, Nixon suggested that "nothing would please the Kremlin more" than Stevenson's ascendancy to the presidency. The articulate Californian also showed an affinity for alliteration by calling Stevenson "Adlai the Appeaser" and a Ph.D. recipient from "Dean Acheson's Cowardly College of Communist Containment." Nor did Nixon shy away from that old standby in the heat of a political fight: the scare tactic with what Nixon must have thought was a literary flourish. He warned that if the Democrats retained the White House, it could lead to "the awful prospect of still more wars under the Truman-Acheson and now Stevenson-Alice-in-Wonderland policy of Communist containment."⁴⁰

In the last two weeks of the campaign, Nixon was again to

turn to China as a prime issue. In a San Francisco speech on October 28th, he declared that Stevenson's position on the Far East would "mean suicide for America." He demanded that the Democratic nominee "renounce his previously expressed ideas and declare unequivocally" that he opposed recognition of Red China, supports free China...and opposes giving Formosa to the Communists." Nixon asserted that if Stevenson did not renounce his prior statements on the Far East, "he forfeits the right even to be considered for the Presidency."⁴¹ Nixon was referring to Stevenson's view supporting the then "unorthodox" and suspect notion that nationalism, not communism, might be the determining political force in China and elsewhere in Asia.

Undoubtedly Nixon's tactics alienated some voters but there is no denying that his onslaught against Stevenson and Truman also galvanized support for the Republican ticket. Perhaps it did not matter whom Eisenhower chose as his running mate since his popularity alone may have ensured victory but the debate over how Nixon helped or hindered the Republican national ticket in 1952 can be left to political scientists who wish to quantify such important questions. What matters is that Nixon had been elected to the second highest office in the land and would use his position within the new administration to steep himself in foreign affairs, travel and study as he evolved his own philosophy of foreign policy. China and a developing Pacific geopolitical strategy would not be lost in myopic concern over Europe although the defense of

Europe remained important to him, whereas the Asia Firsters might well have been happy to abandon that Old World entirely. Nixon would continue to devote much but hardly all of his energy to the situation in Asia. He was, after all, one of many who had spoken out vigorously against the Truman policy in the Korea War and the rest of the Asian continent. Nixon grabbed the spotlight over MacArthur's ouster but as has already been suggested, he was hardly focused solely on the China issue.

During Nixon's first year as vice president, Eisenhower would send him abroad on an unprecedented trip to some 19 Asian countries, making Nixon the highest ranking American official up to that time to visit that part of the world in an official capacity. It was on that journey that Nixon was able to hone his vision of America's proper role in Asia and the pivotal issue of how the United States should deal with the region's most vital and divisive issue, the China question.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER 1: MR. NIXON GOES TO WASHINGTON

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CHAPTER 2: THE GRAND TOUR OF ASIA

On July 7, 1953, the White House announced that Vice President Nixon would make a goodwill tour of the Far East. At the time, the assignment was interpreted as evidence that Eisenhower felt that the Truman administration had seriously neglected developing "formal national friendships" in that part of the globe. The Nixon trip was also viewed as a follow-up to Secretary of State John Foster Dulles's diplomatic mission to the Middle East that past spring.¹

When Nixon left Washington in October, The New York Times hailed him as "a kind of Assistant President" and praised the large role they considered the vice president to be playing in the new administration. The Times noted that with the young Californian in the Number Two slot, the job had taken on "larger dimensions" with Nixon regularly attending Cabinet and National Security Council meetings as well as serving as Eisenhower's liaison to GOP leaders on the Hill. After only half a dozen years or so in existence, the NSC had become an "inner cabinet" and The Times was impressed that Nixon chaired the meetings of the council whenever Eisenhower had other obligations. Not surprisingly, that bastion of Old Guard opinion, U.S. News & World Report joined in the chorus of praise for the nation's youngest vice president since John Breckinridge. However, although Nixon enjoyed far more respect from the mainstream press at that time than people who prefer to only remember his beleaguered and ultimately disgraced presidency can recall, there was not unanimous

support for the journey to the other side of the world. The liberal biweekly The Reporter, which had criticized Nixon in April 1952 as being too closely aligned with the China Lobby and had run another article excoriating him in that year's national campaign, editorialized that a vice president's place should be here at home. With some prescience, the magazine had no doubt that Nixon would be "royally received" by Generalissimo and Madame Chiang, but wondered whether he would "be prepared...for conversations on a high intellectual level with a man like Nehru, that sophisticated and almost petulantly independent statesman"? (As things turned out, Nixon's meeting in New Delhi with the "neutralist" Nehru was the lowpoint of what was later widely interpreted as a successful trip.). The Reporter recalled that Nixon's California backers took tremendous pride in Nixon's "salesmanship" but the journal worried that Nixon might be ill-suited to deal with a part of the world which is "developing a strong sales resistance to American advertising techniques." The liberal Italian immigrant Max Ascoli's publication concluded that "the education of Richard Nixon could be disastrously affected by a holiday from the Washington school of responsibility and a premature exposure to the eyes and ears of a critical world." Functioning on the highest levels of international diplomacy did not strike The Reporter as requiring the same kind of experience involved in speaking to a group of rotarians in southern California. But the strident tone of this editorial aside, Nixon had earned

respect from the mainstream press, and all this in just a year since the debacle over the fund.²

Yet, that voice of the Eastern Establishment, The New York Times, remained strongly in Nixon's corner as he set out on his grand tour. The paper pointed out that although extended travel abroad by a vice president was not unprecedented (FDR had sent Vice President Henry Wallace to the Soviet Union, China and South America), the scope of Nixon's ten-week, 38,000-mile trip with stops in some 19 countries distinguished his mission from previous ones. In a news analysis, W.H. Lawrence called the Nixon trip the most important ever taken by any vice president. He, too, perceived the assignment as proof of Nixon's "amazing comeback" in the aftermath of the Checkers speech as well as further evidence that he enjoyed Eisenhower's "full confidence" and was being kept completely informed of all the problems he would face should he have to succeed to the highest office in the land (The implication being, of course, to quell fear that Nixon might be as removed from the action as Truman had been at the time he became president.). Lawrence claimed that the Asian trip was seen as a "build-up" for Nixon which the White House did not discourage even though questions remained that should the president choose not to seek re-election in 1956, he would want Nixon to succeed him.

The trip was also taken by Lawrence as proof that the new administration was trying to strike more of a balance in the nation's foreign policy by paying more attention to Asia

rather than concentrating its diplomacy on Europe. But despite the so-called Nixon "buildup," the political writer believed that Nixon would be more of a "reporter than a roving ambassador" and that he had "no particular message" to impart to Asian leaders.

After stops in Australia and New Zealand, Nixon moved on to Saigon where on October 31 he called not only for the defeat of the Communist Vietminh but for a free and independent Vietnam, which could only have discomfited his French colonial hosts. Nixon again invoked the pre-Eisenhower "domino theory" by saying that if the Communists triumphed in Indochina, "independence would be lost to this whole part of the world." But independence from communism was not enough to satisfy the Wilsonian idealist in Nixon who insisted that the independence of Vietnam from the French should be the aim of the war. He then attempted to give a history lesson to his hosts by reminding them that France had helped the United States achieve its independence. (But just as French objectives differed from American ones in the American Revolution, so too did they diverge in the 1950s as France still hoped to retain the vestiges of its empire in Southeast Asia.) The vice president then tried to give both the Vietnamese and French a sense of mutual purpose by stating that Vietnamese independence could not be achieved without destroying the Communists in Vietnam.³

However, on November 2, while still in Saigon, Nixon modified that statement he had made upon arrival in Vietnam.

The vice president reportedly told the staunch anti-Communist emperor Bao Dai, the Vietnamese chief of state, that the United States disapproved of the campaign of the Vietnamese "ultranationalists" against the French. Nixon told the emperor that for Vietnam to gain independence they had to first destroy the Communists but would not be able to do so without the assistance of French troops (and he could have easily added the funds and materiel that the United States was supplying to the French).

The Vietnamese figurehead was said to agree with the vice president's emphasis on the necessity for allies in the struggle against the Vietminh. Bao Dai told Nixon that he believed Mao and Vietminh leader Ho Chi Minh had an understanding that should the Communists triumph in Indochina, the Vietminh would take all of Southeast Asia while China would extend its sphere of influence over the rest of the Far East. The emperor added that he feared the Communist Chinese would aid the Vietminh should the tide be turned against them. Nixon recalls in his memoirs that Bao Dai was opposed to negotiations of any kind with the Communists and he later claimed that the emperor warned him that "There is no point in negotiating with them. At the very least we would end up with a conference which would divide my country between us and them. And if Vietnam is divided, we will eventually lose it all."⁴ Was Bao Dai really so shrewd or is this just Nixon's own rendering in hindsight of a prophecy for what he believed would occur in Vietnam if the country was divided at that

point? (And of course, that is exactly what did happen since as a result of the Geneva Conference of 1954, the country was divided and finally reunified after the victory of the Communists in 1975).

What is particularly interesting here is the misperception that Bao Dai had of the nature of the Sino-Vietnamese alliance just as for the public record, American politicians in both the Republican and Democratic parties often spoke of monolithic communism in the guise of the Sino-Soviet relationship. Bao Dai certainly misread this, at least in the historical sense, since the peoples of Indochina and China had been dire enemies for centuries and over 20 years later, after the modern nations that composed Indochina fell, the ensuing major conflict in the region was over who would exercise influence in Cambodia: the Vietnamese or the Chinese-backed faction. Yet, making this statement is in no way an attempt to line up completely with revisionist historians who place far too much emphasis on the nationalistic nature of the Vietnamese and Chinese Revolutions. The middle ground is more tenable where one indeed understands the motives of those revolutions as being nationalistic, yes, but a nationalism distinctly marked by Communist ideology not necessarily in tune with the Kremlin, but Marxist-Leninist nonetheless. Actually despite the public posture that Nixon, Eisenhower and Dulles took regarding Sino-Soviet entente, historian Gordon H. Chang argues that the American leadership in the new Republican administration early on privately recognized the

possibilities of separating the Chinese Communists from Moscow. But this simply was not politique to mention in an era when so much of American foreign policy in Asia rested on the cornerstone of complete and unadulterated Communist conspiracy under the orchestration of Stalin's Kremlin.⁵

In Hanoi on November 4, Nixon said that the United States would not approve of any peace negotiations in Indochina that would deprive its people of their freedom. He called for a complete victory over the Communists in Indochina just as he had rallied behind MacArthur's cry for a total triumph in Korea. He backed off a bit again from his earlier Wilsonian urging for Vietnamese independence by restating that it was essential for the Vietnamese to remain within the French Union in order to defeat the Vietminh.

While in Vietnam, the vice president toured the front by jeep and was briefed by French military officials who said their troops did not have enough supplies and materiel to wage the war. They urged Nixon to try to get the United States to supply the anticommunist forces in Indochina, although America had been bankrolling the French since 1946. Nixon promised to take the matter up with Eisenhower on his return to Washington. But the anti-colonialist Nixon had little sympathy for the French as much as he wanted them to destroy the Vietminh. In his memoirs, RN, he goes to some length criticizing the French for their condescending and undeniably racist attitude toward the indigenous troops and people of Indochina. The southern Californian so steeped in American

middle-class egalitarian and democratic values found the rather decadent sight of the French dining in luxury particularly offensive, commenting that at one dinner he felt that he could just as easily have been at a mayoral banquet in Dijon or Toulouse.⁶

Nixon's anti-colonial, Wilsonian sensibilities were to be further offended upon his exposure to Hong Kong. But for the record he described the British crown colony as a last point of contact with the Chinese mainland and he praised its ability to take care of refugees, although Hong Kong could not possibly accommodate all those millions who would have wished to flee there. To Nixon, Hong Kong's political importance lay in its functioning as a "shining example of what life could be like on the mainland" if the Communists government "changed its ways or the present government was changed." Then, in echoing Wilson's comments on the friendship between the American and Russian peoples despite the differences between their governments, Nixon added that the friendship that existed between the Western world and the Chinese people could not be disrupted forever by the totalitarian Chinese government in Peking. But his memoirs make clear how much disdain he felt for continued British rule of Hong Kong.⁷ There was truly much of the Wilsonian idealist in Nixon.

The vice president arrived in Taiwan on November 8 where he delivered a nationwide broadcast in which Reuters reported that he said that the people of China would "reopen communications and become friendly with the rest of the

world." However, a transcript of the broadcast included in the Nixon Pre-Presidential Papers clearly shows that although Nixon spoke of what he considered the natural amity between the Chinese and American peoples, he hardly indicated that he expected communications with the mainland to be reopened. Perhaps not too much should be made of what could be a matter of semantics but so much of diplomacy in the end comes down to the nuance of an altered phrase which can change perceptions. This could have been a case where a reporter summarized a speech in a convenient phrase or perhaps where Nixon departed from the text that is included in his papers. These are the very vagueries that keep historians in business although no matter how much work is done to clarify such points, there are instances where the "truth" may very well never be uncovered.

The transcript indicates that Nixon referred to the actions of the Peking government as "one of the tragedies of our time" since it effectively cut off millions of Chinese on the mainland from America and the rest of the free world. For the vice president, the tragedy lay in that he believed the Chinese people are "basically friendly to America and friendly to the free nations" and that they should "have the opportunity to express their friendship through open communication," not that he expected communication to be reopened as Reuters had reported. He firmed up the American commitment to Taipei by telling his listening audience that the United States "recognizes the government of Free China as the one which most truly represents the Chinese nation and the

Chinese people." He added that he was "confident that this situation in which millions of Chinese people are cut off from the rest of the free world due to the actions of the government which has been imposed on them cannot endure indefinitely." Nixon concluded his remarks by saying he looked forward to the day when the people of China and the free world "can live together in peace and friendship."⁸

What is striking in Nixon's comments in Chiang's capital is the marked change in tone from the one he used for domestic political consumption. His rhetoric is conciliatory rather than inflammatory and antagonistic. Instead of taking advantage of a potential opportunity to attack Peking aggressively and goad Chiang on to regain the mainland, he chose to couch his language in unbelligerent terms addressing a future hope that the Chinese and American peoples would be able to resume their natural friendship without specifically addressing how that would be brought about. Nor did he directly say that such resumption of friendship between the two peoples even required the ouster of the Communist regime or the restoration of Chiang and the KMT to power in Peking. This was not the strident Richard Nixon who his critics at home so despised and this pattern of conciliatory language, without the bombastic rhetoric, continued through his five-day visit to the Republic of China.

On November 9, Nixon's second day in the island nation, he was greeted by cheering crowds in the streets. He gave a speech before the parliament in which he reaffirmed the

American position that the government in Taiwan was the one true, legitimate government representing the Chinese people. Nixon overrated the quality and depth of Chiang's democracy when he lauded the legislators for having been chosen by the people of Taiwan to represent them whereas the Communist government in the mainland was "imposed upon the people by force." To Nixon, what distinguished totalitarian and free nations was "the right of people to determine the type of government they want" although this statement conveniently ignored the dictatorial nature of Chiang's regime on Taiwan and particularly his oppression of the native Taiwanese in favor of those exiled Chinese from the mainland. But despite the mark of Wilsonian idealism suggested earlier on Nixon, underneath there lay a very cool, though perhaps still too young and eager, student of international affairs who was beginning to have a grasp over the dilemmas of choice in the world of realpolitik. Although Chiang was hardly in the mold of a Jeffersonian, to Nixon and those in his camp, he was preferable to the Communist Mao.

The vice president implored the legislators to hold up Taiwan as an example to its own people and those who inhabited the mainland of "what a free people and representative government can do." Nixon, invoking a Lincolnesque spirit in his address, added that Taiwan was showing that a "free government is always better for the people in the long run than a slave government." All that was left to be asked was whether or not China could survive half-slave and half-free.

Nixon then elaborated on his favorite theme of Chinese-American friendship and that this amity existed by pointing out that "despite the actions of the ruthless government which dominates the Mainland" and that the "genuine affection which the people of the United States have also always had for the Chinese people has never wavered in any respect." Nixon was very much a child of the allure of the "China Myth" in which the affinity between Americans and Chinese was often romanticized and exaggerated to the detriment of true American understanding of Chinese politics and social movements. Despite Nixon's classic American romance for the Chinese people, he interpreted Mao's Communists as an undeniably pernicious and a major threat to the peace and stability of Asia and the western Pacific.

He concluded this speech by saying he was confident that the "artificial line" which had been drawn between the people of the two nations could not go on forever and that he was sure that in the end, "it will be the cause of freedom, the cause of representative government rather than the cause of slavery which will triumph not only in China but throughout the world."⁹

The vice president continued to laud Chinese-American amity in a speech later that day before 24 of Taiwan's civic organizations. Nixon told this Chinese version of rotarians that they, too, and not only their government, had a great "responsibility to keep the fire of freedom burning in the hearts of the Chinese people not only here (Taiwan) but on the

mainland as well." He then expressed his confidence that "the cause of free and representative government for all the people of China is one that cannot lose" and that in the end it would be victorious. It is hard to believe that Nixon really believed this since he had a good grasp of how difficult it would be to bring down the Communists in Peking. But the important thing is that he did not merely want to pander to his audience, but somehow keep the hope alive that China would one day be "free." A little hope, no matter how unrealistic, can go a long way among allies in international relations.

He then offered a critique of the Communist Chinese government that might have pleased any sophist in ancient Athens. He challenged the notion that the Peking government was a "people's" government and said that the Chinese people themselves would ultimately change the government. Nixon theorized that communism in China could not possibly survive because of the importance the Chinese people place on family, in contrast to Communist doctrine. (This line of thinking follows the oft expressed view within the China Lobby before the revolution that China simply could not go Communist because of the Chinese people's venerable, traditional heritage, ostensibly so antithetical to communism. This was wishful thinking on the part of the proponents of Chiang for although it is true on the surface, the preeminent China scholar John King Fairbank has successfully argued that Mao's Communism retained many Chinese elements in its character even though one could hardly use the modern nomenclature "pro

family" to describe it.) To attempt to ignite a sense of fraternity with America in his Chinese audience, Nixon said that Americans have close families, too, and that they play such an integral role in both societies. (This is something that President Ronald Reagan would echo during his 1984 trip to Tokyo when speaking about the supposed similarities between Japanese and Americans. Could Reagan have been trying to invent the Japan Myth?) Nixon further described how the Chinese, just like the Americans, are gregarious people who "like to get together in Junior Chambers of Commerce, and Rotary Clubs and labor organizations such as are represented here." This, Nixon argued was as far removed as possible from life under a Communist government which would say that "no such organizations can exist under our system unless we set them up, we control them, and we run them." Nixon, ever the smooth debater, added that although the Communists "call their government a people's government--it will fail because it is not a people's government." Nixon concluded that the "great friendship" between Americans and Chinese simply could not be resisted and that in the future those on the mainland and in the United States would be friends.¹⁰

These remarks were made by the American politician, Richard Nixon, accustomed to speaking to American civic groups when he would go out on the hustings back home. That day he was truly before his kind of audience. Boosters. Babbits. Only this time Main Street ran through downtown Taipei. Somehow in this speech, the artful Nixon managed to relate the

traditions of Confucian China to the American way of life. Through the use of this kind of effective rhetoric, Nixon sought to bring the Chinese and Americans closer together and keep the hope raised high that China would one day be free, although he never seems to direct the most vital issue at hand: just exactly how that very feat could be achieved.

The next day, November 10, after reviewing Chinese Nationalist troops, Nixon commented that Chiang's army was stronger than many in the West had thought. Of course, the question immediately arises that if they were so strong, what were they doing in Taiwan in the first place? But the vice president was diplomatically and politely trying to keep their morale up. He could not exactly say that they were as weak or even weaker than the "experts" in the West believed. He praised the Nationalists by pointing out that some of them had "been fighting communism for over thirty years" and pungently added that there were "leaders in the United States (who) didn't recognize that Communism existed until a few years ago."¹¹ If the vice president had been campaigning at home, he most surely would have gone on to denounce Roosevelt at Yalta and Truman and Acheson over their Asian policy (or lack of it, as he would have preferred to say), but this being a diplomatic mission, he refrained from directly attacking the Democratic opposition back in the U.S.

The following day the vice president participated in ground-breaking ceremonies at Tunghai University. Nixon used this occasion to express his wish that many of the so-called

Overseas Chinese (Chinese living outside of China) might come to Taiwan for their higher education. He was especially concerned that a large number of Overseas Chinese were going to the mainland for their education where he knew only too well they would be indoctrinated with Communist ideology. Nixon stressed the importance of education in the battle for "the minds and the hearts and the souls of men" which he termed "the great struggle...in the world today." To Nixon, it was important that Free China be "not only a bastion of military and economic strength...but a bastion of cultural strength, of spiritual strength" and an example for free people around the world. Education was the sine qua non in what Nixon liked to refer to as the "ideological conflict" with communism.¹²

The highlight of the trip to Taiwan was Nixon's private meeting with Chiang, where Madame Chiang served as interpreter. Nixon recalled his meeting with the Generalissimo 25 years later in his memoirs. Nixon, more than Eisenhower's mere "reporter," had a terribly unpleasant message to impart to Chiang: namely, that the United States would not commit its military power to support any invasion that Chiang might launch against the mainland. However, Nixon had to be diplomatic and "could not tell Chiang outright that his chances of reuniting China were virtually nonexistent." In retrospect, Nixon called Chiang's "plans to return to the mainland totally unrealistic."¹³

Now, this does not mean that the Eisenhower administration

and Nixon were ready to accept the Peking regime formally. Hardly. But there was an awareness within the administration of the reality of Communist power in Peking that if ever stated publicly would have roused the China Lobby in all its fury. In fact, throughout the Eisenhower years, the administration, and Nixon in particular, frequently had to shoot down rumors that the United States might alter its policy of non-recognition of China and its stand against that country's admission to the United Nations. The American government's public posture of absolute unwillingness to compromise on China and the private, gruesome recognition that the Communists would be impossible to dislodge from Peking marked the 1950s. Acceptance of realities, no matter how distasteful, in the privacy of government councils and the necessity to maintain an idealistic, if often unrealistic position to the world, is not hypocritical. The facts of political life in America are that the domestic political climate simply did not allow for any change in the China policy at that time. In the American political system, domestic political considerations, whether worthy or not, nearly always reign supreme over political realities abroad. Whether this is right or wrong is not the point. It is real, the way of the American political world.

Ambassador Karl Lott Rankin, United States envoy to the Republic of China during Nixon's visit, later reported that Chiang perceived the questions of Korea and Indochina as problems that were "insoluble by themselves." Chiang believed

that as long as the mainland remained under Communist rule, all countries in the region were under the "constant threat of aggression." Rankin reported to Washington that Chiang told Nixon that Communist Chinese efforts in Korea "represented their maximum present capability, and that increasingly long and difficult communications would reduce that capability...as the projected theater of operations is moved to the south." (By which, one assumes, Chiang meant any distraction his forces could induce by fighting to regain the mainland.)¹⁴ Chiang, of course, was echoing what Nixon had proposed during the wake of MacArthur's firing. Unfortunately, Rankin does not reveal what reply, if any, Nixon had to Chiang's comments.

Nixon suffered some embarrassment in Taiwan when Secretary of State Dulles held a press conference in Washington in which he said that the United States was "not forever opposed to a recognition of a Communist government in China," this coming on the heels of Nixon's effort to shore up the regime publicly on Taiwan. However, Dulles was quick to add that the matter of recognition could not be considered as long as Peking was a "proclaimed aggressor in Korea and has not purged itself" and was "promoting aggression in Indo-China" as well as continuing to act in a way "which is not becoming of a nation which presumably has the obligations...expressed in the (United Nations) Charter." The secretary of state pointed out as well that this view had never been articulated diplomatically. He was in no way calling for a change in American policy. Perhaps his intention was indeed, to make such remarks while

Nixon was in Taipei, to drive home to Chiang that the U.S. would not offer military assistance should Chiang try to regain the mainland. Or perhaps Dulles was just rendering one of his pedantic lawyerly briefs over the legal complications of the issue of Chinese admission to the U.N. What is surprising is that Dulles seemed to hold open the door to the very theoretical possibility of "two" Chinas in the United Nations. He told reporters that he recognized the possibility that Communist China might be represented in the General Assembly while the government on Taiwan could be on the Security Council. He pointed out that "China," as such, was a charter member of the United Nations and that the question of which government represented China was another matter. Dulles pointed out that only in the case of new member nations admitted to the U.N. was it required that both the Assembly and Security Council approve.¹⁵ This professorial digression was the last thing Nixon needed to contend with on this sensitive part of the trip. Young Nixon just might have been Dulles's "prat boy" on this mission.

But Dulles was just stating an interpretation of what constituted membership in the United Nations. He was hardly advocating recognition of Communist China nor its admission to the U.N. Furthermore, the secretary's comments did not stir up any controversy at home so it is hardly likely that Dulles was signaling any change in United States policy. After all, "forever" is a long time.

But Rankin reported back to Washington that several Taiwan

newspapers editorialized against the Dulles remarks and perceived that the Eisenhower administration might just not be tough enough on the Communists and one paper complained that from the position of Taipei, the new administration was no better than the Truman team.¹⁶

Nixon was also reportedly angry about the Dulles statement. The vice president was described in a November 10 United Press account as "obviously angered" and as having told a dinner audience that he was "confident that in the final analysis the Chinese people will never allow a Communist government to prevail over them." The wire service story maintained that the Nixon response was "interpreted by observers as an indirect reply to Mr. Dulles although Mr. Nixon did not name him." Before departing Taiwan for South Korea on November 12, Nixon issued another statement trying to clarify what Dulles had said. The vice president insisted the secretary's comments did not represent any change in American policy toward China, and the U.S. would continue to oppose the admission of Communist China into the U.N. Nixon matched Dulles in discussing the legal niceties of the China issue and the U.N. He explained that the secretary had actually discussed two separate problems: U.S. recognition of China and its admission to the U.N. He pointed out that Dulles had said that the United States could not consider recognition as long as the "Red regime continues to be an aggressor in Korea; promotes aggression in Indochina; (and) conducts itself not in accord with the United Nations Charter." Nixon added that it

all boiled down to that the U.S. would not even think about recognition "unless Red China quits following Communist policy and quits taking orders from Moscow." As for the U.N., the vice president said the United States would continue to be against the admission of "a government which has waged war against the United Nations...has on its hands the blood of over 150,000 men from members of the United Nations...and obstructs the United Nations in its efforts to bring peace to Korea."¹⁷ For one who at home so stridently criticized the lack of support from other members of the U.N., Nixon abroad was only too happy to draw them in for the sake of his argument.

However, although Rankin wrote the State Department that the Taiwan press was still not entirely satisfied with Nixon's response, The New York Times said that the vice president's explanation of Dulles's comments "softened what would otherwise have been a heavier blow."¹⁸

This particular episode is important because it reveals how the young vice president, on his first trip abroad for the administration, treated the highly sensitive issue of United States recognition of Communist China (and the question of its admission into the United Nations) while he was in the very diplomatically delicate position of being a visitor in Chiang's Taiwan. However, at this point in the mission it appeared that Nixon might well indeed have been in a little hot water with the secretary of state. Drew Pearson wrote in the Washington Post of November 23 that Dulles was "not happy,

to put it mildly, over Vice President Richard Nixon's impromptu diplomacy on his Far Eastern tour." Dulles, Pearson reported, was especially perturbed over the way Nixon handled the recognition question that arose during the visit to Taiwan. "After Dulles announced that the United States may someday recognize Red China," the columnist wrote, "Nixon assured Chiang Kai-Shek in Formosa that the secretary of state really didn't mean what he said. Naturally, Dulles was furious." As Pearson told the story, Dulles objected to Nixon's showmanship. "Nixon reached for too many headlines," he wrote, and "may have put personal publicity ahead of American foreign policy."

As if that was not enough trouble for the earnest "Young Richard," Dulles was also said to be displeased over Nixon's performance in Indochina where the vice president had urged the French to fight for total victory against the Communist guerrillas. Pearson claimed that the French "protested afterward that the United States didn't fight the Korean war to total victory, and that the French might settle for an honorable truce in Indo-China too." To add insult to injury, the highly influential Washington columnist revealed that the secretary was so unhappy with Nixon's recent behavior abroad that the vice president was now being forced to read prepared speeches "scrutinized" in advance by American diplomats.¹⁹ If indeed, what Pearson wrote was true, it must have rankled Nixon because he prided himself on drafting his own speeches and being able to speak extemporaneously when the need arose.

Nixon and his wife Pat, who had accompanied him on the trip, had insisted to the State Department that they not follow the usual routine of only high-level meetings and formal state dinners. Rather, the young southern California couple wanted to be sure to have ample opportunity to meet with the common people and tour marketplaces, schools, hospitals and even speak to opposition leaders. This undoubtedly alienated the "striped pants" set. Pearson was already a committed Nixon opponent who had continued to question the candidate's personal finances after the Checkers speech and attack him personally. Pearson, of course must have had numerous sources at Foggy Bottom, but one has to read Pearson with the knowledge that he was no Nixon fan. Dulles, may well have been annoyed at the time, but when the whole relationship between the secretary and the vice president is considered, this minor flap was a deviation. The two developed a close personal relationship, in essence, one of mentor-student in which Dulles played the professor of foreign affairs to the eager, bright young student, Nixon. To Nixon's credit, the secretary also had ample respect for Nixon's political abilities and insight in dealing with Congress and often looked to him to get the "inside dope" on how key players on the Hill were leaning on major foreign policy issues.²⁰

Nixon left Taiwan for South Korea where he had another vital message to impart to that nation's president, Syngman Rhee. The vice president was greeted upon arrival with placards calling for the "liberation" of North Korea. His

speeches on this stop readily recognized that "Korea means something to the United States, Korea means something to the world", yet none of Nixon's remarks came close to conveying the emotional tone he set in Taiwan extolling the tradition of friendship between the Chinese and American peoples. China had won a sentimental place in his heart and historical imagination, and in the hearts of thousands, if not millions, of other Americans. Korea simply had not touched the American spirit as China had. This was so in spite of the fact that the United States had just been allied with the South Koreans in a bloody conflict against Communists, thousands upon thousands of whom just happened to be Chinese. But the roots of the China Myth ran deep in Nixon as with so many other Americans and there was no comparable, deep-seated feeling that contributed to any "Korea Myth." Nixon spoke before the Korean National Assembly on November 13 and urged that the United States and South Korea "stand firmly side by side" in an effort to win "a free, united and independent Korea. It is our responsibility as legislators-leaders of our people-to accomplish" the reunification "if we can win in peace," he concluded.²¹

In his memoirs, Nixon recalled that he spent a good deal of his time in Korea trying to get the message across to Rhee that Eisenhower was adamantly against any unilateral military action by South Korea to reunify his country. Nixon claims that he finally got Rhee to assent to the Eisenhower request, although he was markedly impressed by Rhee's contention that

the element of unpredictability was vital in combating the Communists. Rhee felt that his hand was strengthened if the North Koreans thought he just might have the audacity to take action on his own. The Eisenhower administration disagreed, just having concluded the hostilities which cost some 34,000 American lives. But Rhee's lesson was not lost on Nixon and one thinks of how during his presidency, the "madman" theory, i.e., that Nixon was willing to stand up to possible Russian intervention in the Yom Kippur War, prevented Leonid Brezhnev from daring to intercede directly in that conflict. The so-called "madman" theory was also said to have been respected by the North Vietnamese before the signing of the peace accords when then-President Nixon relentlessly bombed the North.

Yet, at the time of the visit to Korea, Drew Pearson would not let up on his attack of the vice president. Pearson suggested that Nixon actually pledged American support to Rhee for unilaterally seeking militarily Korean reunification even though that was precisely against what Eisenhower wanted. For Pearson, this was further fuel for the fire that ignited Dulles's anger towards Nixon. But in sharp contrast to Pearson's portrayal of Nixon's stop in Korea, The New York Times reported that the vice president had actually "helped soften...Rhee's determination to renew the war if an early solution was not found to the problem of unification of the peninsula." The Times added that the vice president "got a renewed pledge from the Republic of Korea leader to consult

fully with the United States. In turn, Mr. Nixon was reported to have assured Dr. Rhee he could rely fully on United States support." Now, The Times version is a bit less tempered than Nixon's own recollections, but perhaps even the American government did not want it publicized that Rhee had absolutely, positively ruled out all military options. What was desired was the appearance that it would not involve the United States and Nixon's reported assurance of "support" does not specifically mention the employment of American troops.²² This is another case of just who should an historian believe: a president's memoirs, the reporting of America's "newspaper of record," or a story by a prestigious, albeit staunchly anti-Nixon, Washington correspondent? Pearson's anti-Nixon bias leads one to exercise caution in reading his account.

There was even more controversy to come when Nixon got to Japan. The furor came over remarks he made calling America's prior insistence on Japanese disarmament a "mistake" in light of Soviet geopolitical developments since the end of World War II. Nixon actually acquitted himself quite nicely from what could have been a nasty morass and was generally praised back home by a variety of newspapers across the political spectrum. The incident was stirred up when on November 19, Nixon addressed the Japan-America Society in Tokyo and said that considering the Communist threat emanating from Moscow, the United States had "made a mistake in 1946" when it persuaded Japan not to have an army and navy with offensive

capabilities. The United States did not readily look to admit past or present errors in the harsh Cold War climate of 1953. This comment was so very highly inflammable because of the American insistence that the Japanese renounce war in their 1947 constitution. The renunciation of war had been embraced by the Japanese themselves, whose own country had been so devastated by the war they had initiated. So, here was the seemingly audacious young Nixon seeking the reversal of what had been the heart of United States postwar policy towards Japan. "We misjudged the intensions of the Soviet leaders," he said. "We believe in peace; we believe in disarmament," he added. Then the vice president posed a rhetorical question. "We felt disarmament was proper in 1946. Why is it wrong then in 1953?" The answer, to him, was obvious. "It is the threat from the Communist nations and the threat centered in Moscow," he pointed out concluding that "if it were not for the Communist threat, the free world could live in peace."

Nixon then urged his Tokyo audience to "analyze" the threat to peace seen in the recently concluded Korean war and the fighting then taking place in Indochina. "If we want peace we must be militarily stronger than the Communist nations," he said. But military strength alone was not enough as he stated that it was "essential" to maintain "economic strength as well." Nixon was only too cognizant that the United States could not fight communism alone as he added that "all the free nations of the world must stand together. It is essential for the United States to have friends." Nixon then

returned to his favorite theme flavored with the domino theory, equating the importance of both Asia and Europe in the struggle against Communist domination. "What happens in Asia is just as important as what happens in Europe. If Japan falls, he warned, "all of Asia falls. Likewise, if Asia falls, Japan falls, too. Japan must work with the free nations, maintaining adequate strength."

The vice president then linked Japan's freedom to the successful defense of South Korea. Nixon said that if the Korean War had not been fought, "Japan today would be under the domination of Communist imperialism. You have only to look at the map to see that this is true," he added. He also pointed out that Korea could not have been defended nor the advance of communism stopped if the U.S. and other members of the United Nations had not been able to use Japan as a base.

This time around, Nixon's Tokyo remarks drew the support of Dulles and the State Department. Dulles told reporters back in Washington that he agreed with Nixon's contention that the United States "made a mistake in 1946" in seeking Japanese disarmament. "As Vice President Nixon said," Dulles observed, "those in charge of our own foreign policy at that time seemed to have assumed, as was quite natural perhaps to assume--many of us did--that we were entering into an era of lasting peace and that the Soviet Union would not be a threat." But for both Dulles and Nixon, the perceived Communist threat emanating from the Kremlin and Peking provided the rationale to seek Japanese rearmament in 1953. Nixon disclosed in his

memoirs that both he and Dulles had agreed that Nixon would make these remarks in Tokyo as a trial balloon to try to bring about support for the rearming of Japan. Both privately agreed, remembered Nixon, that it was necessary to strengthen Japan militarily in order to face down Communist pressure to dominate the Pacific. The feeling was that it was simply too volatile a political issue to raise on American soil. Nixon says that the speech had just precisely the effect he and Dulles wanted it to have: namely, for the press to think that Nixon had merely ventured out on a limb by himself to express these sentiments as well as providing encouragement to the anticommunist leaders in Japan. Could the secretary of state have been trying to set up Drew Pearson all along? Nixon also commented that the Japanese were particularly impressed that the United States should have admitted making a mistake.²³

In Burma, Nixon confronted pro-Communist demonstrators and made headlines at home when he walked through the crowd of protesters, introduced himself (as if they did not already know who he was) and challenged one man as to whether or not he thought Communist aggression in Indochina was right. The crowd soon dispersed and the lesson that Nixon took from the incident was that Communists were a lot like bullies in a schoolyard. They had to be stood up to, their bluff had to be called. This was a bit of a prelude to Caracas nearly five years later.

The major issue of discussion on this stop was the presence of Chinese Nationalist troops on Burmese soil. The

vice president candidly acknowledged that Chiang's forces in Burma were a "a major point of irritation in United States relations with Burma." Nixon also recognized that the Burmese held the United States responsible for the failure of the Nationalist Chinese troops to withdraw since Burma considered America to be the main power behind Chiang. But Nixon certainly did not leave the impression that the American government was going to immediately try to erase the Chinese Nationalist presence in their country, despite his recognition that it was a source of contention between the two nations.

Yet, Nixon's appearance in Rangoon seemed to disappoint some Burmese observers. Maung Maung, in a letter to The New Republic, cited several local newspapers which suggested that Nixon's stopover in the country was a "disappointment." Maung objected to Nixon's campaign style politicking in Burma, deeming it inappropriate behavior for an American vice president abroad. But the major controversy concerned the presence of Chiang's troops and Burmese resentment that they were allying themselves with local bandits and rebels, an issue which the writer thought Nixon had side-stepped. Maung unfairly, and inaccurately, charged that Nixon had said in Taiwan that Chiang would soon be returning to the mainland, something which the record shows he did not say. Yet, even this Asian critic had to concede that Nixon exhibited skill "in handling difficult situations" such as the anti-Nixon demonstration, and remarked that "his ruthless efficiency and determination to be successful...are assets that should carry

Mr. Nixon far in his political ambitions."²⁴

One of the few blemishes on an otherwise successful journey was Nixon's meetings with Nehru in India. Nehru had been a thorn in the side of American policy in Asia since he had been an early proponent of Communist Chinese admission to the United Nations as well as criticizing the Eisenhower administration's talk of the possibility of instituting a blockade against China. Washington was also concerned that Nehru was drawing too close to Moscow. The Indian leader ultimately emerged as the primary spokesman for the so-called "non-aligned" movement, the "neutrals" who many American policymakers generally deemed to be actually more inclined towards supporting the Kremlin than the West. In his memoirs, Nixon later described Nehru as the "least friendly leader" he met on the trip and was alienated by the prime minister speaking "obsessively and interminably about India's relationship with Pakistan." The vice president was apparently dumbfounded that Nehru should devote so much energy and time to "railing against" Pakistan rather than discussing U.S.-Indian relations or other Asian issues. Nixon suspected that Nehru's main goal was his own "thirst for influence" in the region and among the nations emerging newly independent from colonialism, what we now call the Third World. Nixon snidely wrote that if only Nehru had devoted as much of his ability to solving India's own domestic problems, then Indian democracy might be stronger today. Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi, served as the official hostess, and Nixon apparently

did not care for her either, calling her "in every way her father's daughter."

Nehru was angry that the United States was thought to be on the verge of offering Pakistan considerable military aid which, naturally, he thought could only endanger India's own strategic position in South Asia and even in its northern-most state of Kashmir, which was a source of contention between the two Asian governments. The so-called American "tilt to Pakistan" can rightly be said to have begun in this period of growing distrust between New Dehli and Washington. As president, Nixon was considered to side with Pakistan again over its seemingly eternal disputes with India. And it should be remembered that when Nixon secretly dispatched Henry Kissinger to China, he went through Pakistan. The bottom line was that Nixon always viewed the Pakistanis as consistently and staunchly anti-Soviet allies in Asia while he was often suspect of the Indian leadership. The issue of how American diplomacy should handle "neutralism" popped up again later in Nixon's vice presidency when he returned to Asia in 1956.

On arrival in Karachi, Nixon had reportedly lauded Pakistan for its "readiness to fight the new Communist colonialism." (Again, Nixon, in the true Wilsonian spirit, saw the Asian nations as having been either victims of past European or current Communist colonialism.) Nixon was far more at ease in Pakistan where he met with Ayub Khan, who at that time headed the nation's military but had not yet risen to political power there. Nixon was pleased to see that

although Khan made clear his hatred of the Hindus and distrust of the Indians, he was concerned with other issues than Pakistani-Indian friction. Khan impressed Nixon as being decidedly anticommunist and a willing and eager ally of the United States who was particularly worried that as Nixon recalled, "the Soviets would use India as a cat's paw for establishing a major presence in South Asia." But Khan must have been equally concerned about what he must have considered as Nehru's pernicious influence in the region. The Pakistani-U.S. entente was a relationship in which several interests were served, not only the American desire to contain the Soviets but the additional goal of "containing" the influence of Mr. Nehru.

Looking back on this trip in 1956, Selig S. Harrison wrote in The New Republic that when a Karachi newspaper ran a headline on the second day of the Nixon visit proclaiming a United States pledge on military aid for Pakistan, the "Indians decided that Nixon had been less than honest with them. His visit had left a bad taste." A year later, Nehru called Nixon "an unprincipled cad." Harrison believed that the vice president's support for an arms pact "tipped the scales" in Pakistan's favor back in Washington. William Costello, in his critical The Facts About Nixon (originally serialized in The New Republic in late 1959) also criticized Nixon's early attack on neutralism and charged that the vice president's "dogmatism" on the issue "seemed to contradict Eisenhower's generous views on the subject."²⁵ The question

remains, however, that if the president's views were indeed so "generous," why did he end up backing military aid to Pakistan? In defense of Nixon, it can hardly be said that Nehru's espousal of "neutralism" was in the interests of the United States, and Nehru himself had been a seering critic of American policy in Asia. If the old creed of politics is reward your friends and punish your enemies, why should not the United States at that time have sought to enhance its own interests and influence in South Asia? Nehru chose to chart his own course which was rightly understood as inimical to American interests, so why should he have been signalled any sign of encouragement? Today, of course, with the end of the threat of Communist advance in Asia, this policy towards India would be outdated, despite the enmity that will always remain between Pakistan and India. But the 1950s was an entirely different period and although Nixon's dislike of neutralism may well have indeed fueled the non-aligned movement's anti-Americanism at the time, in the "long run", it was the right choice. In foreign affairs, Nixon was never one with his eye on only the expedient course for the present.

Despite the tension engendered by the Nehru meetings, the Asian trip was a triumph for Nixon. He and Pat returned to an effusive welcome in Washington December 14 and were praised by both Eisenhower and the press.²⁶ Upon arrival back home, Nixon said Asians wanted peace and if the Communist leaders rejected Eisenhower's proposal before the United Nations that the world's nuclear power be used for peaceful rather than

military purposes, the Communists would lose ground "tremendously" in the vast continent.²⁷

Nixon's grand tour of Asia succeeded in enhancing his prestige within the administration. The New York Times editorialized that "the consensus was that in general he had done much to improve U.S.-Asian understanding," and the paper praised the vice president's "penchant for mixing with ordinary citizens and avoiding the customary pomp of a state visit." (Nixon may not have known how to please the American diplomatic corps abroad but he certainly knew what would make good copy back home and how to play to the American people.) The Times also observed that Nixon appears to have gained esteem at the White House where President Eisenhower cordially commended him for the generally good impression he has made in many countries." In a separate article, the nation's premiere newspaper predicted that as a result of his trip, Nixon would "be able to influence foreign policy as has perhaps no other Vice President." The Times noted in particular that Nixon was likely to use his new-found influence to try to bring about Japanese rearmament, overcome delays in South Korea's reconstruction, and last, but hardly least important, to bolster the French and the native governments of Indochina in their fight against the Communists.²⁸

Don Irwin, writing for that resounding voice of Eastern Establishment Republicanism, the New York Herald Tribune, said that the trip might even possibly have made Nixon a "contender for the Presidency in his own right." Irwin lauded Nixon's

"not inconsiderable attainment in winning popular praise in the Orient, in the face of Communist efforts to pain all Americans as 'imperialists' callous toward non-Western peoples."²⁹

Despite having been so critical of Nixon just a few weeks before, that old Nixon nemesis, Drew Pearson seemed to have had a change of heart. Even Pearson had to concede that "Nixon handled himself well and won a lot of good will for the U.S.A." Pearson had a lot to say about what he read as Nixon's apparent open-mindedness on the China issue, although he did not reveal any of his sources for the controversial claims he made in his column. The Washington journalist wrote that Nixon had told Nehru that the United States "would recognize Red China, if China, in turn, took a more reasonable attitude toward the West. Red China, he [Nixon] said was probably here to stay and if the Reds would bring about a permanent peace in Korea, we would be willing to revise our present diplomatic boycott." Pearson then said that Nehru was so "impressed" that he immediately contacted his ambassador to Peking and urged him to use the news to "promote peace in Korea." Without knowing Pearson's sources, one would have to conclude that this was rather doubtful reasoning on his part.

Pearson believed that Nixon had drifted away from the Congressional China Bloc's intractable position against recognizing Communist China. He further claimed that in discussions with Burmese and Indonesian leaders, Nixon "held out the same virtual promise of recognizing Red China in return

for Korean peace." Now, the columnist claimed that Nixon had been speaking with the "complete approval of the State Department, which made this fact all too clear when Nixon was in Formosa." As for the apparent flap with Dulles over recognition of China, Pearson said that while visiting Chiang, the vice president said publicly that America would never desert the Nationalist Chinese leader and never recognize Red China, but once he heard the Dulles remarks in Washington, he changed his tune.³⁰ For one thing, Nixon visited Indonesia before Taiwan or Burma and it was highly unlikely that he would tell Sukarno that the United States would be prepared to recognize Communist China.

As Nixon and Dulles had both made clear, "China" was a great nation that was already accepted into the United Nations. Now, if Pearson had closely examined the text of what Nixon actually said in Taiwan, he would have understood that Nixon was not talking about recognition of the Communist government as it was, but was speaking hopefully of a day when conditions might change the government in Peking without elaborating on how that would be brought about. The Communist Chinese government, to Nixon, acted in violation of the United Nations charter and until Chinese aggressive behavior changed there could be absolutely no such consideration of recognition or Peking's admission to the United Nations. Also, Pearson clearly misinterpreted the Dulles statement. The secretary never said that the United States would keep an "open mind regarding Red China" or that Washington might "some day

recognize her." Dulles merely observed that the Eisenhower administration never said it would be forever opposed to the recognition of Communist China. That is hardly tantamount to recognition. And remember, that privately, Nixon had indicated to Chiang that Washington would offer no support should he try to militarily regain the mainland. The idea of Nixon directly telling Nehru that the United States might recognize Communist China is absolutely ludicrous. If he was going to impart that message to anyone, the last leader it would have been would be Nehru. The language and nuance of diplomacy is a far subtler matter than Pearson seemed capable of discerning at that time.

The vice president gave his own version of the trip in a nationally televised address from Washington on December 23. Nixon asserted that the Eisenhower administration's foreign policy had succeeded in putting the Communists "for the first time...on the defensive all over the world." He added that the Communists "lost their chance" to control Asia when the United States stopped their aggression on that continent (the inference, of course, being to Korea but not surprisingly, no credit was given to Truman for the intervention.) But Nixon was not about to let down his or the nation's guard and he warned that Asians were still endangered by "internal subversion and revolution" if not "armed overt aggression."³¹

For Nixon, Communist China was still the devil incarnate in Asia, the "basic cause of all our troubles" on the

continent and the ultimate reason for the war in Korea, Indochina and Malaya (where indigenous guerrillas had been waging an unsuccessful battle against the British since 1948. In fact, the British use of Malayan forces to fight the Communists there was to inspire John F. Kennedy's strategy of counter-insurgency in Vietnam. To Nixon's credit as well, the British idea of using Malaysian troops to fight their own battle did not radically differ from what he had proposed for Indochina at the time or in his own presidential program of Vietnamization of the war. The Nixon Doctrine enunciated in 1969, in which native forces were to carry their own military burdens, might even be said to have been influenced in part by the successful British experience in Malaysia.). Nixon told the American people that Taiwan's military and economic strength was growing and, in what he thought of as a potential propaganda coup, he added that the Overseas Chinese in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand and elsewhere in Southeast Asia were turning against the Peking government. However, he avoided the subject of how this development might ultimately affect the Communist Chinese regime.

Instead, Nixon resorted to the rhetorical device of several anecdotes which graphically illustrated Communist cruelty and barbarity. He was not too subtly suggesting that the Communist Chinese were sowing the seeds of their own destruction. Nixon portrayed this barbarism and its perception among the Chinese within and without China as why the Peking government was losing support in its own country

and throughout Asia. No one can dispute the viciousness of the early years of Mao's reign, but Nixon here was also engaging in unrealistic hopes. If anything, Mao and the Communist Chinese were becoming all the more entrenched in power.

Nixon then tried to rally public support for American assistance to the French in Indochina. He again invoked the "Domino Theory" to claim that if Indochina fell, Thailand could be next and Malaysia, with its rubber and tin, would be threatened as well as Indonesia. Ultimately, in this scenario, Japan could be "endangered." He reiterated what he had said in Vietnam, namely that the United States supported independence for the Associated States of Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos) but that he feared that "the day the French leave, the Communists will take over." He exhorted the French to fight alongside their "partners in the French Union against the forces of Communist colonialism which would enslave them." There were two types of colonialism at war, or so it seemed. Nixon had to veil his distaste for French colonialism in the wake of what he considered the greater danger: Communist aggression.

The vice president remained all too aware of lingering isolationist sentiment within the Republican Party and across the nation and he wanted to persuade his audience that America needed to play a vital role in international affairs. He made a particular effort to convince his American audience that what happened in Asia was of vital importance to the United

States. "Why should Americans care what happens one-half way around the world?", Nixon rhetorically asked. His fundamental rationale was standard by now: that the United States needed to devote as much of its diplomacy to Asia as Europe and that the thousands of American casualties in Korea were proof enough that what happened in Asia effected Americans. Nixon also realized the tremendous size of the population in Asia and the need, as he saw it, to battle the Communists to prevent them from exercising influence over the Asian masses.

Then in what was a fairly bold ploy for 1953, Nixon warned of the danger that Communist propaganda was trying to portray Americans as "prejudiced", "arrogant" and "bent on war rather than a program that will lead to peace." In a very homey, trite way, Nixon went on to speak of the similarities he sensed between Americans and Asians rather than the great cultural and often political differences. (But just as there was the realist in Nixon, there was also much of the American optimist in his worldview.) He advised the nation that Asians wanted dignity and independence and predicted that the Asian peoples would be a decisive force in setting the future of the world. The vice president particularly warned against the damage done to America's international image by racial discrimination at home. "By deed and word and thought," he said, "it is essential that we prove that American ideals of tolerance and equal rights for all do in fact exist and that we are dedicated to them." These comments were made several months in advance of the 1954 landmark Brown v. Board of

Education Supreme Court decision. Nixon, sounding like a latter-day Lincoln Republican, was talking about racial tolerance before civil rights had taken off as a prominent national political issue. His fear was that American racial prejudice would fall right into the hands of Communist propagandists who wished to portray America as racist and imperialist. "Every American citizen," the vice president said, "can contribute toward creating a better understanding of American ideals abroad by practicing and thinking tolerance and respect for human beings every day of the year." Race relations in the United States is certainly a paramount example of how an American domestic issue can have repercussions on the nation's foreign policy. Nixon exhibited keen insight and tremendous shrewdness, as well as a sense of the need for racial justice, by declaring that racial discrimination at home could undercut America's position abroad. This was especially important in Asia and Africa where people of color were sensitive to any racial slight or vestiges of the condescending attitudes that had been part and parcel of European colonialism. Nixon rightly feared that the people of the developing world also associated these racist sentiments with the United States, but he at least proposed the beginning of a remedy to the extremely serious problem.

In the speech, Nixon drew a picture of the world where in recent years millions had been afraid of America due to the effectiveness of Communist propaganda but he was optimistic that the United States, under Eisenhower's skillful

leadership, would be able to turn the tide and keep the Communists on the defensive.³²

This is what Nixon said publicly. What is even more important in understanding his position on China and the evolution of his Pacific strategy was what he said in private to the National Security Council. On December 15, Nixon briefed the Council on his meetings with Rhee in which he had given the Korean leader a letter from Eisenhower seeking Rhee's assurance that he would not take unilateral military action to try to reunify his country. (Nixon gave an extensive overview of his impressions of the entire journey to the group the following week). The account in the NSC minutes of the encounter with Rhee actually closely follows Nixon's version in his memoirs. Nixon reported that Rhee thought it essential in fighting communism that a "good bargaining position" must always be retained, just as the Communists themselves always wanted that position. But Rhee believed the key was that the Communists must always fear what he might do. So, if he were to make any public announcement that he would go along with Eisenhower's request not to take unilateral military action, he would actually be weakening the position of South Korea and the United States. Rhee had asked Nixon why Eisenhower did not seem to want to use South Korea as the Soviets used their satellites--"to take positions which subsequently the USSR itself might or might not stand by, depending on the circumstances?" Nixon then commented that Ambassador Arthur Dean agreed that Rhee's argument had merit

and "that it was indeed unwise to pull all of Rhee's teeth."

Nixon summarized his understanding of Rhee's position by saying he did not think Rhee would take "any of the action of the sort we fear without prior notification to the President." Nixon also assured the Council that Rhee would not take any action unless he knew that the United States would back him, but that he would in all likelihood, continue to make threats even though Rhee, himself, knew that he could "never get away with any course of action which would forfeit U.S. support." Nixon also said that he had disabused Rhee of the notion that the Korean leader had heard from some friends in America that he would have U.S. backing if he "goes it alone." The vice president also pointed out that not only would Rhee oppose a Soviet presence at a political conference to determine the fate of Korea, but the leader was also adamantly against India's inclusion in such discussions, since he considered India "as no more than a communist satellite." Nixon concluded with a swipe at the American diplomatic corps who Nixon said made charges, when irritated with Rhee's conduct, that he did not have the support of his people. The vice president stated that he found just the contrary to be true, that Rhee had the complete support of his nation and that there was a "strong popular desire" for reunification of the country.³³

The next day, December 16, the NSC convened again, and Nixon made some acerbic observations about Nehru. The vice president reported to the group that Nehru was vehemently

against the United States granting military assistance to Pakistan but Nixon made clear that it would be a "fatal mistake to back down on this program solely because of Nehru's objections." Nixon feared that "such a retreat would cost us our hold on Pakistan and on many other areas in the Near East and Africa." Nixon showed incisive perception into Nehru's political character when he told the council that Nehru was "one sort of a character in his domestic position in India and quite a different character in the realm of international relations." (American politicians are not the only ones who must take domestic political considerations in setting their foreign policy. Nehru, ever mindful of India's all too recent colonial past under the British Raj, undoubtedly felt obliged to oppose all Western foreign influence, especially the United States, since the torch of leadership of the West had been passed from London to Washington.) But on the question of military aid to Pakistan, Nixon suggested sending a special envoy to New Delhi to explain "firmly and forthrightly" why the United States wanted to assist Pakistan and, to try to reassure him of American intentions vis-a-vis India. Nixon claimed he wanted to "make the medicine easier for Nehru to take."

Nixon pointed out that Nehru had indicated that he feared American aid to Pakistan because he thought the Pakistanis might use it against India in the dispute over the sovereignty of Kashmir. But the vice president thought Nehru's real objection was that if Pakistan were to be built up, then his

own leadership in Asia and parts of Africa would be challenged. Nixon warned that if the United States backed down on Pakistani aid, "we can count on losing most of the Asian-Arab countries to the neutralist bloc."³⁴

Nixon's big day before the NSC occurred December 23 when most of the meeting was devoted to his official report on the Asian trip. Nixon had proved himself more than just a quick study and he was emerging with an incisive understanding of Asia that could intellectually match many of the regional "experts." Nixon expressed a cogent appraisal of the complicated politics throughout Asia and the western Pacific and reported on country by country in the order that he had visited them. He started with Australia and New Zealand and urged that better use be made of those nations in "high councils" concerning international relations. He thought the two nations felt somewhat out of the stream of things within the British Commonwealth, and believed they would appreciate more of a role in world affairs. Nixon was in essence anticipating the ANZUS defense pact between the three countries signed later in the decade.

Speaking of Indonesia, Nixon observed that its leader, Sukarno, was quite powerful and although not a Communist, he was "naive" about communism. Nixon was optimistic that Sukarno would prevent Indonesia from going Communist and would keep the former Dutch colony on the side of the West. But Nixon noted that Communists controlled what little labor organization there was in Indonesia and more significantly,

they were making gains in winning students and the young to their side. Nixon claimed that some 10,000 students, including Chinese and Indonesians, would be studying in Communist China and "less than one plane-load" of students were planning to come to America. Nixon criticized the Dutch colonial policy of having only trained people at the highest levels while neglecting the development of a civil service and competent technicians. He urged that the United States "beef up" its educational attache division to better compete with Communist influence, and he presciently pointed out that Indonesia is "potential dynamite" unless the United States performed better than at that time. (There was unrest in the country in 1957 and in 1965, a pro-Communist coup was aborted, leading eventually to Sukarno's ouster. Interestingly enough, in the years following Nixon's visit, Sukarno was often deemed to be anti-Western.)

On Malaya, Nixon applauded the British for having militarily cut the Communist threat there to a matter of "mopping up." Nixon called the problem in that country "25 percent military and 75 percent ideological" and he was particularly impressed with the imaginative methods employed by the British troops, such as having each company "adopt" a village and help the people solve sanitation problems and the like. The usually anglophobic Nixon praised British rule in Malaya and said its people did not have a strong drive for independence largely because the population was split between Chinese and Malay, and they had their own disputes. This is

one case where Nixon left his Wilsonian idealism behind. But Nixon, ever looking to the geopolitics of the entire region, said keeping Malaya free would be "ten times as hard" if Indochina went Communist.

Nixon was also optimistic about Thailand and felt that the "danger within increases in direct proportion to developments without." He also cautioned that if Indochina fell, Thailand would follow, but he pointed to the Thai's prosperity as one reason why the Communists had not been able to gain a foothold there as well the fact that the Thai people do not like the Chinese, despite the presence then of some three million overseas Chinese in the country.

The vice president was far less sanguine on the Indochina situation. He insisted that publicly, the United States speak optimistically and "stick by" it. "The Communists have a sense of history, and time is on their side," he observed. He said even if the Communist forces suffered defeat by the spring of 1955 (in fact, they would be victorious over the French by May 1954), the U.S. should never assume that the Communist movement and the need for America to spend vast amounts of money to fight it, will have diminished by that time. Nixon early on understood the extraordinarily tenacious nature of the Communist rebellion in Indochina. For the vice president, "the key to Indochina is China" just as China was really the major issue throughout Asia. Nixon theorized that if the Chinese stopped backing the Vietminh, the latter "would not last three months." However, Nixon offered the caveat

that a military defeat of the Communists does not mean that the Chinese cannot stir up trouble at a future time in Indochina.

The vice president frankly criticized the French training program of the Vietnamese forces, saying that the French had no confidence in them. He also was distressed that there were "no real leaders" in Vietnam. But on the positive side, Nixon said that the Navarre Plan (named for the French commander, General Henri Navarre) instituted that fall was a "tremendous improvement." The Navarre Plan provided for more American military aid, the introduction of additional French troops and the incorporation of more indigenous forces under Navarre's command.

Nixon was quite conscious of the wider geopolitical picture in Europe and of the "need to stiffen the French at home" and he discerned that what happened in Indochina was more significant from the perspective of European strategic interests than what happened in Korea. He strongly advocated continued military and economic aid to the French effort in Indochina. Nixon said that Navarre believed he had enough equipment; his problem was not having enough men. Nixon understood Gallic pride well enough to realize how much the French resented suggestions that their training of the Vietnamese could be improved. Nixon recommended that the United States should "try to convince the Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians that they will have and can have independence within the French Union." He said the people of

the Associated States understood that the Communists would take over if the French withdrew, that they wanted to stay within the French Union (the Union being something tantamount to the British Commonwealth), but that they believed the French had not offered them independence (Nixon was certainly right on that last point). Nixon proposed that an "offer of independence within the Union" could be helpful in selling the idea of the indigenous peoples fighting with the French.

Nixon then recounted his conversation with Bao Dai in which the emperor warned against negotiations with the Vietminh since he feared that either division of the country or some sort of coalition government could only lead to Communist domination. Nixon further advised that there was currently no capable anticommunist leadership in Vietnam to fill the gap if the French got out, and that the Communists were stronger militarily. He pointedly told the NSC that any negotiation with the Communists at that time would be "disastrous."

From there, Nixon moved on to the central focus of his attention, the China issue. He commented that he believed the Chinese in Formosa were "no longer corrupt" (could he have been really serious?) and that American financial assistance was being put to good use economically and militarily. He found morale among Chiang's troops to be "tops" and far better than he had expected. He added that those forces were being "sustained...by the hope of a return to the mainland in a military action." He mentioned that in Hong Kong, the most

important thing was the "dramatic shift" away from support of Peking by the overseas Chinese in the Crown Colony, Taiwan and Indonesia. But Nixon drastically overestimated the impact that overseas Chinese could have on events and the government in the interior of China. Any Anglophobes sitting around the NSC table must have been pleased when the vice president reported that the people in the colony hated the British and claimed that he had been told that if given the choice, the people would vote against the colonial government in favor of independence ten to one. Nixon postulated that there had been a shift among the Chinese in Hong Kong away from the Communists largely because of reports from relatives on the mainland, cruelties of the Communists, and the sense that although the Communists were gaining in the cities on the mainland, they were losing support of the peasants in the last two or three years. But Nixon pointed out on the negative side that Chinese prestige had been enhanced by the Korean War and this had resulted in giving them "a good boost throughout Asia."

The vice president then asked the pivotal question of what America should do vis-a-vis the China issue? Nixon pointed out that the United States had already rejected an attempt by Chiang to overthrow the Communist regime militarily. On the other extreme, Nixon described what he called the thinking of the "British career diplomat" which still held out the possibility that China in the future could "do a Tito." Just as he had in 1949, Nixon rejected this out of hand as any type

of realistic possibility and as if to underscore his own opinion, he pointed out that no leader he had spoken to on his trip, save Nehru, had held out the possibility of a Titoist resolution in China. The British argument, Nixon continued, accepts that Communist China "is here to stay" and that implied that China must slowly be admitted to the international community of nations. According to this view, Communist China would have to be admitted to the United Nations, trade gradually built up depending, of course, on a Korean settlement. The result of that, Nixon said, would be that Taiwan would revert to China, Indochina would come under Chinese influence as would Indonesia, and even Japan, the linchpin of American policy in Asia, would fall into the Communist sphere of influence. The vice president stressed that these developments, including Malaya falling under China's domain, would all come about as a result of a policy of accepting China into the U.N. As for the end result of all of this, Nixon described the British view as concluding that China would then emerge as a "great world power" and that its relationship with the West would be "cold and correct...probably just as it would be with the Soviet Union."

Nixon was hardly keen on this approach. He dismissed another alternative, a containment policy and economic blockade based on the hope that the Communists could be overthrown from within rather than from without. The vice president considered this idea as having "very little chance." But he did hold open the door to trade. A pragmatic Nixon

with his eyes on the economic interests of American business posed the question of whether or not the United States could afford an economic blockade after a Korean settlement. He wondered whether the U.S. could continue to withstand pressures from the allies and neutral nations for trade with Communist China. The vice president suggested that the United States should consider to carry on with "a policy of containment and isolation, but to allow for trade." Nixon was beginning to make concessions to the reality of Communist China's existence, although he was not prepared to go as far as the British view. "We must recognize that trade is inevitable," he said. "Trade is a good cover and we can trade with China without recognizing her." Aye, recognition, that was still the rub.

Nixon understood that to recognize China and not oppose its admission to the U.N. would give the Communist regime the "respectability" it so strongly desired. Ever concerned with the overseas Chinese, he postulated that "there would then be no place for the 22 millions of overseas Chinese to go except to the Communist side." After all, he pointed out, the overseas Chinese "have a love of country and they want to belong someplace." That still left Formosa up in the air. Nixon said that the U.S. had to tell the Nationalists that they could not return to the mainland (he had in effect already done that in his meeting with Chiang) and that what was important now was to keep Taiwan as a symbol and as a bastion of overseas Chinese culture.

But Nixon knew in his ever politically attuned heart, mind and soul that any move towards recognition of Peking would be unacceptable to the Republican constituency, not to mention the numerous Democrats who also opposed recognition. Remember that 1953 was the year that saw the formation of the Committee of One Million, a bipartisan group created to fight American recognition of Communist China and its admission to the U.N. Its membership went far beyond the more narrow confines of the China Lobby, including on its diverse roster such liberals as Hubert H. Humphrey and Jacob Javits. Statesmanship is a grand thing, but in order to be a statesman, one has to be a successful politician, and one cannot be a successful politician in a democracy unless one retains the support of the voters to hold on to high office.

Nixon then focused his realistic vision on Korea and remarked that a "united, independent Korea...is simply not possible." It is not that he did not want a united Korea under Rhee's rule, liberated from Communist domination. It is that he recognized this was not going to be possible in the real world of international politics. "North Korea will go to the Chinese," he said, and "we must settle for a divided Korea." Furthermore, he commented that any idea that a political conference could unite Korea "must be shelved." How quickly holding power can change perceptions in foreign affairs. It had literally been only months before when the Republicans were in opposition to the Truman policy in Korea and now they were faced with the same dilemma that beleaguered

the old Democratic administration. This Nixon is a far cry from the young Senator who barnstormed the country in 1951 in behalf of MacArthur's proposals to fight on to total victory in Korea.

The vice president also conceded that "we can't stay in Korea indefinitely." He suggested that as soon as possible, the United States bite the bullet and "pay the price necessary, in the loss of prestige, to settle for a divided Korea." He remarked that he was disturbed to learn that the British, Sukarno and Nehru all seemed to agree that the Korean War had harmed the U.S. and helped the Chinese. "We've already lost prestige," Nixon told the cold warriors assembled around the NSC table that day, so "now we should take our loss and get out of Korea, losing as little face in the process as possible." It was a situation that had to be faced up to, Nixon added. This was certainly a surprising argument from the future president who would later insist on an honorable peace in Vietnam at the cost of thousands of American lives.

On the subject of the recent enemy, Japan, Nixon told the group that "the greatest danger in Asia today is the danger of internal subversion" there. What particularly disturbed the vice president, was that he did not think that either the Americans or Japanese recognized that threat. He feared that the Communists would make inroads in Japanese labor organizations. From Nixon's perspective, the spectre of Communist China lurked over Japan as it did all the other free countries of Asia. Again, he was alarmed that 3,000 Japanese

students were going to Communist China to study the following year, with all expenses paid by Peking. He pointed once more to the "great sense of history" that the Chinese Communists had and he saw this as a great advantage for them. They were not thinking about what was going to happen now in Japan but of who would control that country 50 years in the future. To counter the possibility of enhanced Communist influence, Nixon thought Japan needed a stronger government but held out some hope that Japanese Prime Minister Yoshida could "strengthen the alliance."

While in Congress, Nixon had proposed the Nixon-Mundt bill which would have required Communists in America to register with the government. He always claimed that the legislation would have allowed the Communist Party to continue to exist in the United States, although his critics frequently portrayed the bill as prohibiting the party's very being in America. Nixon, however, was even more militant on the issue of Communists in Japan. He suggested to the NSC that the Communist Party be outlawed altogether in that country. "In all places where the Communist Party has been outlawed, the problem has been dealt with successfully," he argued. "Where it is not outlawed, the Party is gaining tremendously." Nixon pinned the blame for the Communist Party's continued life in Japan on none other than his old hero, General MacArthur. The vice president said that MacArthur's policy after the war had been to not outlaw the Communist Party in Japan because "everybody was free."

The vice president urged that effective propaganda be mounted in Japan, especially in the labor unions. "The unions in Japan must be controlled," he said, getting right to the point. And he wanted to see student exchange programs built up as well as the expansion of trade between Japan and Southeast Asia. He ascertained, surprisingly in hindsight, that there was no pressure in Japan to trade with Communist China because they understood that in the economic field, trade with the United States and Latin America was more important to them. However, he claimed the Communists were trying to stir up the issue of initiating trade with China.

The vice president spoke disparagingly of Burma saying it was "in a race with Indonesia as to which is the weakest and most liable to go Communist." He cited the same situation he had encountered in Indonesia, namely Communist infiltration of labor as well as what he referred to as a "terrible guerrilla problem." He did not elaborate on the latter but it appeared that in reality the problem was two-edged, stemming from the continued presence of Chinese Nationalist guerrillas as much as any indigenous rebels against the Burmese government.

When the topic of India arose in this meeting, Nixon's dislike of Nehru was again readily apparent as he told the council that "Nehru likes nobody but Nehru" and the Indian leader's prime concern was that a U.S.-Pakistan pact would threaten "neutralist theory" and Nehru's "own thirst for power over Southeast Asia, the Near East, and Africa." He emphasized that the United States not try to flatter the

Indian leader. If the U.S. should back down from giving aid to Pakistan, Nixon warned, it has to be done in such a way without making it appear as a victory for Nehru. It certainly appeared that Nehru had taken on a virtual Achesonian role as the butt of all Nixon opposed among foreign leaders, just as the former secretary of state was the receptacle for Nixon's vitriolic attacks on the Democratic foreign policy at home throughout the 1950s, even years after he was out of office.

He then glossed over Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) saying that rice and rubber were the major components of the economy and that he perceived little danger there from the Communists. He proceeded to gush over Pakistan saying it was a country he "would like to do everything for." He said it would be "disastrous" if the U.S. did not grant Pakistan aid since such a step could eventually force out the current political leadership in that nation. Interestingly, Nixon did not appear afraid that such a change would drive the Pakistanis closer to the Communists. His biggest nightmare was that it would provide the potential for a "closer relationship with the Indians." However, it certainly seems that Nixon was merely trying to scare the National Security Council into backing military aid for Pakistan, because even at this early stage of his exposure to South Asia, he must have known that absolutely nothing could bring Pakistan and India together. That would never be the theme or great aim of any government in the subcontinent. The enmity between the Muslims and Hindus was simply too ancient and ran far too deep, and Nixon

must have known better. But what mattered most to Nixon was that Nehru and the neutralism he espoused be reined in. He believed Nehru's influence could only be enhanced if the U.S. did not conclude a military assistance pact with Pakistan.

On Afghanistan, which would become the focus of Soviet-American tensions more than 25 years later, Nixon told the Council that he was confident that the Afghans would "stand up against the Communists." He recounted that he had discussed the Pakistan aid issue with Afghanistan's leaders who had in turn suggested that Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and Turkey enter into their own regional version of the "Atlantic alliance" with aid going to these countries jointly rather than on an individual basis, where the various nations could conceivably threaten each other. However, Nixon pointed out that the Pakistanis did not share that view. Apparently, Pakistan wanted to be assured of its very own military assistance from the United States. Nixon was referring to what eventually became known as CENTO, which the United States never formally joined, leaving Britain as the chief Western power leading that alliance.

Discussing the former American colony, the Philippines, the vice president advised that the biggest danger there was "not overt aggression." Trying to put a positive spin on the Korean War, Nixon asserted that it had lessened the chances of such blatant aggression in the Philippines. But as in so many other Asian countries, just as within the United States, Nixon feared that internal subversion could unravel American

influence and the anti-Communist position of the various governments there. But in his concluding remarks before the NSC that day, speaking of all of Asia, Nixon cited America's greatest weakness in the continent as not "getting our ideas across." He recounted how he had been frequently told on his travels that Russia and the U.S. both posed "equal threats" to international peace. The Wilsonian in Nixon reemerged as he reminded the group that Asians want independence and peace and that "unfortunately, we have got ourselves in the position of being 'against peace' and 'against independence.'" The vice president then scored the United States Information Service and the public relations people in the State Department. He pointed out that "sometimes an anticommunist line isn't the best line" and that what these officials often said in Asia was wrong "because it was so patently U.S. propaganda." Nixon was obviously recognizing the complexities and subtleties of Asian politics and that the United States not only had to address the perceived threat of communism but had to take into account the legitimate nationalistic aspirations of so many Asian peoples for both independence and a respected role among the family of nations. The vice president suggested movies and radio were not particularly good instruments for getting across the U.S. view. This is one of the few proposals he made that had a certain naivete to it. He misread the power of the visual media in 1953 just as he would arguably lose the presidential election in 1960 because of his lack of understanding of the emerging influence of television in

American politics. Nixon preferred that the U.S. build up its library program and his pet project, student exchange, as well as having the country devote more energy to "building institutions and supporting them" in Asia.

He cited the need for recognition of the people of Asia and said they were "hungry for attention." Trying to leave the Council with an optimistic assessment, the vice president said that the low point in Southeast Asia and the rest of the continent was reached about a year and a half ago (clearly placing that low point within the time frame of the Truman administration). Nixon then lauded the new Eisenhower administration for having brought about great improvement in American relations with this vital part of the globe.³⁵

Nixon continued to get favorable press on the aftermath of the trip when Newsweek ran a story on the Nixon briefing of the NSC headlined "Nixon's Secret Report Warns: Don't Recognize Red Chinese." The magazine claimed that Nixon had "impressed the council" and his "broad proposals received sympathetic attention." The article shot down any rumors or doubts about U.S. refusal to recognize Red China when it said "Despite press reports to the contrary, the Vice President was categorical in his opposition to recognition of Red China" and that any efforts to bring an "aggressive Communist China into the family of nations...must be stopped by all means at American disposal." Newsweek got the gist of it, but they did not discern the complexity of the issue that Nixon did, nor his advocacy of eventually resuming trade with the Chinese (or

perhaps this was not leaked to them or if they knew that, they discreetly omitted it from the article. After all, Nixon did have an image to keep up). The story further claimed that Nixon backed a "military crescent" including Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Indochina, Taiwan and Japan--"which would help close the ring around the Communist empires of China and Russia." The minutes of the NSC meeting indicate that Nixon said this was suggested by Afghani leaders, although the "high government source" who spoke to Newsweek may have indeed said otherwise. Having been a proponent of NATO and an eventual ardent supporter of Dulles's 1954 creation of SEATO and the Mutual Defense Treaty with Taiwan, there would be nothing surprising in Nixon supporting such a "military crescent."

Newsweek certainly picked up on Nixon's deep displeasure over Nehru, seeing the vice president's support of Pakistani aid as a "counterforce to the confirmed neutralism of Nehru's India" and his conclusion that U.S. policy "should be based on what is best for the United States, not on any fear of angering Nehru." The magazine accurately portrayed Nixon's notion of the domino theory applied to the potential of the fall of Indochina and his concern that the anticommunist effort there was harmed by French insistence that Vietnamese forces be under the command of French soldiers. On Korea, Nixon was reportedly "reasonably sure that Rhee will continue to play with the U.N. forces--at least until and unless the Reds break the truce." The lid was kept on Eisenhower's request (and Rhee's apparent submission to it) that Rhee

refrain from using unilateral force to try to unify the Korean peninsula.

The Newsweek article also discussed Nixon's perceptions of Africa, which were given scant, if any, attention in the NSC minutes. Nixon was said to think the situation was "touchy", especially in South Africa and Rhodesia and he believed that the Indian foreign service "connives" in Africa against the West, as he thought it did in Asia. Nixon also warned, the weekly said, that the Communists were setting their "sights" on Africa and that as the world's natural resources became more scarce, Africa would emerge as "decisive" in the East-West struggle.³⁶ Apparently Nixon's Willkiesque "one-worldism" was by no means limited to Asia and Europe.

All things considered, the trip had been a resounding success not only in improving Nixon's image and standing at home but in contributing to his education in foreign affairs. This was to prove only the beginning of what would be a lifelong course on Asia as the world's attention would continue to focus on that continent in 1954 with the French defeat at Dienbienphu in Vietnam. And on the domestic political front, Asian politics and Mr. Nixon were to play no small role in the off-year congressional election campaign that November.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER 2: THE GRAND TOUR OF ASIA

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- 13) Nixon, RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon, p. 126.
- 14) Karl Lott Rankin, "Views of President Chiang Kai-Shek as Expressed to Official American Visitors in October-November, 1953." Written 30 November, 1953. Included in the Karl Lott

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16) Karl Lott Rankin, "Weekly Summary of (Taiwan) Press Editorials, November 3-16, 1953." Included in Nixon Papers, NARA-LA, Series 364, Box 2 (Far Eastern Trip, 1953--Formosa, Hawaii).

17) New York Herald Tribune, 11 November, 1953. Included in Nixon Papers, NARA-LA, Series 375, Box 1 (Far Eastern Trip, 1953, Press Clippings--American). Also, Statement by Vice President Richard Nixon, 12 November 1953, Taipei. Included in Nixon Papers, NARA-LA, Series 364, Box 1 (Nixon speeches on foreign trips, 1953--Far Eastern trip).

18) Ibid., Karl Lott Rankin, "Weekly Summary of (Taiwan) Press Editorials, November 3-16, 1953." Included in Nixon Papers, NARA-LA, Series 364, Box 2 (Far Eastern Trip, 1953, Formosa, Hawaii).

19) Drew Pearson, "The Washington-Merry Go-Round," Washington Post, 23 November, 1953. Included in Nixon Papers, NARA-LA, Series 375, Box 1 (Far Eastern Trip, 1953, Press Clippings, American).

20) See RN for Nixon's recollections of his relationship with Dulles as well as Nixon interview (1965) by Richard Challener for the John Foster Dulles Oral History Project at the Seeley G. Mudd Library of Princeton University. Also, see numerous memorandums of conversations between Dulles and Nixon as recorded in the Memcon series of Dulles included in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

21) New York Times, 13, 14 November, 1953.

22) RN, pp. 126-129. Pearson, "Washington Merry-Go Round," Washington Post, 23 November 1953; New York Times, 14 December 1953, p. 8.

23) Nixon Papers, NARA-LA, Series 375, Box 1 (Far Eastern Trip, 1953. Press clippings, American). New York Times, November 19, 25, 1953. RN, pp. 129-130. U.S. News & World Report, 3 December 1953; pp. 37-40.

24) RN, pp. 130-131. New York Times 27 November 1953. The

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25) RN, pp. 131-133. Selig S. Harrison, "Nixon: The Old Guard's Young Pretender," The New Republic, 20 August 1956, p. 12. William Costello, "The Traveling Salesman," 12th installment of The Facts About Nixon, printed in The New Republic, 21 December 1959, p. 12. Also, more on Nehru in U.S. News & World Report, 27 November 1953, p. 18, and 25 December 1953, p. 12.

26) New York Times, 13, 14, 20 December 1953.

Don Irwin, "Nixon's Tour of Asia Adds to His Stature," New York Herald Tribune, 20 December 1953. Included in Nixon Papers, NARA-LA, Series 375, Box 1 (Far Eastern Trip, 1953, Press Clippings--American).

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27) New York Times, 15 December, 1953.

28) New York Times, 13, 14, 20 December 1953.

29) Don Irwin, "Nixon's Tour of Asia Adds to His Stature," New York Herald Tribune, 20 December 1953. Included in Nixon Papers, NARA-LA, Series 375, Box 1 (Far Eastern Trip, 1953, Press Clippings--American).

30) Drew Pearson, "The Washington Merry-Go-Round," Washington Post, 23 December 1953. Included in Nixon Papers, Series 375, Box 1 (Far Eastern Trip, 1953. Press clippings--American).

31) New York Times, 24 December 1953.

32) Nixon televised speech to the nation, "Report by the Vice President of the United States" (on the Asian trip), 23 December, 1953, p. 7. Included in Nixon Papers, NARA-LA, Series 369, Box 1 (Far Eastern Trip, 1953).

33) Ann C. Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 5, Minutes of 175th Meeting of NSC, 15 December 1953. DDEL.

34) Ibid., Minutes of 176th Meeting of NSC, 16 December 1953, DDEL.

35) Ann C. Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 5, Minutes of 177th Meeting of National Security Council December 23, 1953. DDEL.

36) Newsweek, 4 January 1954, p. 17.

CHAPTER 3: THE INDOCHINA CRISIS AND 1954 ELECTIONS

As 1954 began, Vice President Richard M. Nixon had already achieved the first of what would be several comebacks in his long and controversial political career. Nixon had weathered the storm caused by allegations that he was the recipient of a "slush fund" while a senator from California. He had almost been forced off the Republican Party ticket in 1952, but Nixon, at least then, was not a quitter. He had survived the charges by delivering the renowned "Checkers" speech, and had managed to stay on the ticket, with Eisenhower finally telling him that he was still the general's "boy." His political capital within the new administration had been vastly increased by his Grand Tour of Asia in late 1953.

As the new year unfolded, American attention not surprisingly shifted from Communist China and Korea to Indochina as the French position continued to deteriorate and Dien Bien Phu was on the verge of falling to the Vietminh (The French outpost eventually fell in May.). Nixon, and most American politicians of both major parties, considered the Communist Chinese to be the principal suppliers of materiel as well as the instigators of the Vietminh rebellion against the French.

The National Security Council again turned to Indochina when it convened January 8. Eisenhower firmly stated his opposition to dispatching American forces to replace the French in that war-torn part of the world, warning that if we did, the Vietnamese would "transfer their hatred of the French

to us" and he feared that such a move would "absorb our troops by divisions." These were the words of a most perspicacious old general.

Nixon displayed his own keen perception of the French position by then pointing out that as far as building up the indigenous forces there, the French "talk one way but feel another." He criticized the French command for their belief that the Vietnamese could not fight unless led by French soldiers while the Vietnamese doubted French sincerity in wanting to train great numbers of them. (This was in stark contrast to what Nixon tried to change as president when he instituted "Vietnamization" in which the goal was for the Vietnamese to take over the major responsibility of fighting the war. The French view of 1954 is also sharply different from what became known as the Nixon Doctrine, when in 1969, Nixon recognized the reality that America could no longer police the world but had to support the development and maintenance of armed forces among our allies in the Third World). Nixon understood only too well that French and Vietnamese objectives were "incompatible" since the French wanted to keep Vietnam in the French Union while the Vietnamese yearned for complete independence. The vice president noted that General Henri Navarre had little confidence in the program to train the Vietnamese, but Nixon shrewdly stated that the "indigenous forces are the key to success or failure." To Nixon, the situation boiled down to a political problem since the French wanted to win but without

building up the Vietnamese to the extent where they could win on their own. In a rather caustic Francophobic tone, Eisenhower rejoined that if the French were "smart they would have long since offered the Associated States independence on the latters' own terms." Nixon, sensing what his commander-in-chief wanted to hear, added that the Vietnamese lacked the all important "cause" to fight for and he backed the president's idea of a large U.S. training mission. But in all fairness to Nixon, he was not just simply playing to Eisenhower, for he had previously elaborated on the subject of the necessity for the Vietnamese to have a *raison d'etre* in the fighting.¹

China was hardly forgotten as the fighting continued to rage on in Vietnam. Throughout the Eisenhower years, Asia Firsters and members of the "China Bloc" in Congress, those staunch proponents of Chiang like William Knowland, the Senate Majority Leader from Nixon's native state of California, and Minnesota Republican Congressman Walter Judd, kept the political pressure on the White House not to even suggest the possibility of any change in the U.S. policy of nonrecognition of Peking and opposition to its admission to the U.N. This stand by the "China Lobby" proved to be quite an irritant to Eisenhower. The president was opposed to recognition as long as China continued to be what he termed an aggressor (this was Nixon's position as well). But Eisenhower was said to object to the fact that mere discussion of Chinese recognition was somehow deemed to be un-American and he rued the day when

Woodrow Wilson refused, for moral reasons, to recognize Victoriano Huerta's revolutionary government in Mexico in 1913. (The U.S. had generally followed the practice of de facto recognition of new governments prior to Wilson). Also, in 1953, Eisenhower had forcefully stated his opposition to Republican senators who wanted to discontinue funding to the United Nations should that body ever admit Red China. The president had written Nixon a forceful letter at the time saying that such a move would only undermine America's position in the world for it would take away an international forum where the United States along with its allies was able to oppose totalitarianism.²

On this ever politically persistent question of recognition of Peking, The New York Times reported on January 10 that Nixon had met with about 40 officials of the State Department to emphasize to them that the United States was against any change in its policy concerning Communist China; i.e., that there would be no recognition or acceptance of that country joining the United Nations. The Times article noted that Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Walter Robertson, Chiang's most vociferous supporter at Foggy Bottom, had already denied that the government was looking at the possibility of recognition and that Eisenhower's recent State of the Union message had also "made it clear that United States diplomatic relations would continue with the Nationalist Chinese Government on Formosa."³ Nevertheless, the China Lobby would never cease questioning the

administration on its stand on Peking, as if any deviation from the hard-line policy they supported would raise questions as to the manhood of the general turned president and the team around him. But recognition of Communist China by the United States at this point was so far removed from reality that its persistence as an issue must ultimately be attributed to the political posturing of Old Guard, Asia Firsters, China Lobby Republicans who saw everything to gain and nothing to lose from continuing to make nonrecognition an issue. After all, the Old Guard's candidate had been Bob Taft, and Eisenhower would forever have to prove he was a "true believer" to the right wing of the Republican Party which was something he would never fully succeed in doing.

Eisenhower got so fed up with the Old Guard's isolationist tendencies, its dedication to unreality in Asia (that Chiang could somehow miraculously militarily regain the mainland), and its unreconstructed domestic Hooverism that he wanted to start a third party which would shut out the right wingers and bring about what the president liked to call "Modern Republicanism." He was to ultimately fail in this quest. Stuck right in the middle of this morass within the GOP for eight years was Nixon who faithfully served as the go-between for the Eisenhower forces and the Old Guard. It is to Nixon's credit as an effective politician that he was personally able to balance support from both wings of the Republican Party.

But the spectre of Communist China aside, the Eisenhower administration was more immediately concerned with the

developments in Indochina. The war came up again during the NSC meeting of January 14. The vice president actually seemed to be contemplating the advantages of French withdrawal when he remarked that a French exit "might just provide what was lacking to the Vietnamese by way of the will to fight." Nixon hoped that the Vietnamese might allow the U.S. to come in and train their forces and "do for them what the French had thus far failed to do." But he was sure to qualify quickly his comment by saying that this did not mean sending American combat forces to Vietnam. To Nixon, United States leadership might well succeed where the French seemed doomed to failure.⁴ But did the thought ever cross his mind that the Vietnamese, themselves, might simply look upon American aid of this type as another manifestation of neocolonialist efforts to control the region and its people, denying them their nationalist aspirations? Eisenhower seemed even more aware of Vietnamese sensibilities when he remarked in the preceding meeting that the Vietnamese would hate Americans as they did the French if the United States were to move in with combat forces, although Nixon was just arguing for American-led training, not the introduction of ground troops (However, "hypothetical" comments he made on that very subject in April were to embroil him in controversy once again.).

The vice president turned again to the unraveling situation in Indochina when he gave a major speech in Philadelphia on March 9, before the annual forum of The Philadelphia Bulletin. Nixon again pegged his appeal for the

strategic importance of Vietnam based on the domino theory that if one nation fell to the Communists in Southeast Asia, then others would follow suit. He again observed that Japan was dependent on trade with Southeast Asia, and he warned that if Japan were denied those markets, then it would inevitably become an "economic satellite in the Soviet orbit."

Predictably enough, Nixon praised the Eisenhower administration for putting an end to the war in Korea. Nixon explained to the Philadelphians that the administration had also made a major decision on how to combat Communist military aggression--namely that the United States "rather than allowing ourselves to be nibbled away...[by wars like the one fought in Korea, in which Nixon noted that there were some 125,000 American casualties and, according to Nixon, not one Soviet casualty]...rather than to allow ourselves to be destroyed economically, should rely primarily on the massive retaliatory power of our atomic weapons and of our Air Force." Nixon, of course, was referring to the "New Look," the heart of the Eisenhower defense policy which called for cuts in conventional forces and reliance instead on nuclear deterrence to prevent war and further Communist aggression. The doctrine rested upon the United States threat to retaliate against Moscow and/or Peking should their proxies gain in their efforts to overthrow governments aligned with the West.

Nixon reiterated that from a strategical standpoint, Indochina was even more important to the United States than Korea. It was Indochina's geographic position that made it so

significant because it was just to the east of Malaya, where the British were already involved in putting down a Communist rebellion in that Crown Colony. The vice president also mentioned Thailand, which he categorized as the "rice bowl" of Asia. Nixon argued that a Communist victory in Indochina could only help to spur on Communist rebellion throughout Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, which was rich in oil. The vice president again underscored his fear about Japan going Communist if that war-torn nation lost its markets in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, which was rich in oil. He summed up his arguments with what had by now become his adage, saying "The loss of China led to Korea and to Indo-China, and the loss of Indochina may lead to the loss of Asia." In a rhetorical twist, he rationalized American aid for France in Indochina as a means for the United States to stay out of Asia. "We aid the French and the associated states in Indochina not because we want to get into war there," he declared, "but because we want to keep out."

He concluded with an overview of United States policy in Indochina and around the world. "We want peace," he said. "We want it in Indochina as well as every place else. But it must be peace without surrender," he emphasized. "We will not bargain our friends into Communist slavery at the conference table," Nixon concluded undoubtedly with an eye looking toward Geneva and remembering his conversation just a few months before with Bao Dai.⁵

Among Nixon's Pre-Presidential Papers, there is a typed

draft of a speech found in the file for this appearance that differs somewhat from the remarks recorded in the Philadelphia Bulletin. There is substantial material dealing with Communist China and the crisis in Indochina. In these notes, Nixon makes much of the geopolitical importance of Asia and the fact that of the 600 million people in the world who were neither committed to communism or the free world, most of them were in Asia (Where Nixon exactly got these figures, no one can guess. The lawyer in Nixon always had an affinity for numbers in any argument.). Nixon said that this substantial number of people held the "balance of power--in terms of population and natural resources--between the forces of Communism and the forces of freedom." This served to further demonstrate to him the vital significance of Asia. In this text, Nixon declares that "Korea taught the Communists a lesson--that armed, overt aggression would be met by force."⁶ Nixon believed adamantly in the use of military force to quell Communist aggression. He was soon to privately advocate the use of American air power to try to subdue the Vietminh rebellion.

But a brief respite from the ensuing crisis in Indochina resulted when Adlai Stevenson, the titular head of the Democratic Party, made a speech castigating the Eisenhower administration over the tactics employed by Senator Joseph McCarthy and its defense policy embodied in the much ballyhooed "New Look." In essence, it was the first shot of the bloody war also known as the campaign of 1954, which would

end with much of Nixon's enhanced status resulting from the Asia trip eviscerated over charges from the Democrats that he was still the same old dirty, tricky politician who when given the choice, always preferred taking the low road.

In a Miami Beach speech on March 6, Stevenson charged that Eisenhower had accepted "McCarthyism" as the Republican Party's "best formula for political success." Stevenson was doing his best to tarnish the president through his party affiliation with the Wisconsin demagogue. He argued that "McCarthyism" was actually responsible for much of the problems in the government and cited a "demoralized" State Department, an "enfeebled" American voice abroad, a threatened press, an educational system under attack, and a "confused" foreign policy.

Stevenson then lashed into the much vaunted "New Look" that Eisenhower had given to the American defense posture, which emphasized the doctrine of deterrent by "Massive Retaliation" with nuclear weapons rather than having the nation expend its financial resources on maintaining armed conventional forces to fight Communist aggression "anywhere and everywhere" around the globe. As pointed out above, the idea behind the "New Look" was that the threat of "Massive Retaliation" would be held over the head of Moscow and Peking, much as the sword of Damocles, since the Communist giants, themselves, would be the target should the United States resort to such drastic measures to fight the other side. Stevenson showed some political courage when he dared to take

on America's greatest war hero as he criticized the Eisenhower program for being "without benefit of bipartisanship." The man from Illinois took the ostensibly hawkish line as he spoke out harshly against what he called impulsive military budget cuts. Stevenson further charged that the policy had created confusion among American allies as well as stating his doubts about the efficacy of the administration policy.⁷

Stevenson had challenged not just the demagogue McCarthy but America's national treasure, war hero and commander-in-chief, Dwight D. Eisenhower. The president usually prided himself on being above politics but the arrows Stevenson shot his way harmed the general's pride. It was bad enough to try to tinge the president with "McCarthyism" since Eisenhower personally detested the Wisconsin senator and his irresponsible witch hunt aimed in no small part at the general's very own U.S. Army, the pride and joy of his life. But to denigrate the "New Look," which happened to be designed by the greatest general-politician of the 20th Century was tantamount to crossing the line in the sand. After all, it was Eisenhower who had commanded five million troops in the masterful and gallant crusade that liberated Europe, not the egghead to the manner born with the holes in the soles of his shoes. Eisenhower was furious but he had an image to maintain. He wanted to respond in kind to the Stevenson attack but did not want to get his own feet muddied. There was only one way to defend the administration and the honor of its commander-in-chief. Eisenhower reached down into the

chain of command and asked his point man, Nixon, to reply to Stevenson's attack in a nationally televised address the next weekend. The vice president, Eisenhower reasoned, could handle the McCarthyism charges without alienating the right since Nixon, himself, had such a solid reputation as an anticommunist stemming from the Hiss case. Also, Eisenhower clearly realized that Nixon could simply be more blatantly political than the president cared to be or would ever allow himself to be.

In his memoirs, Nixon describes his intense preparation for the speech. He went into solitude at the Statler Hotel, just a short walk from the White House, scribbling his ideas and drafts on his beloved yellow legal pads. He was always the debater, the lawyer hard at work. The "Iron Butt" (his nickname at the Duke Law School) might be considered his greatest political asset. This entire episode very well could have been his seventh crisis had he chosen to expand his first book to include it. This was Nixon preparing for battle in the heat of crisis; working in seclusion around the clock, preparing himself like a Roman gladiator for the fight in the arena. Nixon truly thrived on situations like this and needed that heightened sense of melodrama to get his adrenalin going to face the challenge, whatever it might be.

In the speech, Nixon tried to distance the administration from McCarthy by emphasizing that Eisenhower was the one and only true leader of the GOP (Stevenson, true to his political roots in the Illinois prairies, had invoked the greatest son

of Illinois, Lincoln, when he said the preceding week that the Republican Party was "half McCarthy and half Eisenhower" as if to imply that a party divided against itself could not stand--although precisely just such disunion was a consummation devoutly to be wished by any dedicated Democrat.). The vice president did not attack McCarthy by name. If anything, he lent his support to the importance of fighting Communist subversion within the government, but his oft quoted point was that when you are fighting rats, you must be sure to shoot straight, lest the fight lack effect since a bad shot will just enable those rats to scurry about and survive. In his heart, Nixon certainly seemed to be suggesting that he knew McCarthy was right. It was the Wisconsin senator's manner and methods which hindered what Nixon considered a truly noble cause. Nixon was concerned that McCarthy would potentially harm the reputation of the president as well as endangering administration programs on The Hill (This latter point was one of Eisenhower's chief worries.).

Nixon also defended the "New Look" but he did so in a partisan way that further inflamed the Democrats, but no doubt galvanized the vast majority of Republicans who supported not only the administration, but the young vice president as well. After all, the 1950s could hardly be categorized as a latter-day "era of good feelings" and American politics is not a profession limited to gentlemen. Nixon, traveling yet again down the low road, stirred up the ashes of his past fiery

criticism of the Truman-Acheson policy in which "600,000,000 people had been lost to the Communists and not a single Russian soldier had been lost in combat." He further countered Stevenson by saying that when the new administration had come into office, it had "found that despite record spending for military purposes that in our efforts to be strong everywhere we weren't strong enough anywhere." Nixon rationalized the "New Look" by suggesting, as he had in Philadelphia, that the Kremlin's strategy was to draw the United States into "little wars all over the world with their satellites, however, where they, themselves, were not involved." He added that they were attempting to destroy American freedom by forcing the United States to "stay armed to the teeth" in order to defend that very freedom. The vice president argued that the new policy rested on the premise of not letting the Communists "nibble us to death all over the world in little wars." Rather, he said, the United States would "rely in the future primarily on massive mobile retaliatory power which we could use in our discretion against the major source of aggression at times and places that we chose." (This last portion of the phrase was an echo of Dulles's position taken in a 1952 Life interview.) Nixon claimed the policy had succeeded because the Korean War was now over and the nation was approaching that much sacred icon of the Republican Party of that era, a balanced budget. But the most important result of the New Look to Nixon was that it had contributed to the United States being able to take the

ideological offensive away from the Communists. And in words that would soon embarrass him by the onrush of events in the next two months in Indochina, he mentioned that the Communists had made no gains since Eisenhower had taken the helm (Of course, this was before the fall of Dien Bien Phu.). He further argued that the New Look held the Kremlin and Peking responsible for Communist aggression by their satellites and that the policy served as a warning to them. But in reality, even though Communist China instigated the Vietminh, after Dien Bien Phu fell, the Chinese were not to be the target of any massive retaliation by the United States. Despite the New Look, the politician who knew war better than any other, Eisenhower, allowed his cooler head to prevail over American policy since the last thing he wanted on his watch was World War III.⁸

Republicans may well have been pleased with the vice president's speech but it was all the more fodder to feed to the ever-growing contingent of rabid Nixon haters in the Democratic Party. The usually liberal Democratic leaning TRB (the nom de plume of Richard Strout) of The New Republic rendered a biting critique of the Nixon speech and the administration's New Look defense policy vis-a-vis the continuing deterioration in Indochina. The columnist admitted that Nixon was a power in his own right in Washington. "Let nobody underestimate Richard Nixon," TRB wrote. "His oratory is a bit indigestible for our stomach, like rich fruitcake, but it is effective for all that." He

added that Eisenhower "seems to consider him heir apparent; for all we know he will be president some day." But "Cheer up," the journalist wittily wrote, "he will doubtless have matured somewhat by then."

Yet, TRB raised some very serious questions about the New Look, not unlike Stevenson's. He noted that regarding Indochina, the "one shooting war today in the world," Eisenhower had backed off from the view of "instant retaliation" in a press conference days after the Stevenson speech. TRB observed that Ike appeared "vexed" in responding to questions from the press on the Democrat's speech. The president seemed to pull the rug somewhat out from under his own New Look when he told the newsmen that he would not make war until Congress had granted him the authority to declare it (Eisenhower was, to his credit, usually quite meticulous, if not always, about the Constitutional separation of powers in the American system and the need for the president to have the cooperation of Congress, especially in matters of war and peace. This was made clear later in the Formosa Resolution of 1955 and the Congressional resolution that legitimized the Eisenhower Doctrine.). It was now TRB's turn to ring the alarm about American vulnerability to Communist attack. "America could be blown off the map by that time," he warned. He pointed out that Republicans had mercilessly scored Acheson for "allegedly giving China the notion we wouldn't intervene in Korea." Strout, who hailed from New England and had covered every American president since Warren G. Harding,

feared that "Ike is repeatedly giving the notion that we won't intervene in Indo-China, or indeed, almost anywhere." TRB cleverly turned the argument in favor of a balanced budget on its head. He scored Nixon in his column when he wrote "that with a candor which even enemies would not have supposed he would employ, Nixon offers as one of the...proofs that the new policy is 'working' that 'our budget is approaching a balance.' Yes," TRB caustically commented, "it's saving money all right; and we'll hit Ho Chi Minh with a balanced budget any day now." Strikingly, the premier columnist of the decisively left-liberal New Republic ended up attacking Nixon and Eisenhower from the right over Indochina and the New Look.⁹

On March 29, Dulles gave a major speech in which he called for "United Action" on the part of the allies to keep Vietnam out of the hands of the Communists. It was more or less a pretext to find a way to defeat the Vietminh without unilateral action by the United States, which had grown weary of the limited war in Korea and had been at peace there for only less than a year. However, the British were to prove recalcitrant (they certainly were not going to fight to preserve the vestiges of the crumbling French Empire since they had so recently lost India to independence) and friction between the Americans and French made "United Action" difficult, if not impossible. Nixon and Admiral Arthur Radford, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, raised the ante when they soon privately advocated American air strikes

on Vietminh positions. (Radford actually favored the use of tactical nuclear weapons in what was planned as "Operation Vulture." Historians Fawn Brodie and Stephen Ambrose say Nixon supported Radford on that, although Nixon only admits in his memoirs to wanting to take a stronger line than Eisenhower was willing to follow). In the end, as Dien Bien Phu fell, Eisenhower opted to keeping Americans from actively engaging in the fighting, even though it meant the division of Vietnam at Geneva despite the American refusal to sign the accords.

At an NSC meeting April 6, Nixon again harped on the political dangers of the U.S. appearing to side with the European colonial powers, particularly Britain, and he called British policy in Asia a "millstone...around the neck of the United States." Despite his previous praise of the British squelching the Communist rebellion in Malaya, he now said that the U.S. should insist on granting Malaya independence in the future and that America should make clear its opposition to colonialism.¹⁰

At the following week's meeting of the NSC on April 13, the subject of discussion included Communist China as well as the continuing crisis in Indochina. Nixon displayed more of the growing sense of realpolitik that he had exhibited privately before when he again supported trading at some point in the future with Communist China. He pointed out to the group that the U.S. had not recognized the Soviet Union until the 1930s but had traded with that country prior to recognition. Nixon said that although it was impossible for

the U.S. to recognize China at that time, he thought that trade could be expanded as a "negotiating point." He certainly seemed to imply that future recognition would not be ruled out. The vice president then made the point that it was "necessary to be calculating and hard boiled." Nixon asked the poignant question that if trade was not used as a bargaining chip with the Chinese Communists, what else could be used? Nixon hardly sounded like he was under the control of the China Lobby when he suggested that "if and when Communist China clearly abandons her present aggressive policies, a hard-headed study should be made as to whether or not trade should be opened up." (No one who knew the inner thoughts of Nixon on this most sensitive of issues could have ever called him the vice president from Formosa, as unreconstructed Chiang loyalist William Knowland was known as the senator from Formosa. The bottom line for Nixon the realist was the interests of the United States, first and foremost.) He concluded his remarks to the NSC by saying that the "time had come...to determine under what conditions, what level of trade, would best serve the interests of the United States vis-a-vis Communist China." Nixon had again displayed a shrewd calculation of what Eisenhower would deem worthy of consideration. The president said that the best way to influence the Chinese against their Communist government was to allow Chinese junks to sail to Japan and "fill up with everything they could buy."¹¹ The president and vice president clearly would have liked to pursue trade with China,

but they were all too cognizant of the domestic political realities that prevented taking such action then. However, they wanted to be prepared to follow that avenue should conditions allow for change. Neither Nixon or Eisenhower's position at this point was cast in stone.

Things really got fired up for the vice president over Indochina after Nixon made some controversial remarks at a meeting of the American Society of Newspaper Editors on April 16 in Washington. Nixon, who had been speaking "off the record" to the prestigious group of newsmen, had been asked whether or not the United States would send troops to Indochina should the French abandon their fight there. Nixon responded that on the basis of the question being "hypothetical," he would have to say that hypothetically speaking, if the only way for Indochina to be saved required the deployment of American ground troops, then the United States would need to send the troops there.

Now, much was made at the time of Nixon's statement since no seasoned Washington politician could possibly think that such a controversial comment could be made without its being reported to the public (The remarks were revealed by foreign journalists who Nixon claims in his memoirs were not present at the meeting but heard the vice president's comments second hand. Specifically, The Times of London and France-Soir disclosed that Nixon, himself, had made the statements.). It was seen in some quarters as a "trial balloon," another instance of Nixon taking the hard-line (and the heat) while

President Eisenhower could be removed from such politically unpopular talk.¹² Such talk would have also been too controversial for even Secretary of State Dulles despite the fact that he frequently spoke about the potential use of nuclear weapons. But the insertion of ground troops struck a particularly raw nerve with the American public in the wake of the Korean War.

However, in a 1965 interview Nixon claimed that the speech was in no way a "trial balloon" and that he had spoken completely on his own rather than at Dulles's or anyone else's suggestion. But Nixon remembered that Dulles agreed with him that the United States should use its own military forces if that was ultimately what it took to stop the Communists in Indochina. Yet, when the French and British would not join the United States on the secretary's "United Action" proposal, Dulles then changed his mind and concluded that America could not stand alone in Indochina. Nixon recalled Dulles thinking this choice was a mistake but that the U.S. did not have any realistic option for intervention without the full support of the major European allies. (Of course, one wonders about the very term "United Action" since the French were already fighting, albeit a losing battle. The problem appeared to be that the French, as much as they wanted to hold on to Vietnam, simply did not want to yield command of the military operation there to the United States.).

After the story broke, Dulles told Nixon that Eisenhower was "not disturbed" by the remarks. The secretary of state

had told reporters that he did not care to answer the question itself since it was an off-the-record response to a hypothetical question. The vice president later clarified his comment by saying his remarks were meant to indicate that "if the only way to hold Indochina was to go in, we might have to." Nixon also told Dulles that he was going to make speeches that week which endorsed the Eisenhower-Dulles Asian policy for its firmness, and that he would invoke a reprise of his favorite theme: that Korea was caused by vacillation. Eisenhower called Nixon to tell him not to be bothered by "stories press boys had been cooking up out of his 'perfectly innocent' remarks" and that he would have probably said the same thing if he had been asked. Yet, it is hard to believe that Dulles and Eisenhower were not at least somewhat miffed by the young vice president charting his own course in American policy in Indochina. After all, Dulles distanced himself from the remarks in refusing to answer the question when the press asked him about it. He also told Senator H. Alexander Smith (R-NJ) that he was strongly against getting U.S. troops "bogged down" in Asia and that the Nixon remarks were "unfortunate" but "would blow over."¹³

The New York Times reported a summary of Nixon's "off-the-record" remarks two days after the vice president delivered them. By that point, obviously, the lid had been blown off. Nixon's comment that the United States might indeed send combat troops to Indochina was not in his prepared text but Nixon had made the statement in response to a

question from the audience of journalists. According to The Times, the vice president maintained that the French should be able to stay in Indochina and win their struggle against the Vietminh. He cited the French advantage in manpower (presumably including the indigenous troops) and perhaps even more importantly, the advantage of French airpower. Nixon's fear was that the French did not have the will to win, and he was concerned that should Dien Bien Phu fall (which it did less than a month later), the French would try to attempt to salvage their position by making a deal at the upcoming Geneva Conference at any cost. Nixon then spoke of the need for additional manpower but mentioned that the French had grown tired of their war, just as Americans had grown weary of the Korean conflict. Nixon firmly believed that additional manpower needed to come from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos--again, this foreshadowed Nixon's policy of "Vietnamization" of the war that he was to espouse as president.

Despite Nixon's rhetoric about independence for Vietnam during his trip there the previous Autumn, he told the newsmen that the Vietnamese lacked the ability to fight the war themselves or even to govern themselves. The vice president went so far as to predict that if the French pulled out, Indochina would fall to the Communists within a month.

Nixon then said that as the leader of the free world, the United States simply could not tolerate any more of a retreat in Asia. The vice president added that although the hope was

that the United States would not have to send troops to Indochina, if the situation deteriorated, the Eisenhower administration would have to send American forces there.

Nixon cautioned that the United States needed to go to the Geneva Conference, which was to begin in late April, committed to obtaining "United Action" on the part of France and Britain with the United States. In particular, Nixon feared that both the French and the British would be too eager to end the fighting and make concessions to the Communist forces. Nixon realized that the French, not surprisingly, were tired of the war, and their public opinion was galvanized against it. As Nixon saw it, the British were reluctant to get involved in Indochina since they had already recognized the Communist Chinese government and did not want to alienate Peking, or far worse for their interests in the region, endanger their hold on Hong Kong. (Remember that as a United States senator, Nixon had been an unabashed Anglophobe, castigating the British over their use of Hong Kong as a conduit for trade with the mainland. Also, Eisenhower could hardly be termed an Anglophile despite having been Supreme Allied Commander during World War II. Even though the president was a dedicated internationalist, that old midwestern distrust of the British ran very deep in the man from Abilene.)

The vice president further said that the United States was the only country politically strong enough domestically to take a position that would save Asia from Communist

domination. He warned that any agreement with the Communists to divide the territory would only lead to a Communist takeover. Nixon hoped that the French and British might take a lesson from the Communist intransigence in Korea and form ranks with the United States behind Dulles's much touted "United Action." Nixon then told the editors what he had told so many groups before--that there was a danger that all of Southeast Asia would fall to the Communists should the Vietminh gain power in Vietnam. He suggested that the United States continue to aid the French forces with materiel, encourage the French to grant true independence, and finally, seek a "United Action" program with our allies.

Nixon shrewdly observed that such an alliance alone would not be enough to keep Indochina out of Communist hands. Just as he had interpreted danger to America in the form of internal subversion, Nixon also believed that internal subversion in Asia was the major threat to the stability of Indochina. Nixon, always mindful of the ramifications of the United States appearing to be a colonial power, told the editors that it was absolutely essential for America to be associated with the aspirations of the people of the Far East, namely the quest for independence, equality and peace.¹⁴

The Nixon remarks on the possibility of sending United States troops to Indochina were seen, indeed, as a "trial balloon," no matter what Nixon's true intentions were. The Times reported that the State Department, in the first "official" reaction to the Nixon remarks, said that sending

United States troops to Indochina was "highly unlikely." In fact, the State Department, refusing to acknowledge that the "high government official" cited in the news reports was Nixon, went so far as to say that the comments did not differ from policies put forth by Eisenhower and Dulles. All of this was based, according to State, on the premise that the remarks concerned merely a "hypothetical" situation.

On April 20, Nixon clarified his position in a speech in Cincinnati, just as Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was preparing to embark for the Geneva Conference. The vice president addressed a dinner held in honor of the late Senator Robert Taft and said that the United States would seek an "honorable and peaceful settlement" on Indochina at Geneva but that the country would oppose "outright surrender" to the Communists. Backing away somewhat from his "hypothesizing" a few days before, Nixon told his Ohio audience that the Eisenhower administration was working to prevent (underlining mine) the need to send United States troops to Indochina. But once more, Nixon warned that should Indochina fall to the Communists, all of Southeast Asia and Japan would be in danger. Nixon also used this forum to again laud the administration's "New Look" defense policy.

Warming up for the mid-term elections of 1954, Nixon harped on what he called the "failures" of the Truman administration. (One would think that the Harry Truman was still ensconced in the Oval Office by the disparaging way that Nixon spoke of him.) Nixon still insisted on attacking it

for not placing enough emphasis on Asia, and putting too much on Europe. The vice president declared that the Eisenhower administration had redressed this imbalance. He accused the previous administration of being weak and vacillating.

Perhaps even more importantly, Nixon charged it had failed to recognize the Communist strategy of "foreign-controlled and directed civil wars" for expansion. Actually, this accusation was a bit thin for Truman and Acheson were just as convinced as the right wing of the Republican Party that Moscow was behind the Korean War. Very few Republicans or Democrats saw Korea or Indochina as expressions of pure nascent nationalism.

As for massive retaliation, Nixon described it as a means "to let the men in the Kremlin know that in the future they might be held accountable." Nixon added that the result of the Eisenhower administration's balancing of Europe and Asia was the end of the Korean War and the decreased threat of "new overt aggression" by the Communists due to a more effective defense for less money--"more bang for the buck" as the military doctrine was fondly referred to by its backers.

Nixon saw Indochina as a test for the Eisenhower policy and he drove home the point that the struggle in Vietnam was not simply a civil war. "This is just not a civil war," Nixon said, "this is a war of aggression by the Communist conspiracy against all free nations." Then he pointed the finger to Peking, when he said, "The Chinese Communist government supports, controls, and directs it. It is not a war to perpetuate French colonialism but to resist extension of

Chinese Communism."¹⁵

Two days later in Phoenix, on April 23, on his way to address a Republican gathering in Tucson, Nixon declared that the United States could go to the Geneva Conference "with strength" if the country continued its present aid to the French. He also repeated one of his favorite themes of the period, namely that "the mounting of a great ideological offensive will make it clear that the United States associates itself with the aspirations of all peoples for peace." He added that this type of ideological program was "the long-range answer to defeating the Communists without a war."¹⁶ This was not simply rhetoric for Nixon since he believed that the struggle between the free world and the Communist nations did not merely lie in the military strength of each side. An emphasis on ideology, or perhaps one might more realistically say propaganda, was required to win the non-aligned world to the side of the West, and particularly the United States, according to the vice president. This was also a faithful rendition of the Eisenhower "party line" on the matter.

On April 27, Nixon was back in Washington to address the Washington Congress of Governors. The vice president emphasized to the governors (in another off-the-record speech) the geopolitical importance of Asia with millions of people on that continent neutral in the battle between the free world and Communist nations. Nixon distinguished between two types of tactics employed by Communists in their effort to dominate

Asia. He portrayed the invasion of Korea as a traditional tactic, a "war of aggression" and pointed to the united action taken by the United Nations as the means to stop Communist aggression on the Korean peninsula.

Nixon then explained that he thought outright invasion by Communist troops of the type employed in Korea was unlikely elsewhere in Asia since the Communists would not be eager to face United Nations forces again. (Nixon's reasoning must be greeted with some skepticism since one can only wonder how a full United Nations force could be assembled if Britain, France and the United States could not even agree on United Action in Indochina. Also, in 1951 during the MacArthur controversy, Nixon had persistently made the point that it was unfair that the United States dominated the U.N. contingent. But like any good and shrewd politician, Nixon wanted to have it both ways on this issue, using whatever argument would suit him before a particular audience.) Even more importantly, according to the vice president, the Eisenhower administration's New Look of massive retaliation would also deter blatant Communist aggression. Nixon spoke quite directly about the possible use of nuclear weapons as he recognized that Moscow and Peking would prefer to get the United States entangled again in a war with one of their satellites. Nixon expressed a very real, sobering truth about the advent of nuclear weapons, and their possible deployment when he said that the New Look allowed the U.S. the option not to "limit its reaction to meeting [Communist] aggression with

the traditional forms of warfare in the area involved." He warned that such aggression would not be met "necessarily by fighting a satellite of the Kremlin or Peiping [Peking], which, of course, is part of their grand master plan." In an apocalyptic voice, Nixon said that the United States reserved the "right to meet the aggression by massive retaliation against the major source of the danger," meaning the Russians and the Chinese. Then as if to tone down the threat a bit, he said massive retaliation was just a possible option.

To Nixon, the real danger lay not in overt aggression and the crossing of borders, but through the second tactic, internal subversion. That was what distinguished Indochina from Korea. The vice president added that "In Indochina, no soldiers marched across the border--at least not openly and aggressively. None were landed on the Indochinese shore. It was not necessary." Such an overt tactic was not needed because in Indochina, the war was "inspired, controlled, and supported by the Communist government in Peiping and indirectly by the Communist government in the Soviet Union. But the war is fought as a civil war," Nixon declared.

Nixon told the governors that China was a "classic example" of this second, more indirect tactic. "The free nations found no way to stop the Chinese civil war from developing into Communist domination of that country," the vice president said. Nixon reiterated that Indochina was the second example in Asia of this modus operandi and he regretted the fact that, in his view, the United States had not yet

"developed in diplomacy a successful or an effective way to deal with this phase."

Nixon incisively understood the limitations of a NATO style pact for Southeast Asia and the Pacific (In the speech, he referred to the possibility of a "PATO" pact.) "At the present time," the vice president said, "there is nothing specific in the NATO Pact, for example, which allows it to be called into play to deal with this new type of aggression--a type of aggression which is internal in character, but which nevertheless is more effective and more sinister as a means of imperialist domination than overt aggression itself." This was a keen comment. Nixon was ever conscious of the demoralizing effect of European imperialism on the peoples of Asia. Here, he was again able to rhetorically link Communist imperialism with colonialism as a means of speaking out in favor of independence of the colonies as well as the hope that they would be free of Communist domination.

Nixon admitted that such a defense pact for Asia, while potentially raising morale, would virtually have no effect in dealing with what Nixon believed was the greater danger: internal subversion inspired by foreign-controlled revolutionaries. But this pact was to be realized later in 1954 with the formation of the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO). It was not that Nixon opposed such alliances; rather, he understood their limitations in fighting communism.

But Nixon saw a far broader problem, namely, not just how

to cope with the situation in Indochina, but how to avoid revolution in other parts of Asia, in particular, Indonesia and Japan. Nixon displayed a keen perception in his appraisal of the political situation in Asia vis-a-vis the threat of Communist revolution. He criticized those who thought the answer to all the problems of Asia was a "bowl of rice." Nixon said such thinking is an "insult to the Asians" and that it was also the wrong way to look at the situation.

Nixon explained to the governors that the Asians, of course, did want economic progress but that independence was their most important aspiration. "To him (the Asian), independence means equality--recognition of his dignity as a human being." Here again, Nixon's rhetoric is imbued with "Wilsonian" notions as he stated his belief in national self-determination and his distaste for both British and French colonialism. Nixon added that the Communists had been able to convince some Asians that Communist rule would lead to economic progress and independence. But Nixon said that the Asians themselves soon came to realize the "truth" which "is that while the Communists talk for all of these aspirations, in practice they never produce. The Asians," the vice president continued, "have learned that when the Communists come into a country and take it over, instead of bringing independence, he brings Communist colonialism (underlining mine)." Then Nixon elaborated on his view of Communist colonialism: "Instead of bringing economic progress, he brings economic exploitation for the Soviet Union or Peiping."

Nixon concluded his address with a clarion call for the United States to win the propaganda war by giving "the lie to the Communist propaganda" and to "get the truth out concerning how the Communists actually perform." But Nixon made the governors aware that the problem of Communist aggression did not lie in Asia and Europe alone. He exhorted the government to begin to pay more attention to the problems of South America and Africa which he believed would become ever more significant in the future.

He made some very revealing comments in the follow-up question and answer period when he emphasized that the United States could not "afford a further retreat in Asia" and that independence should eventually be granted to the Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians. However, he offered the caveat that all three countries were not yet prepared to govern themselves, let alone fight a Communist insurgency, and that the Eisenhower administration should not rule out military intervention in Indochina. He felt strongly about this because he was convinced that America could deal with Communism only from strength. And then, although this was in April 1954, Nixon again criticized the remarks made by Secretary of State Dean Acheson in January 1950 which set forth the defense perimeter of the United States as running through Japan and the Ryukyus down through the Philippines and Formosa. After the June 1950 invasion of South Korea by Communist troops from the North, Republicans had blamed Acheson for the war. The Republican right interpreted

Acheson's speech as implying that the U.S. would not defend Korea. There was no one ever more vehement in his criticism of Acheson than Nixon.

Nixon remained obsessed with criticizing Acheson and Truman. He would not relent in his attacks on them. He told the governors that "In dealing with the Communists, you have to deal from strength; and Korea, of course, is the prime example. Mr. Acheson said, in effect, in January of 1950, 'We will not defend Korea. It is outside the defense zone of the United States.' Now," Nixon continued, "lots of people would have said under those circumstances, 'This means American boys won't be involved in Korea.'--wonderful thing--nobody wanted to fight in Korea. What happened?," Nixon asked. "Mr. Acheson and the American people found that if you tell the Communists that the United States and other nations won't do anything to save an area, the Communists will come in. In June we had to go in. We went in unprepared, with terrible casualties," Nixon concluded. He realized that completely ruling out any American involvement in a war in Indochina would be popular politically, but he felt that it would be a major mistake for the U.S. to do so. He argued that even in considering the hypothetical case, "you must not rule out the possibility of the United States going in because the moment you do, you then appear before the Communists in a weak position." Nixon repeated an axiom he would often use in his own presidency in discussing the Vietnam War: that it was imperative for the United States to negotiate from a position

of strength. As president, he would often refer to his efforts to achieve "peace through strength."

The vice president also stressed that America stood solidly for independence for the Associated States and that the French had finally come to that conclusion as well, but that they arrived too late at that realization. He recognized that freedom would be slow in coming but that it was possible for the peoples of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos to eventually govern themselves, just as the Philippines ultimately had achieved independence and the ability to govern itself.

Just to be sure that he had not led his audience astray, Nixon drove home the point that the United States was not presently planning to intervene directly in Indochina. In fact, Nixon claimed that this very policy of leaving the United States's options open was designed with the explicit hope that the policy of strength without giving away America's hand would keep the country out of the war in Asia.¹⁷

On April 29 at another NSC meeting, Nixon took a different tack when he advocated consideration of U.S. air strikes against Communist positions at Dien Bien Phu. He realized they might not be militarily decisive but he argued that such action could effect opinion throughout the free world since it would amount to the U.S. standing firmly against the Communists. Nixon said the U.S. would be in the worst possible position if it just stood where it was at the moment for he especially feared that to do no more would, in essence, give Britain a veto over American policy in Southeast Asia.

The Anglophobic Nixon still considered the British a "painful liability" for the U.S. in the region and he was frustrated that the British, by refusing to engage in "United Action," were in effect, obstructing American interests and "freedom of action" in Southeast Asia. He suggested that the U.S. look to nations other than the British to join a coalition against the Vietminh, and he was certain Thailand and the Philippines would join such a group along with Australia. He again spoke out in favor of independence for the Associated States. Nixon certainly was ready for some form of American armed intervention and, he stressed that it was wrong to think of such intervention in terms of the deployment of ground forces only rather than also considering air power.¹⁸

The NSC reconvened May 6, the day before Dien Bien Phu fell. Eisenhower, far less hawkish than his vice president, stressed that there could be no U.S. intervention in Indochina without congressional approval. Nixon, fully aware of the danger of the United States appearing to be imperialist or racist spoke strongly against the idea of intervention by just the white, imperial European powers. He argued that such intervention would be "almost as bad" for the U.S. as unilateral intervention, since the Asians would interpret it as "sheer colonialism."¹⁹

In the wake of the French defeat, Nixon appeared to be somewhat more moderate than his public image when on May 13, the NSC discussed legislation restricting Communists publishing propaganda in the U.S. and sending it through the

mail. Nixon expressed doubt about such legislation and distinguished between mere Communist propaganda and criminal and conspiratorial acts by Communists against the government, where it would be more appropriate for the government to take action against them. The vice president advised the council that the best way to fight Communist propaganda in the U.S. was with the "weapons of truth and information."²⁰

Over twenty years later, when Nixon wrote his memoirs, RN, he, not surprisingly, put himself in the best possible light in recounting the Indochina crisis. Nixon goes to some length to separate himself from Admiral Arthur Radford, then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who had advocated the use of three small tactical nuclear weapons to destroy the Vietnminh positions around Dien Bien Phu. Some historians, such as Fawn Brodie, have associated Nixon with Operation Vulture, as the Radford proposal to use nuclear weapons was called. Nixon counters that both Eisenhower and Secretary of State Dulles "felt that nothing less than overt Chinese Communist aggression would be sufficient provocation for our going into Vietnam in any such a direct and unilateral way." Nixon had claimed, and there is little reason to dispute this, that the Communist Chinese supported the Vietminh with military supplies. What is interesting is that Nixon maintains that as early as the end of March, Eisenhower told a congressional leadership meeting that if the French lost their hold on Dien Bien Phu, the president would consider engineering some kind of diversion, such as allowing Chiang's Nationalist forces to

attack China's Hainan Island or to put a naval blockade of the Chinese mainland into effect. But this might have been just another case of the president telling Old Guard, Asia Firster congressmen what they wanted to hear.

In RN, Nixon included a diary entry on the NSC meeting of April 6 which supports the position he had been taking publicly of acknowledging that any "united action" taken against overt Communist aggression "would not meet the real future danger in Asia" which Nixon believed was the "subversive aggression of the Indochina and Chinese Civil War type." At this particular NSC meeting, Nixon claims that he had suggested that Eisenhower send more than the 200 military technicians that had already been dispatched to Indochina. Nixon clearly believed that Congress and the nation would back such a move by Eisenhower. But Nixon ends this diary note with the sense that Eisenhower had already begun to back down from the relatively hard-line position he had enunciated to the congressional leadership group the week before. Nixon was not in agreement with his commander-in-chief but he dare not be insubordinate--although in effect, he went AWOL in his controversial remarks the following week before the editors.

Nixon recognized that the main problem on the domestic political scene would be in convincing the American people of the significance of Dien Bien Phu--that as he later wrote, "more was at stake than the defense of some French troops besieged at a colonial outpost." Nixon says that no one, except possibly, Radford wanted military intervention. But

this is a bit removed from the truth for NSC minutes reveal that Nixon was advocating at the very least, conventional air strikes at the Vietminh positions surrounding the French at Dien Bien Phu.²¹

Nixon linked the crisis in Indochina to what he perceived as the Communist threat internationally. On the question of military intervention, Nixon remembered that "We were all convinced, however, that unless the Communists knew that their so-called wars of liberation would be resisted by military means if necessary, they would not stop until they had taken over Southeast Asia, just as they had Eastern Europe."

As pointed out above, Dulles failed to gain the support of Britain to join together to resist communism militarily with French and American forces in Indochina. In his memoirs, Nixon tells a fetching anecdote that Radford went to London to try to get Prime Minister Winston Churchill to lend British military support to deal with the crisis in Southeast Asia. Churchill told Radford that considering that the British could not get their own people to fight to keep India in the British Empire, he certainly did not think that they would fight to enable the French to hold on to their colonial claim to Indochina. Churchill was said to have agreed that the rest of Indochina would fall should Vietnam be lost, but he simply did not see any threat to the remainder of Southeast Asia, Japan, or Australia. Nixon says that he was "astonished" by Churchill's position considering that this was the same man who in 1946 issued the caveat to the West that an "Iron

Curtain" had fallen separating Eastern Europe from the West.

In his memoirs, Nixon does not make too much of the flap over the ASNE convention speech in Washington on April 16. Nixon must have well understood that the comments would be taken as some sort of trial balloon, despite his disclaimer in the 1965 interview. What is most telling is that Nixon was "concerned" that Eisenhower might be upset by the incident. But it is highly unlikely that Nixon, experienced Washington hand that he was, was naive enough to think that such a bold, controversial statement would go unreported.

Nixon then describes the meeting of the National Security Council which took place on April 29. At that meeting, Harold Stassen proposed that the United States act unilaterally by sending U.S. ground troops into battle in Indochina. Nixon notes that he countered Stassen's argument at the time by pointing out that winning the war in Vietnam did not necessarily have to be based on a strategy of committing ground troops. Nixon, writing in 1978, and in concurrence with the NSC minutes of the meeting, says that he believed an air strike representing a united alliance would send a message to the Communists that there was resolve on the part of America to fight more expansion as well as serve as a means to boost the morale of the French and Vietnamese troops. (One must wonder about this for after all, although they had been allies early in their careers, Stassen was hardly a favorite of Nixon's since he had tried to dump Nixon from the ticket in 1956. Perhaps Nixon wanted to take advantage of using his

memoirs to extract a little revenge by painting Stassen as an extremist, while portraying himself as far more moderate--when in fact, Nixon would have quite possibly been willing to resort to nuclear weapons to defeat the Communists in Indochina.) Nixon also records that he broached the idea to the NSC of trying to develop a coalition in the Pacific which would include the British, Thailand, the Philippines, Indochina, Australia, and New Zealand. Nixon was clearly thinking along the lines of the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO), a group which came into being later in 1954, but which the NSC minutes showed he had some reservations about.

Nixon also discusses another meeting in late April 1954, shortly after the NSC meeting recounted above. This was a meeting that included Eisenhower, Nixon, and General Robert Cutler who served as Ike's special assistant for national security affairs. Cutler apparently said that the NSC planning board had been considering informing our allies that if we did go into Indochina, we might use nuclear weapons. Nixon writes that when Eisenhower asked him what he thought of such a plan, Nixon responded that he did not think it was necessary to tell our allies such a thing before they had all agreed on United Action. Nixon then goes on to write that he "emphasized" that it might be feasible to have some conventional air strikes.²²

But Stephen Ambrose and Fawn Brodie, in their separate biographies of Nixon, virtually accuse the then-vice president

of covering up. Both historians portray him as favoring United States military intervention, even if such a step would have to be made unilaterally. Brodie, in particular, also painted a portrait of a Nixon who was more than willing to use nuclear weapons, as a last resort to "save" Vietnam.²³

In May, the French suffered their ignominious defeat at Dien Bien Phu and during July of 1954, a settlement was made at Geneva which divided Vietnam in two. The United States refused to sign the agreement and Nixon claims that a month before the signing, he had "urged Dulles not to be part of any settlement that would result in the surrender of any part of Indochina to the Communists." Nixon, reflecting on the crisis, and the way it was perceived by the press, wrote in his memoirs that he, Dulles, and Radford were portrayed as the hawks in the Indochina crisis. He conceded that "to some extent Radford did believe that the early use of tactical nuclear weapons would convince the Communists that we meant business." (There is nothing like slight political understatement.) As for the secretary of state and himself, Nixon said they "both believed that if the Communists pushed too far we would have to do whatever was necessary to stop them. Eisenhower fully agreed, although I think that Dulles and I were probably better prepared to stand up at an earlier point than he was." That was as far as he went in saying he disagreed with the president. And in a further invocation of his die-hard belief in peace through strength, Nixon concluded that "We all hoped that by being prepared to fight we would

never actually have to do any fighting."²⁴

Nixon had glossed over the incident. (The relatively recent declassification of a number of sensitive government documents from the period indicate that Radford was quite prepared to employ nuclear weapons to defeat the Communists in Vietnam and again in 1955 during the first Formosan Strait Crisis.²⁵) But what Nixon neglects to say is that he, too, would have been ready to use nuclear arms at least in Indochina. Eisenhower was far more restrained, no matter how neo-revisionists like Gordon Chang and H.W. Brands, Jr. portray him.

Ambrose offers an incisive view of Nixon and the 1954 Indochina crisis. He claims that Nixon's interest in foreign affairs grew, largely as a result of the trip he and Pat had taken to Asia the previous fall. Also, Ambrose indicates that 1954 was the year when Nixon drew closer to Dulles. Nixon gave Dulles advice on the Far East and the vice president recounted that they often would meet for drinks and talk late into the night about the international situation. They shared the same distrust of Nehru and feared that he would lead the non-aligned nations closer to the Soviet Union.

Nixon's chief concern was Asia, and this was at a time when the Korean War had ended and it could be argued that the State Department was far more concerned with Europe and building up the NATO alliance against the perceived military threat of the Soviets.

Ambrose does not see the ASNE speech as a mere trial

balloon sent up to get a sense of how the American people felt about the possibility of intervening in Vietnam. Rather, Ambrose maintains that Nixon was trying to "jolt" Eisenhower into supporting United States military action in Vietnam. And, Nixon had already proposed that the United States not sign any accord at Geneva that would lead to the division of Vietnam.

The Indochina crisis was, according to Ambrose, Nixon's "first major foray into foreign policy" and he observed the following about Nixon's actions and positions during that crucial time. First, Nixon was unable to persuade Eisenhower to order the type of intervention that Nixon wanted. Second, he was not afraid to argue for the course of action he believed in, despite that fact that he realized that it was not what Eisenhower wanted to hear. Also, he put himself out on a limb politically, when he spoke in favor of the possibility of sending ground troops to Indochina. Ambrose claims that Nixon was the only elected politician to do so. Finally, at a relatively early age and after only a short time as vice president, Nixon had made a commitment to keeping Indochina out of the hands of the Communists--a commitment he would continue to fight vigilantly for when he ascended to the presidency.²⁶

But above and beyond the Ambrose interpretation, what is particularly striking about the Nixon position on Vietnam in 1954 is how consistent it was with his later stand as president as well as his perspective 10 years after his

resignation, when he wrote the polemic No More Vietnams. He always stressed the importance of the Vietnamese bearing the brunt of the fighting if they were to win as proposed in his "Vietnamization" program and the importance of the U.S. achieving "peace through strength" and "peace with honor" which he hoped would ensure a "generation of peace." Nixon knew better than most politicians before, during and after his presidency that defeat in Vietnam would have devastating ramifications on America's power in the world. As Nixon himself often would put it, the "easy" thing would have been simply to withdraw but he was concerned not just with the current situation but its bearing on the future. Nixon's refusal to cave into public opinion for immediate withdrawal as president was indeed, nothing less than an act of political courage.²⁷

On June 12, Nixon returned to his alma mater, Whittier College, to accept an honorary degree. Nixon gave a speech in which he combined praise for the Quaker school with a detailed assessment on United States foreign policy. However, the day was marred when two lines formed after the speech--one, for those who wished to shake the vice president's hand, and one for those who did not. It certainly was an embarrassing incident for Nixon and served as an example of the kind of divisiveness he was capable of arousing.

In his speech on the campus, Nixon basically summed up his outlook on the struggle between the United States and the

Communist world. Much of what he said had been included in other speeches that year. But Nixon also spoke out in favor of integration and lauded the recent Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision which declared segregation in the nation's public schools unconstitutional.²⁸ He was being consistent with his stand in a nationally televised address the previous December when he urged the American people to be more racially tolerant. Now, this certainly was not the popular stand nationally either by most Republicans and certainly not for Democrats, those from the South and even the 1952 Democratic candidate for president, Governor Adlai Stevenson of Illinois. (In fact, one of Stevenson's major political problems in 1952 was that he was perceived in the South as being too liberal on the race issue. By 1956, Stevenson would hold back to some degree on civil rights in an effort to mollify Southern Democrats.²⁹) There is no denying that Nixon was certainly ahead of his time (for the mid-1950s) on race relations.

In homiletic terms, Nixon spoke to his youthful audience of the great promise of the future and he emphasized that expectations for a better world could only be realized if there was peace all around the world. Nixon saw the world as either black or white: namely, that the United States stood for peace while the Communist world stood for aggression. The vice president remarked that "There is only one threat to world peace, the one that is presented by the internationalist Communist conspiracy with its power center in the Soviet

Union." Nixon saw the ultimate objection of the Communists as gaining a "balance of power which will enable them either to begin a world war they can win, or to force the free world to surrender to their domination without a war."

Nixon then praised what Dulles had frequently called "Peace Without Surrender." The vice president went on to explain how America could achieve the goal articulated by Dulles. He realized that America could not act unilaterally and that in order to combat communism, the United States needed allies around the world. In addition, as a *sine qua non*, he believed that the country had to maintain its military strength. He again recited the policy of massive retaliation to deter communism by saying, "In the event of future overt aggression, we may in our discretion, use our mobile retaliatory power against the source of aggression, not because we want an atomic war but because we want to avert the conditions which might bring one about."

Nixon also described what he considered to be the unique nature of America. He clearly defined the nation within the realm of "American exceptionalism" and offered an analogy to "salesmanship" as a means for communicating the benefits of the "American Way" around the world. "We Americans have a good cause to sell in Asia and everywhere in the world. We are a world power, but we are unique among history's great world powers in that the United States wants nothing from any other country, no land, no concessions, just friendship and peaceful relations." He added that the United States and the

free world needed to "associate ourselves unequivocally and directly with these great causes other people believe in and that we believe in--peace, equality, independence, and economic progress." Here, Nixon expressed the heart of classic American idealistic thought in foreign affairs, the very point of view which would be attacked in the 1960s and 1970s by revisionist historians who saw American foreign policy chiefly as the quest to expand foreign markets for American goods. But what Nixon was actually doing here was to attack indirectly the French and the British for their desire to retain their colonies.

Nixon ended his address on an optimistic note, expressing his view that we could "win the battles for men's minds" if we could convince the non-aligned world that we are for freedom and independence. Nixon believed that if only the facts could be told, then the people of Asia, Africa and South America would rally around the United States.³⁰ Considering how detailed and intricate his position on fighting the Vietminh had actually been, the Nixon speaking at Whittier seemed a bit less worldly as he attempted to provide the remedy for Communist aggression without taking into account the nuances and differences in the political and economic situations in the various countries. Although Nixon did see the ideological conflict between the free world and communism to a large degree in black and white terms, his insight was far more intricate than he let on to his audience that day. Herbert S. Parmet suggests that this signified one of Nixon's

complexities; namely, that his thinking was often more sophisticated than the rhetoric he employed both publicly and privately. The historian maintains that Nixon, ever aware of the subtleties, often kept them to himself, and in this instance was also gauging his Whittier audience.

On June 26 in Milwaukee, Nixon delivered another foreign policy address which again stirred up discontent and criticism from Democrats--many of whom were willing to work with the Republican administration on a number of issues. Nixon gave yet another speech in which he went on the attack against Truman and Acheson by saying that the Truman administration had not been able to stop the Communists from winning China. Nixon continued to link the fall of China to the onset of the war in Korea and the dismal situation in Indochina. Nixon had been blaming Acheson and Truman for the loss of China for five years. It was a theme he relished but it alienated many Democrats whose support Eisenhower needed on Capitol Hill. This particular speech had offended Representative Sam Rayburn, the former speaker of the house who was then serving as minority leader but would resume the speakership in the next Congress. Rayburn was a key player on The Hill and he certainly was one whom Eisenhower did not want to alienate since the president depended on both Rayburn and Senate Minority Leader Lyndon Baines Johnson, another Texan, to support him. What is more is that Rayburn and Johnson's style concerning Eisenhower was conciliatory when the Democrats were in the minority, and even when their party regained a majority

in Congress.³¹

Rayburn reportedly had said that if Nixon repeated those allegations against the Truman administration, that the bipartisan foreign policy on The Hill would be jeopardized. At a June 30 press conference, Eisenhower defended Nixon when a question came up regarding the vice president's latest flap--but it was a lukewarm response filled with "Eisenhowerese" in which the president stated his admiration for Nixon yet refused either to endorse or to repudiate what Nixon had said.³²

Actually, the day before following a meeting of the "Speech Committee" in the president's office, Eisenhower had asked Nixon to stay behind for further discussion. The president criticized Nixon's Milwaukee speech. Eisenhower spoke harshly to Nixon about his "castigation" of the Democrats over foreign policy. The president pointed out to his protegee that Dulles had been seeking bipartisan support and that one Democrat had indicated that his party was "smarting" over Nixon's comments in Wisconsin. Nixon defended himself before this one-man tribunal by saying he had not attacked the Democrats, but only Acheson. But if Acheson was not representative of the Democrats, who was? Nixon told the president that he feared that the memories of the people were "very short" and that he wanted to get the idea across that the Republican administration's leadership could not be compared to what he termed the "Acheson program." Eisenhower retorted that although there were Democrats who did not back

Acheson's policies when he ran State, they felt that any criticism of the former secretary reflected on them. The president was concerned that Nixon's effusive combativeness might threaten the essential support from Democrats that Eisenhower required if he wanted to see his foreign policy program steered through Congress. Nixon defended himself by replying that "bipartisanship" in foreign policy had not applied in years past to Asia, but only to Europe and that Dulles and Eisenhower had criticized the Asian policy of their predecessors.³³ Nixon again was being consistent here for even as the bete noire of the Truman administration over Asian policy, he had frequently qualified that opposition in public by stating unequivocally that he backed the Democrats's European policy. What is striking about this episode is that Nixon held his own in answering Eisenhower's criticism.

But Nixon was losing the standing and good press he had gained as a result of his Asian trip the year before. James Reston wrote The New York Times that Nixon had "steadily squandered what seemed to be the most promising political reputation in the Republican party." What particularly was impolitic of Nixon, according to "Scotty" Reston, was that the Milwaukee speech embarrassed Eisenhower and Dulles while they were holding sensitive talks in Washington with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. The British were quite disturbed over the policy of "massive retaliation" and Nixon, undoubtedly eager to please his partisan audience in Joe McCarthy's home state, praised the policy which only served to

underscore key Anglo-American differences at the time. And Nixon's attack on the "Acheson policy" was privately criticized by the State Department and the White House, Reston said. The preeminent Washington columnist also scored Nixon for having boasted just months before that the U.S. had seized the "initiative" from the Communists only to see Dien Bien Phu fall within a matter of weeks after that statement and the Communists triumph at Geneva. Reston also criticized Nixon's "off-the-record" remarks regarding the possibility of sending U.S. ground troops to Indochina. The journalist concluded that Dulles was having enough problems at the moment without having the situation complicated by a "partisan argument provoked by his own Vice President." The Washington Post criticized Nixon in an editorial, indirectly defending the former secretary of state by saying "China was lost by the Chinese to some other Chinese" and objected to the vice president's "meanly partisan" approach. The New Republic's TRB thought Nixon's Milwaukee speech was indicative of Republican desperation entering into the 1954 congressional campaign and was a "pretty low performance" coming as it did, in the middle of Churchill's visit to Washington. TRB predicted that the GOP would try to counter the "disagreeable loss of Indochina" with what he cleverly referred to as more "Acheson." The columnist also believed that Eisenhower condoned the Nixon technique since he had called the vice president a "splendid American" in dealing with press questions on the Milwaukee address.³⁴ But this time around,

TRB misinterpreted the nuances of "Eisenhowerese," which was precisely the objective of the president whenever he resorted to that deliberately inscrutable dialect.

On July 1, Republican uneasiness surfaced again in Congress over the administration's position vis-a-vis the admission of Communist China to the United Nations. Senate Majority Leader William Knowland, of California, warned the administration not to alter its policy. Knowland threatened to resign from his leadership position and devote all of his energy to trying to attain U.S. withdrawal from the U.N. should the administration waver on this issue. The "Senator from Formosa" received strong support from other Republicans ostensibly wary of any change regarding China policy, most notably Senator Styles Bridges of New Hampshire, the "dean" of the Senate who happened to chair the extremely significant and politically potent Senate Appropriations Committee.

Knowland was concerned that if Congress adjourned as planned by the end of July (and with the next Congress not scheduled to convene until January 1955), there might be a move to accept Communist China in the United Nations, or the administration might passively allow its entrance by not blocking it. Knowland was an unabashed Asia Firster who was skeptical about continued American involvement in Europe. He threatened that should Communist China gain entry into the U.N., he would lead a movement in the Senate to cut off military aid to France and Italy unless those two nations ratified the European Defense Community Treaty, a step that

obviously would impede the NATO alliance (The French were holding back not just because of Gallic recalcitrance and desire to go their own way but because of their deep, and understandable, reservations about German rearmament as part of the pact.).

What is especially striking about Knowland's comments is that he seemed unduly suspicious that Dulles might cave in and idly stand by while Communist China entered the United Nations. Knowland urged that Dulles act to reappraise American foreign policy and he feared that there was a movement afoot in the United Nations to admit Communist China. Knowland's position was interpreted by one New York Times reporter to mean that Knowland expected the secretary of state to do all he could to ensure that our allies be persuaded not to grant Peking membership into the international body.³⁵

This was all just so much political posturing on the part of Knowland, who explained to Dulles by phone that he thought it necessary to say what he did because he thought the government might not be able to go that far. He was another anglophobe of the Old Guard who was concerned that the British government, in the wake of the Churchill-Eden trip to Washington, might bear too much influence on the administration's China policy. From the way Knowland spoke on the Senate floor, one might have thought he was criticizing Truman and Acheson as if they both still held office rather than Eisenhower and Dulles. Also at play behind the scenes

here was the growing rivalry between the two gentlemen from California, Knowland and Nixon. The press was already speculating that should Eisenhower decline to seek reelection, the two Californians would do battle for the Republican nomination in 1956. Knowland, it would seem, wanted to seize the initiative and preempt Nixon from the right on China.³⁶

Nixon, also only too aware of the potential political heat from the right on the China issue, told Dulles as well that some thought the U.S. had "made a deal with the British." Nor did Nixon care for the impression made by the Knowland statement that America was giving in. The vice president said he would like to reiterate previous administration positions on the issue, as if to suggest the need to clarify it. But Dulles, more of a realist than a liberationist here, pointed out to Nixon that policy statements regarding China were generally couched so that "we would not be committed for all time." Was Dulles abandoning the purity of the faith? Not exactly. He fully understood that Red China was an enemy of the U.N. and under the circumstances could not be admitted to the organization. But the lawyer from Sullivan and Cromwell was privately considering the long view and did not want to be locked into any position that ruled out future change.³⁷

On July 7, less than a week after Knowland's "ultimatum," Eisenhower held a news conference in which he denounced the Communist regime in Peking and pledged to fight to keep Communist China out of the United Nations. But as James Reston reported in The New York Times, Eisenhower was

unwilling to go so far as to say in advance that the United States would withdraw from the body should the Communist Chinese be allowed to join. According to Reston, Ike did not explicitly indicate that the United States would stay in the U.N. should China be voted in. Rather, Eisenhower said that his decision would depend on "Whether we would accomplish more good in the world, whether we could advance the cause of peace and decency better by going out than by staying in." This was again the invocation of the standard Eisenhower "party line" which he used to try to keep the isolationists and Asia Firsters mollified while remaining true to his own internationalist principles.

Eisenhower listed a number of United States grievances against the Chinese. Among these were Eisenhower's feeling that the Communist Chinese had "excoriated" the United Nations at the Geneva Conference on Korea and Indochina, as well as their supporting the Communists in Indochina. Also, Eisenhower raised the issue of the Communist Chinese still holding American prisoners from the Korean War.³⁸

Eisenhower's comments served to soothe somewhat the temperamental Knowland although the majority leader said that he would have been more satisfied if the United States would say right out that the admission of Communist China to the U.N. would be cause enough for the United States to withdraw from it. A compromise was afoot as Senate Minority Leader Lyndon B. Johnson and Knowland reportedly were hammering out a resolution that would urge a review of the nation's foreign

policy by the National Security Council should Communist China be admitted, rather than simply withdrawing from the U.N. Knowland was willing to go along with this although he would have preferred a still stronger statement of American resolve to withdraw should the Communist Chinese be seated at the United Nations.

At this stage, it was quite apparent, even to the less politically sophisticated, that Communist China and American policy in Asia were going to emerge again as an issue in the mid-term elections set for November 1954. Most Republicans and Democrats were indeed opposed to the admission of Communist China to the U.N. but each party was trying to take the initiative on the issue and make the proper political pose that would head off the opposition at the pass. William S. White, writing in The New York Times, said that the Republicans were initially on the defensive since the Eisenhower administration had not been able to keep all of Indochina within the realm of the free world. As a result, politicians of the G.O.P. were returning to the rhetoric that scourged Truman and Acheson, and no Republican was more effective in this dubious game than Nixon. By July 7, even a relatively "moderate" internationalist Eastern Establishment Republican like Senator H. Alexander Smith of New Jersey, issued a statement supporting what Nixon had said in the controversial Milwaukee speech. But the senator was gentlemanly enough not to mention Acheson by name. Yet, it was clear that Smith had adopted the "Nixon thesis" that the

policies of Truman and Acheson had led to Korea and that the Korean War had led to the 1954 crisis in Indochina.³⁹

Not surprisingly, as the Geneva Accords were being prepared for signing later that month, Nixon continued to take the hard-line against the Communists in Indochina. He advised Dulles not to go to Geneva and advocated that the U.S. not be a signatory of the agreement, the latter a position that the administration ultimately took (and frankly, would have taken no matter what the vice president had thought on the matter). Nixon feared that if the U.S. was represented at the signing of the treaty, it would look as if the country "was giving respectability or be a part of a deal which we don't believe in." Nixon, again knowing the political bottom line, pointed out to Dulles that they had been critical of their "predecessors" over matters like this, implying Yalta and Potsdam.⁴⁰ Nixon should have known. He was the Republican point man against the Truman Asia policy and Yalta, which was a pejorative word for the right. Now, that his party was in power, Nixon evidently did not want to see the GOP in the spot he had worked so hard to put the Democrats in.

In an August 2 Philadelphia speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Nixon culled a lesson from the recent Indochina experience: namely, that even if the U.S. had been "10 times as strong militarily" it would not have made any difference to the final outcome there because the problem was one of internal revolution rather than overt aggression. Because of that factor, Nixon again argued that a mutual defense pact

treaty like NATO would not have saved Indochina either. He also did not think that more economic and military aid to Vietnam would have made a major difference. Nixon was showing his awareness of fighting Communist rebellion instigated from within an Asian country as well as simply meeting the perceived threat from without. He implored the veterans to "recapture the spirit of the American Revolution" so that the United States could be a symbol for free men everywhere. But there was even a limit to how far the American Revolution could go. Nixon understood that the U.S. could not expect the whole world to adopt the American political and economic systems. (Was he making an early concession to the notion of "peaceful coexistence"? It certainly seemed a realistic step or two away from "Liberation" and "Rollback.") He merely wanted to convince the world that the best hope lay not in dictatorship and tyranny but in a society in which nations are independent and men free (Politicians were allowed to use the generic term for "mankind" in those days.).⁴¹

That year there had been serious flooding in China and Dulles and Nixon discussed the possibility of disaster relief. Nixon thought it was "worth a gamble" and suggested it be done through the Red Cross but he realized that proposal might be "jumped on" by a few in Congress, such as Knowland or Judd.⁴² Working directly in conjunction with Peking even to alleviate the damage done by a natural disaster carried the danger of being interpreted as a change in policy on the recognition question. The important thing to note here is

that Nixon and Dulles both wanted to offer some form of aid to China but they were wary of alienating the China Bloc. But here, as in so many other instances, Nixon was not so clearly in the China Lobby's "Amen Corner." He had to consider its point of view but he did not necessarily believe privately in such a permanent and ardently fought hard-line.

As autumn arrived, Nixon was back out on the political hustings, taking the low road with his incessant attacks against the Democrats. The campaign aroused many Democrats to charge that Nixon had smeared their party with McCarthyite tactics, questioning the loyalty of members of the nation's oldest continuously functioning political party. Nixon certainly did take the low road throughout the campaign, but when the situation suited him, he could make an effort to appear to claim the higher ground even when it was a means of slinging mud at the Democrats. For instance, in Cincinnati in early September, Nixon exhorted conservative and liberal Republicans to unite for the sacred cause of party and said that such unity would make demands upon conservatives to alter their position if indeed, the party wanted victory. But he then employed his by now famous scare tactics along with what passed for his own sense of humor when he privately told a GOP group the same day that if Republicans failed to win the congressional elections that year, "the swing is going to be completely to the left and the Republican Party will be as dead as the dodo bird."⁴³

Nixon arguably reached his ebb point in the campaign in

October when he charged that there was an alliance between Communists and left-wing Democrats of the Americans for Democratic Action. Nixon had really resorted to mud-slinging here since the ADA was comprised of just those very liberal Democrats who were opposed to communism. But the smearing of the opposition with pink had proved to be a reliable vote-getting tactic for Nixon until then, and he was not about to abandon it for a higher level, less visceral attack on the Democrats. The responsibility to be fair and accurate was not important to Nixon the campaigner. Only winning mattered. And since so much of Eisenhower's appeal lay in the general seemingly being above politics, it was left for Nixon to make the kind of attacks that would have reduced Eisenhower's stature had the president, himself, uttered them. Although Eisenhower, against his better judgment, eventually campaigned that fall but never in the raw partisan manner of Nixon. The vice president was still the general's point man.

The New York Times reported on October 23 that while out in the Western states, "the Nixon forces made no secret of their desire to start a fight with the Democrats over the communism-in-government issue." It had been ungentlemanly enough for Nixon to have accused Representative Jerry Voorhis of receiving Communist support in Nixon's first run for Congress in 1946--support that came from a small committee within the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) membership endorsing Voorhis. At least in that campaign, there was some truth to what Nixon charged, no matter how

ungenteel the method (not to mention, as Parmet argues, Voorhis's own political ineptitude and procrastination in fending off those charges). Nixon has been continually criticized for his conduct in the Voorhis campaign, and later in the 1950 California Senate campaign when he relentlessly attacked Representative Helen Gahagan Douglas. As scurrilous as Nixon was, he at least had the facts in his favor when he charged that Mrs. Douglas had voted against the Truman Doctrine to aid Greece and Turkey. In the 1950 campaign, no matter how distasteful the infamous "Pink Sheet" was, Douglas was vulnerable for not having backed Truman on Greek and Turkish aid. But when one reads portions of Nixon's speech linking the ADA with the Communists, one cannot help but feel that Nixon, resolutely dedicated Republican that he was, had gone too far.

In a statement released in Bozeman, Montana, on October 23, Nixon said "It is time to talk bluntly about the most sinister development of this campaign to date." He went on to mention four points on which the ADA and Communist Party agreed, as if this really meant that there was a conspiracy between the two. Nixon decried them both for "1) Calling for the recognition of Communist China just before the Korean War; 2) Attacking the Eisenhower security program; 3) Calling for the abolition of the committee (i.e., HUAC) which convicted Alger Hiss; and 4) Constant sniping at J. Edgar Hoover and the Federal Bureau of Investigation." (This was the same treatment he had dished out to Douglas when he compared her voting

record to Socialist Congressman Vito Marcantonio--drawing an invidious comparison between the two when they were really quite distinct from one another. Douglas actually tried to turn the same trick on Nixon by charging that he and Marcantonio both voted against aid to Korea in 1949. However, she neglected to explain that Nixon had opposed the measure because he objected to the bill not also including a provision for aid to Taiwan. When such assistance was added to a revised bill, Nixon backed it. One would have to think Marcantonio's rationale for his negative vote came from a markedly different point of view.) Although Nixon was quick to point out that the majority of Democrats and Republicans were loyal Americans, he said that Democrats should repudiate the ADA. Nixon topped off this speech by claiming that Democratic National Committee Chairman Stephen Mitchell had said that if the Congress went Democratic, it would go back to the Truman policies. (The Democrats could hardly be expected to say that they intended to carry on with the Eisenhower program.) Certainly, Nixon was not being fair to the ADA whose ranks were composed of liberals who were definitively anti-Communist, the very *raison d'etre* for their forming the organization in the first place--as a liberal alternative to communism.

Nixon just could not let up on Truman and Acheson. He again linked Acheson to the loss of China and accused Truman of trying to shield Hiss. Nixon also scourged the Truman "so-called 'loyalty order' under which," the Republican

claimed, "individuals with clear Communist records" were retained in government jobs. In addition, Nixon accused the Truman administration of also refusing to cooperate with J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI.⁴⁴ In short, this statement revealed Nixon at his absolute worst. It was these kinds of attacks that made so many in the opposition despise him. What must have really hurt the combative Nixon was that despite going for the jugular, the Republicans lost both the House and Senate in the 1954 election. If anything, since he had emerged as the most visible Republican spokesman other than the president, he was largely blamed for the loss of both the House and the Senate to the Democrats.⁴⁵

Nixon reserved his most vicious wrath for his old enemy, the titular head of the Democratic Party, Adlai Stevenson. He tried to tarnish Stevenson by resorting to following his favorite formula of claiming Stevenson and the Democrats wanted to bring America back to the much-maligned policies of Truman and Acheson. Then, to try to rub the knife ever deeper into the Democrats, Nixon claimed that the 80th Congress (which Truman had called the "do-nothing Congress" on his way to the biggest presidential election upset victory in American history) had actually saved the country from programs which he said would have socialized medicine, housing, water, agriculture and atomic energy. There was never any love lost between Truman and Nixon, nor Nixon and Stevenson for that matter. But the Democrats were to have the last laugh in 1954 just as they had in 1948.⁴⁶

Eisenhower and Nixon both appeared on national television on Election Eve. Nixon had traveled some 25,000 miles to 38 states and 85 major cities since he hit the campaign trail in earnest September 15. The president made a harmonious, non-partisan plea to get out the vote. Nixon, while not nearly as vitriolic as he had been just a few days before, urged the American people to keep both the House and Senate in the hands of the Republicans. The vice president, who had used the Communist issue to its extreme in the campaign and had continued to snipe at Truman and Acheson as if they were running, now merely called past Democratic administrations "blind" rather than questioning their loyalty to the country.

In a separately prepared statement, Nixon attacked the Democrats for using "the Big Lie technique" as the key to their election strategy. Although he cut out all references to Stevenson, Truman and Acheson in the televised address, he kept the references in his written statement and they were caustic. Nixon said that the first, perhaps most important, "Big Lie" that the Democrats propounded was that the Eisenhower-Dulles foreign policy had failed. Nixon countered with his old standby that the Truman administration had gotten us into war and that the Eisenhower administration had gotten us out. Nixon also defended the Eisenhower security program as necessary to protect the nation. The vice president did not let up on his attempt to label the Americans for Democratic Action as an extremist left-wing group and he charged the Stevenson campaign with using "smear" tactics,

which was the very charge the Stevenson camp had laid at his door! (There was no small amount of audacity in the vice president.) Nixon defended himself by saying he did not engage in smear tactics because what he was charging against the Democrats was the truth.⁴⁷ Needless to say, even when young Mr. Nixon tried to be somewhat non-partisan, he was still too extreme in his attacks on the opposition. Nixon did what he felt had to be done to win elections and he took the low road also because Eisenhower would have demeaned himself and the presidency if he had followed Nixon's suit.

After the election, Gerald W. Johnson wrote in The New Republic that Nixon had "used himself up" in the campaign and predicted he would go the way of Henry Wallace in 1944.

(Nixon's opponents and critics have always underestimated his staying power, resilience, his urge for renewal, or as he, himself, would put it, his desire to be "in the arena.") Johnson believed that Eisenhower had been hurt by the election because he had campaigned when his instinct was to have stayed above politics, above party. The writer believed Eisenhower was persuaded by Nixon, and others, to depart from the high ground.⁴⁸

Robert Bendiner pointed out in The Reporter that Richard Nixon had claimed the mantle of the new "Mr. Republican" with his "unique flexibility" whose chief political principle was the survival of the GOP. Electorally speaking, Bendiner said, Nixon had rejected the Taftite idea that Republicans could win only if they brought out the full conservative vote as well as

the avant garde notion that the GOP could only win by stealing liberal votes from the Democrats. Bendiner correctly understood Nixon as being more in the center, using "both approaches, letting neither hand know what the other doeth." But this was old hat strategy for Nixon going back to the 1946 and 1950 campaigns when he eagerly sought Democratic votes to augment his conservative base. On the major issue of Nixon's stands on the Far East, the journalist wrote that if any position on the Far East is taken, "you can find a Nixon quotation to back you up." Bendiner pointed to Nixon's March speech when he said the Eisenhower administration would never allow "the Communists to nibble us to death all over the world in little wars" like Korea while he turned around the following month before the ASNE to say that the U.S. would have to face up to its responsibility to send in ground troops rather than lose Vietnam to the Communists. Bendiner asked the obvious stinging question: if that was not another little war, what was?⁴⁹

But Bendiner and many other Nixon critics missed the complexities and nuances inherent in the evolution of Nixon's strategy for American policy in Asia. It was not just the difference between the private and public Nixon that Bendiner did not see. He failed to follow the flow of Nixon's public arguments, such as Indochina not being analogous to Korea because the threat in Vietnam was internal revolution, not overt aggression. Nor did Bendiner seem to catch on to Nixon's recognition of the ultimate weakness of regional

military pacts in the fight against internal subversion in Asia. And it is quite unlikely that Bendiner necessarily knew that privately, at the time, Nixon advocated consideration of renewing trade with China.

After nearly two years as vice president, the world certainly seemed more complex than it had from the House or Senate floor during the Great Debate following the MacArthur dismissal. If his critics saw Nixon as overly simplistic, that was not necessarily bad for him politically. A politician like Nixon needed criticism to keep his own vision sharp, to keep himself honed for political battle. And many of the enemies Nixon made were perceived to be the enemies of his constituency as well. One would never praise the Nixon of the 1954 campaign because he was vicious and he certainly seemed to have done himself, the president, and the Republican Party damage. But the damage was not irreparable and Nixon would emerge intact and go on to outlast most of his detractors. He did his best to put a good spin on the defeat in a post-election interview with U.S. News and World Report.⁵⁰ And for those critics who say he further alienated Eisenhower due to the 1954 campaign, they are not looking at the reality that Eisenhower never liked Nixon and after Checkers his hand was forced politically by the clever Nixon to keep him on the ticket. Nixon would survive the downspin of the mid-term elections that year just as he would survive on the ticket in 1956 and survive two crushing defeats to rise phoenix-like from the ashes and finally claim the presidency

as his own in 1968.

Nixon was evolving, ever learning throughout this entire process. It was in essence, a gestation period, in which he was formulating a position on Asia that was in reality not inconsistent as Bendiner proposed, but just the opposite. Nixon's consistency on China--always couching his language in terms which would not lead him down a blind alley absolutely ruling out reconciliation--ultimately allowed him to claim as president that it was China, and not he, that had changed since in his view, China had ceased to be an aggressor. And consideration of the key China factor was always at the heart of his Asian strategy aimed at preventing the expansion of Communist influence while enhancing the American political position on the vast continent.

As the administration had been preoccupied with Indochina in 1954, it would soon have to deal with a potentially more dangerous situation: the Formosa Strait crises from September 1954 through March 1955 and ignited again in 1958. It would not only be a crucible for the Eisenhower-Dulles foreign policy, but eventually for Nixon as well.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER 3: THE INDOCHINA CRISIS AND 1954 ELECTIONS

- 1) Ann C. Whitman File, National Security Council Series, Minutes of 179th Meeting of NSC, 8 January 1954, DDEL.
- 2) Robert Donovan, Eisenhower: The Inside Story (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), pp. 131-132; ACW File, International Series, Box 9 (Folder 7), Formosa (China), 1952-1957. Letter from Eisenhower to Nixon, 2 June 1953, DDEL. Also, Ross Y. Koen, The China Lobby in American Politics (New York: Harper & Row, 1974, reprint of 1960 edition); Stanley Backrack, The Committee of One Million: China Lobby Politics, 1953-1971 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976).
- 3) New York Times, 10 January 1954. See also White House Office File, Box 69, Far East File 1, "Vice President Nixon's Report to [State] Department Officers on His Trip to the Near and Far East," 8 January 1954, DDEL.
- 4) ACW File, NSC Series, Minutes of 180th Meeting of NSC, 14 January 1954, DDEL.
- 5) Philadelphia Bulletin, 14 March 1954. Included in Pre-Presidential Papers of Richard M. Nixon, Series 207, Appearances, Box 18, Folder 6, NARA-LA.
- 6) Pre-Presidential Papers of Richard M. Nixon, Series 207, Appearances, Box 18, Folder 6. NARA-LA.
- 7) New York Times, 7 March 1954.
- 8) Richard Nixon, RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978), pp. 144-147. New York Times, 14 March 1954.
- 9) The New Republic, 22 March 1954.
- 10) ACW File, NSC Series, Minutes of 192nd Meeting of NSC, 6 April 1954, DDEL.
- 11) ACW File, NSC Series, Minutes of 193rd Meeting of NSC, 13 April 1954, DDEL.
- 12) New York Times, 18 April 1954.
- 13) "Transcript of Interview with Richard Nixon. Dr. Richard C. Challener, interviewer," 5 March 1965. John Foster Dulles Oral History Project, John Foster Dulles Papers, Princeton University, Seeley G. Mudd Library; John Foster Dulles Files from DDEL, Telephone Conversations, Box 2, Telephone conversation with Nixon, 19 April 1954, Mudd Library; JFD

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14) NYT, 18 April 1954.

15) NYT, 21 April 1954.

16) NYT, 24 April 1954.

17) Nixon Papers, NARA-LA, Series 207, Appearances, Box 21, Folder 4, Speech before Governors's Conference, 27 April 1954.

18) ACW File, NSC Series, Box 5, Minutes of 194th Meeting of NSC, 29 April 1954, DDEL.

19) ACW File, NSC Series, Box 5, Minutes of 195th Meeting of NSC, 6 May 1954, DDEL.

20) ACW File, NSC Series, Box 5, Minutes of 197th Meeting of NSC, 13 May 1954, DDEL.

21) Stephen E. Ambrose, Nixon: The Education of a Politician, 1913-1962 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987) and Fawn M. Brodie, Richard Nixon: The Shaping of His Character (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981). RN, pp. 152-153.

22) Ibid., RN.

23) Ambrose, Nixon: The Education of a Politician, and Brodie, Richard Nixon: The Shaping of His Character, p. 126.

24) RN, pp. 154-155.

25) Gordon H. Chang, "To the Nuclear Brink: Eisenhower, Dulles and the Quemoy-Matsu Crisis," and H.W. Brands, Jr., "Testing Massive Retaliation: Credibility and Crisis Management in the Taiwan Strait," both published in International Security, Volume 2, Spring 1988, pp. 96-123 and pp. 124-157, respectively. Also see Gordon H. Chang, Friends and Enemies: The United States, China and the Soviet Union, 1948-1972 (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1990).

26) Ambrose, Nixon, p. 346.

27) Richard Nixon, No More Vietnams (New York: Avon, 1985). On the subject of Nixon's commitment to South Vietnam, however, it should be made clear that historians dispute the extent of Nixon's support for Saigon. Tom Wicker, in particular, discusses this issue at great length in One of Us: Richard Nixon and the American Dream (New York: Random House, 1991) on pp. 610-614. Wicker puts an interesting twist on his

portrait of Nixon. Rather than joining the crowd that believes Nixon did his best work in foreign affairs, Wicker argues that Nixon's major success as president was in the domestic arena. (Wicker does concede, however, that the China opening was the one great foreign policy accomplishment of the Nixon presidency.) Wicker makes a powerful case that Nixon was far more concerned with saving American face in Vietnam than he was with the ultimate fate of the Saigon government. Wicker maintains that Nixon essentially abandoned the South Vietnamese when he agreed, in negotiations with Hanoi, to allow the North Vietnamese to keep troops in the South. This was, not surprisingly, anathema to Saigon but at that stage, there was no other viable alternative for the South Vietnamese government than to accept the peace accords. My point is simply that Nixon was certain to keep up the appearance of America having fulfilled its commitment and achieved "peace with honor," which had been Nixon's stated goal from the outset of his administration. Nixon was, of course, aware of the importance at times of image over reality and, he promoted the notion that the United States had not given into the Communists in Vietnam. However, as Wicker writes, the fine print of the final agreement put Saigon at a decided disadvantage. Yet, my second point is that in 1969 and 1970 during the height of the anti-war movement, Nixon did not depart from his policy of gradual American withdrawal and Vietnamization.

28) Nixon Papers, NARA-LA, Series 207, Appearances, Box 22, Folder 11.

29) Herbert S. Parmet, The Democrats: The Years After FDR (New York: Macmillan, 1976), pp. 123-125, 134-136, 138-139, and 141-143.

30) Nixon Papers, NARA-LA, Series 207, Appearances, Box 22, Folder 11.

31) NYT, 27 June 1954 and Ibid., Parmet, The Democrats.

32) NYT, 1 July 1954.

33) Ann C. Whitman File, Administrative Series, Box 28, Folder 5, Conversation between the President and the Vice President. 29 June 1954. DDEL.

34) NYT, 28 June 1954; Washington Post, 29 June 1954 (Both NYT and Washington Post articles included in Adlai Ewing Stevenson Papers, Correspondence, Box 403, Princeton University, Seeley G. Mudd Library; New Republic, 12 July 1954, p. 2.

35) NYT, 2 July 1954.

36) JFD File of DDEL, Telephone Conversations, Box 2, Telephone Call from Senator William Knowland, 1 July 1954,

- contained in JFD Papers, Princeton University, Mudd Library.
"156 Nears, Nixon-Knowland Rivalry Grows," U.S. News & World Report, 16 July 1954, pp. 60-62. William L. Roper,
"California: Four Feet--One Pair of Shoes," New Republic,
27 September 1954, pp. 11-12.
- 37) JFD Files at DDEL, Telephone Conversations, Box 2,
Conversation with Nixon, 2 July 1954, contained in JFD Papers,
Princeton U., Mudd Library.
- 38) NYT, 8 July 1954, p. 1.
- 39) NYT, Ibid., p. 25.
- 40) JFD Files at DDEL, Telephone Conversations, Box 2, Phone
Conversation with Nixon, 9 July 1954, contained in JFD Papers,
Princeton U., Mudd Library.
- 41) U.S. News and World Report, 13 August 1954, pp. 26-27.
- 42) JFD Files at DDEL, Telephone Conversations, Box 2,
Telephone Call to Vice President Nixon, 9 August 1954,
contained in JFD Papers, Princeton U., Mudd Library.
- 43) Godfrey Sperling, Jr., "Nixon Sounds Republican Call to
Liberalism," Christian Science Monitor, 3 September 1954,
p. 3. Included in Adlai Ewing Stevenson Papers,
Correspondence, Box 403, Princeton University, Seeley G. Mudd
Library.
- 44) NYT, 24 October 1954, p. 63. See Herbert S. Parmet,
Richard Nixon and His America (Boston: Little, Brown, 1990) on
the Nixon-Voorhis 1946 campaign.
- 45) Ambrose, Nixon: The Education of a Politician.
- 46) "Statement of Vice President Nixon," for release PMs
Saturday, 30 October 1954. Statement contained in Western
Union telegram included in AES Papers, Correspondence, Box
403, Princeton, Mudd Library.
- 47) NYT, 2 November 1954.
- 48) Gerald W. Johnson, "The Superficial Aspect," New Republic,
6 December 1954, p. 6.
- 49) Robert Bendiner, "All Things to All Republicans," The
Reporter, 4 November 1954, pp. 15-18.
- 50) U.S. News & World Report, 12 November 1954, pp. 46-48.
Newsweek also tried to put the best spin on Nixon's influence
of the 1954 election results. Newsweek, 15 November 1954.

CHAPTER 4: ISLANDS IN THE STRAIT

By the end of the summer of 1954, the United States was hardly winning its quest to defeat or undermine, let alone contain, Communist expansion in Asia. The Korean War had ended in stalemate in July of the previous year with the restoration of the status quo antebellum, marking the first time in American history that the United States had not won a complete victory in a foreign war. Although it has often been argued that the conflict was a success since the Communist invasion of South Korea was repulsed, the Asia Firsters and Old Guard of the Republican Party were dissatisfied, to say the least, that Korea had not been reunified under Syngman Rhee and that its neighboring giant, the Middle Kingdom, remained under the thumb of Communist rule.

Chiang Kai-Shek, of course, remained allied with the U.S. against Communist expansion in the region but not without causing anguish for the Eisenhower administration. Chiang was corrupt and temperamental but had to be kept in power on Taiwan lest America lose even more ground and prestige in Asia. Despite the difficulties of dealing with Chiang, the Nationalist leader remained indubitably preferable to Mao. Even most of Chiang's American critics agreed with that.

More importantly, Chiang's supporters in the United States were plentiful and powerful. Indeed, the administration had to appease domestic opinion in favor of Chiang even more than it had to placate Chiang, himself. Eisenhower had to appear to be supportive of Chiang although privately, the

administration had made it clear when Nixon delivered the message to the generalissimo in November 1953 that the United States would not countenance Chiang's pipe dream of an invasion to regain the mainland. This was not an endorsement of Maoism by any means but a recognition of Chiang's weakness and the impossibility of his ousting the Communists from power in Peking.

Taiwan had to be kept in Chiang's hands for its loss to the Communists would be an insufferable blow to American prestige not only in Asia, but with ramifications around the world, especially vis-a-vis the perceived Soviet threat to Western Europe. The Nationalists were not merely ensconced in Taiwan and the nearby Pescadores but in retreating from Mother China in 1949, Chiang's forces had managed to hold onto a piece of the rock in the form of the offshore islands of Quemoy, Matsu, and Tachen in the Formosa Strait.

These bits of real estate were to provide the spark to raise the fear that America might go to war against Communist China. The egomaniacal Chiang attached far more importance to retaining the offshore islands than Eisenhower ever did. Despite the sagacious general's doubts about the strategic and military importance of the islands, he, like his vice president, realized the value of keeping the Communists guessing as to what the United States would do regarding the islands and when, how and if any action would be taken. Eisenhower may have privately eschewed the "psychological" importance of the islands per se, but he knew the importance

of America saving face. He was even more aware of how the "loss" of mainland China led in part to the dethroning of the Democrats. Eisenhower did not want to be the Truman of his party. Also, although he despised right-wing Republicans, he could not politically afford to alienate them.

On September 3, the Communists bombarded Quemoy from the mainland port of Amoy. Chou En-lai had announced only a few weeks before that the time had come for the Communist Chinese to "liberate" Formosa. Could it have been merely a coincidence that the Chinese Communists chose this time for an artillery volley just as Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was on his way to Manila to sign the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization pact designed to contain Communist China. There was nothing inscrutable in the Chinese action. Chou was making it clear that his country would not be intimidated by the United States.

Chiang was adamant in holding to the islands because he still harbored the dream of using them as a launch pad to regain the mainland. Should the islands be lost to the Communists, Chiang feared the morale of his troops would be shattered and that the Communists could use the islands to stage an invasion of Taiwan. Chiang also wanted a mutual defense treaty with the United States into committing America to protect Taiwan. Chiang reasoned that if the United States completed the SEATO and NATO pacts, signed a peace treaty with the recent enemy Japan, then surely the Republic of China deserved the respect a defense accord would bring.

Nationalist Chinese honor and dignity demanded no less. One can only wonder whether or not Chiang actually delighted in the Communist bombardment for he must have recognized this offensive onslaught by Peking as his much-awaited, golden opportunity for bringing pressure to bear on the United States to make such a pact a reality. Chiang's wish was fulfilled in December of that year when the Mutual Defense Treaty between the two countries was consummated, including additional American dollars for the defense of Taiwan.

As far as any imminent danger to Taiwan was concerned, Eisenhower knew very well that the People's Liberation Army of Communist China simply lacked the capability of making a successful amphibious assault on Taiwan. The president had made clear in a press conference after the bombardment began that an invasion would have to "step over the Seventh Fleet." The crisis over the offshore islands was to ultimately reveal the skill, leadership, if not a little guile, legerdemain and the pure thespian talent of Eisenhower, commander-in-chief, as he firmly established America's commitment to the defense of Taiwan and the Pescadores while remaining ambiguous about what the United States would do should Mao's troops dare to attempt to invade Quemoy and Matsu. (The northern island group, Tachen, was abandoned during this crisis, much to Chiang's displeasure. The Eisenhower administration had pressured Chiang to withdraw since Tachen was considered indefensible, and because it was some 200 miles north of Taiwan, and therefore of no strategic value.

Eisenhower drew a line in the waters of the Formosan Strait and it was not a demarcation founded upon melodramatic presidential rhetoric alone. Eisenhower was shrewd enough to attain congressional backing through the Formosa Resolution of January 1955 for any possible military action he might feel compelled to take to defend Taiwan and in ambiguous words, "other" areas, understood to be the much fretted about offshore islands.

And just where did young Mr. Nixon fit into this crisis? He was hardly what the swamis of today's Washington press corps would have called a key "player" nor was the Vice President nearly as visible or publicly controversial during the turmoil over the Formosa Strait as he had been during the fall of Dien Bien Phu the previous year. However, the Quemoy-Matsu situation was to provide further instruction for Nixon's foreign policy education in this "gestation" period of his career in which his "world view" was formulated and essentially crystallized.

In the absence of the president, Nixon presided over the meeting of the National Security Council on September 9 in which Secretary of State John Foster Dulles briefed the policymakers on the Formosa Strait situation. The vice president then asked how far American prestige had been committed to the defense of the Chinese Nationalist garrison on Quemoy. Nixon wanted to know if the island's defense should be considered the responsibility of the United States. He was trying to establish just how geopolitically significant

the offshore islands were to the national security of the United States. Admiral Arthur Radford responded that America's prestige had been "committed 100 percent."¹

Later in the meeting, Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson said that the United States was not used to fighting limited or undeclared wars. (One wonders where Wilson had been during the Korean War). Wilson noted that if American forces fought the Communist Chinese over the offshore islands, an act of war would have been committed which would require Congressional approval. Then Nixon, shifting to the role of hard-line devil's advocate, pointedly asked the secretary of defense whether he had any alternative. Wilson, never quite as prepared as Nixon for such meetings, simply replied that he had no alternative at the moment but would try to come up with one soon.²

But Nixon weighed a variety of options when he asked Allen Dulles, director of the Central Intelligence Agency and younger brother of the secretary of state, what ramifications might result from the loss of Quemoy to the Chinese Communists. Namely, should such a loss occur, what effect would it have on American prestige, how would Chinese Communist prestige be "enhanced" and what effect would such an event have on Chinese Nationalist morale on Taiwan? The director answered that American prestige would suffer less if the islands were completely evacuated of civilians and military personnel rather than merely abandoned to the Communists. Allen Dulles then took a markedly different view

from the one espoused by Radford. He said that the loss of the islands would raise the prestige of the Chinese Communists but he doubted that in the long run their loss would significantly damage morale of the Nationalist Chinese troops on Taiwan.³

A more important meeting of the NSC took place three days later on September 12 at Lowry Air Force Base in Denver, where Eisenhower was vacationing. The secretary of state reported on the signing in Manila of the SEATO pact. Dulles also discussed his five hours of talks with Chiang Kai-Shek and he conveyed Chiang's obsession with getting a mutual defense treaty. Ironically, despite all those historians who see Dulles as reckless practitioner of nuclear brinksmanship and one who was in complete step with the China Lobby, Dulles said that he had cautioned Chiang that should such a treaty come into being, the president might not feel as free to take action. Dulles seemed to be trying to keep Chiang "leashed" rather than giving him everything on his wish list. He told the council that Chiang was getting old. The secretary doubted there could ever be an internal uprising in China which would bring Chiang back to power on the mainland.⁴

The subject shifted to the continuing crisis over the offshore islands. Eisenhower, the venerable general who knew the horror of war, said that he did not think that the American people would accept war at that time over Quemoy-Matsu. Eisenhower, a realist, said it would be a difficult job to explain to the nation the significance of

these islands to American national security. The president further offered that it was imperative to "recognize that Quemoy is not our ship," and added that he often received letters which "constantly say what do we care what happens to those yellow people out there?"⁵ (These comments were made in a far less racially sensitive era.)

At this juncture, Nixon displayed an independent spirit by differing somewhat with his commander-in-chief. Distancing himself from the president before the august NSC, Nixon said that he agreed with the majority of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who emphasized the grave psychological and political consequences of the loss of the islands to the Communists. Nixon repeated the notion that the best course to follow was to "keep the Communists guessing, but take a chance on the possible consequences." Nixon, who less than a year earlier had met with Chiang in Taipei, knew the generalissimo's mindset well enough to state firmly that he did not believe that Chiang would evacuate the offshore islands.⁶

The NSC discussed the possibility of bringing the crisis before the United Nations. Nixon was not against this on principle and commented that if the issue reached the U.N., it would put both the Communists and the British on the spot. Still the staunch anglophobe, Nixon wanted to get back at the British for recognizing Peking. Harold Stassen then rather wryly pointed out to the vice president that if the matter came before the U.N., the United States would also find itself "on the spot."

Nixon prided himself on his ardent internationalism, and pointed out to Herbert S. Parmet in a 1984 interview that it was that stance which distinguished him from the Old Guard of the GOP. But at this particular NSC gathering, Nixon offered the policymakers some caustic words about the United Nations. Despite an interest in some type of U.N. approach to the Formosan Strait crisis, he echoed the MacArthur view of the Korean War when he expressed his anxiety that the U.N. had kept "our boys" from doing the job that should have been done in Korea. Nixon cautioned that if the U.N. route was followed in this instance, it would be criticized by the American people as another Korea. He repeated the need to keep the Communists guessing and it is possible to infer from the minutes of the meeting that he was willing to back unilateral American military action should it be deemed necessary. He mentioned that the Intelligence Advisory Committee believed that the Chinese Communists would not attack the islands if Peking was uncertain about how America would react. Nixon remarked that the United States "should play poker in order to keep the Communists guessing."⁷ (Nixon, raised in the Quaker tradition where any gambling was deemed sinful, had become far more worldly through his Naval service in World War II and established a reputation in his supply unit in the South Pacific as a superb poker player. One source indicated he saved about \$10,000 from his winnings, much of which went towards his first political campaign, the 1946 congressional race against Jerry Voorhis.⁸) This was a position that was

very consistent with Nixon's entire career in foreign affairs in which he firmly espoused unpredictability as the best bargaining chip against Communist aggression. Eisenhower, however, having seen much more of war than Nixon did in his tour of duty in the Pacific, was far more wary.

The situation in the Formosan Strait was further complicated by the Chinese holding 13 American pilots prisoner from the Korean War. Their detention was viewed by the United States government as a violation of the accord signed ending the fighting in Korea. But the administration's problems were exacerbated in November when Senate Majority Leader William Knowland demanded that the U.S. institute a naval blockade of China until all the pilots were released. It is not that the administration did not want the captive Americans released as soon as possible--it is just that in calling for the blockade, Knowland merely increased the tension. (Eleven of the 13 pilots were released in 1955; the last two had been "civilian" pilots whom the Chinese accused of being with the CIA. The American government refused to acknowledge this until Nixon, himself, was president and the door had been opened to China. Nixon then acknowledged that the pilots had been with the CIA and the last two prisoners were let go in 1973.) The "Senator from Formosa" was not a favorite of the Eisenhower team and his bellicose rhetoric was not appreciated at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue or at Foggy Bottom. Also, Nixon certainly was not enamored of Knowland since the two of them were vying to position themselves for the Republican presidential

nomination should Eisenhower choose not to seek re-election in 1956. The ill will between the two young and ambitious Californians stemmed in part from Knowland having been an "Earl Warren man" back in the Golden State whereas Nixon and Warren barely could maintain a civil relationship let alone a political alliance. Warren, proud of his lack of partisanship in governing California, had refused to back the highly combative and partisan Nixon in his Senate race against Helen Gahagan Douglas in 1950, and Warren resented Nixon's behind the scenes maneuvering for Eisenhower in 1952 when Warren had been the favorite son candidate of California.

Meanwhile, the crisis in the Strait continued. At a December 9 meeting of the NSC, just a week after the consummation of the Mutual Defense Treaty between Taiwan and the United States, China was once more at the center of the group's attention. Eisenhower again broached the possibility of encouraging Japan to export goods to North China and Manchuria as a means of "infiltrat(ing) democratic ideas" into those areas. Eisenhower admitted to the NSC that the domestic "political temper" in the U.S. would not allow for American trade with China. However, he asked why not at least pursue some kind of study of possible beneficial effects of having the Japanese trade with Communist China. (Of course, this was still during the period when Japan was recovering from the war and had not yet become a major international economic power.) The president further pointed out that trade was the "greatest weapon in the hands of the diplomat."⁹ Eisenhower was no

ideologue imprisoned by China Lobby recalcitrance and pipe dreams of a grand return by Chiang to the mainland. Ike was pragmatic enough to know that the status quo could not continue indefinitely, although of course he was politic enough not to harbor illusions about recognizing Red China.

Secretary of State Dulles said that Peking's reaction to the U.S.-Taiwan Mutual Defense Treaty was "very bitter" and that the pact had been "described as provocative and, indeed, as an act of war." Dulles warned that the Chinese Communist might make a "move against the offshore islands."¹⁰

Eisenhower, who was also a master of playing the devil's advocate in such high-level settings, then posed the pivotal question of whether the United States had "ever really given thought to setting forth the three or four specific actions by the Chinese Communist Government which might cause the United States to give serious consideration to a change in its policy toward Communist China." Dulles responded that if the Chinese Communists eliminated "specific sources of friction" that this could have some effect on American policy but he offered the caveat that the Chinese could just come up with a list of such points and then not comply in "genuine good faith" with them.¹¹ Eisenhower's question reveals his skepticism about the United States position toward Communist China, especially when one considers that he raised it during the Quemoy crisis and just a week after the treaty with Taipei had been signed.

The president was particularly concerned about how Chiang might interpret the new pact upon which the ink had barely

dried. Eisenhower did not want Chiang to take the treaty as carte blanche for the Nationalists to launch an offensive against the mainland that would involve the United States and lead to American boys dying once again in Asia. With Eisenhower's wariness of the generalissimo in mind, Dulles and the Republic of China's Foreign Minister George Yeh exchanged diplomatic notes on December 10, which Townsend Hoopes has written "effectively 'released'" Chiang and said clearly that any "use of force" from any Nationalist area would "be a matter of joint agreement." This diplomatic corollary was not made public, however, until February 7, 1955, more than a week after the Senate had finally approved the Formosa Resolution.¹²

Eisenhower was trying to ensure that he had some control over any drastic action that Chiang might take. The bottom line was that Eisenhower knew such offensive action by Chiang's army would be futile and despite the political strength of the generalissimo's supporters in the United States, the president was not about to let the Chinese Nationalist leader drag America into another war.

Despite the U.S.-Taiwan treaty, the Communist Chinese hardly seemed intimidated and the tension in the Strait continued. At the National Security Council meeting of January 13, 1955, the topic was the domestic political repercussions of the crisis in the Formosan Strait. Dulles discussed a memorandum that the Democratic National Committee had circulated in the halls of Congress. Dulles claimed that

former Democratic State Department officials such as Dean Acheson, Paul Nitze and Benjamin Cohen were criticizing the new accord with Taiwan by this memorandum which according to Dulles, was "plainly designed to obfuscate the issues and to throw monkey wrenches into the Administration's plans."¹³ The secretary of state was incensed by this circular which questioned the wisdom of the U.S. aligning itself militarily with Chiang. Dulles angrily said that the activities of the Democratic "cabal...bordered on the traitorous."

Nixon, who served as Dulles's eyes and ears on The Hill, responded that the "whole thing was a calculated political maneuver." He pointed out that the opposition party had also criticized the president's State of the Union message. Nixon called this memorandum a "breach of bipartisanship" and suggested that whoever was chosen to respond to it, the president or Dulles should not. Rather, he suggested that a senator or "well-known press figure" should get the call.¹⁴ Here was one of the most blatantly partisan Republicans of the postwar era accusing the Democrats of playing politics. Yes, Nixon had supported Truman on Europe but he was hardly the embodiment of bipartisanship whether the Republicans were in or out of power.

As recounted above, the Formosa Resolution was skillfully steered through both the House and Senate by the administration at the end of January, giving the masterful political magician Eisenhower the free hand he felt he needed to deter the Chinese Communists while remaining vague on

exactly what he would do to thwart them if push came to shove. At one and the same time, the president satisfied the staunch backers of Chiang, received the support of the Congress, and also kept the Communists guessing as to his intent while restraining Chiang.

In February, Nixon was again dispatched abroad by the president. This time the destination was Latin America and Nixon again scored a successful trip as he strove to enhance his education in foreign affairs. Nixon, still the best and hardest working student in the class, reported to the NSC on his travels. The message that the vice president imparted to the policymakers in his briefing on March 10 was that although Latin America might appear to be "small potatoes" compared to other areas in the world, the United States "must never make the mistake of taking Latin America for granted" since it was "after all, our own backyard, and it offered enormous potentials to the United States for good or ill, depending on whether the right or the wrong people were in control of the American republics." Although this trip did not receive the same kind of press attention that his 1953 Asian trip did, it served to broaden the scope of Nixon's perceptions of the world.¹⁵

In the meantime, the Formosan Strait crisis hardly receded. Tensions heated up again in March when Dulles returned from yet another trip to Taiwan and reported to the president and the NSC that the situation was far more serious than he had originally thought. Eisenhower went so far in one

press conference that month to say that atomic weapons might be used in a wartime situation, just as bullets are. The neorevisionist historians have made much of this statement by the president as proof of his bellicose intentions and creation of a "national insecurity state." But Eisenhower knew how to use a threat and it is no mere coincidence that by April when the "non-aligned" world met at Bandung, Indonesia, Chou En-lai was making far more conciliatory remarks than he had just a few short months before.¹⁶ The Chinese now were taking the American commitment to Taiwan far more seriously. This was no doubt because of Eisenhower's remarks on nuclear weapons and the Formosa Resolution's implication that the United States would defend "other areas," which was understood to be the offshore islands.

But even with the United States on the brink of war with China, Nixon remained the president's political point man and began to galvanize the GOP faithful for 1956. In a March 14 speech in Los Angeles before the World Affairs Council, Nixon warned that the Republicans needed to develop the strength of the party, itself, to elect a president rather than relying solely on the popularity of a candidate to hold on to the White House. Nixon knew very well that the future of the Republican Party would be dim, as would his own political future, should the GOP count solely on the popularity of Ike rather than building support at the grass roots for the party. Nixon told the group that the major Republican themes for 1956 would be "peace and prosperity." He omitted his

standard chorus on the domestic Communist menace. Was this a kinder and gentler Nixon or just an incumbent who wanted to take a more statesman-like profile in advance of a presidential election? He also said the administration's foreign policy was united in retaining a strong position in Asia "to resist further Communist aims and aggressions." He did not have to mention Quemoy and Matsu for his audience to know what he was talking about. The vice president also went out of his way to downplay the talk of any differences between Eisenhower and Dulles about "whether the policy of resisting Communist aggression was correct." (Even though Eisenhower had publicly mentioned the possibility of using nuclear weapons, Dulles had been taking a much harder line publicly against the Communist Chinese.) Once again, Nixon had done his bit for the general.¹⁷

Nixon spoke in Chicago on March 17 and delivered a no-holds-barred warning to the Communist Chinese in an address to the Executive Club. The vice president had consulted with Dulles before the speech. In one of their innumerable telephone conversations from the period, Nixon asked the secretary of state if he should stress the "tactical [nuclear] weapons aspect" in dealing with the crisis. Dulles told Nixon that he should "strike a solemn note about the situation in Asia."¹⁸ Was Dulles merely asking Nixon to strike a pose for the cameras? Or was he deadly serious? Fortunately, for the sake of the world, this bluff was never called. The administration was really trying to intimidate the Communist

Chinese government.

In the Chicago speech, Nixon bluntly warned the Chinese Communists that any new aggression on their part would be greeted with nuclear weapons. The elite audience erupted in applause when the vice president said that "it would be insanity for them to embark on additional aggression in the face of the consequences we have made clear will follow."¹⁹

Nixon rationalized the possible employment of nuclear weapons against the Chinese Communists because "dictatorial leaders of revolutionary movements are always unpredictable" and "sometimes do unreasonable things." The vice president emphasized that American policy in the Taiwan area was "designed only to resist aggression--not to initiate it."

Nixon, the lawyer, defended the use of nuclear weapons by saying that they should now be considered "conventional." (He was really following Eisenhower's line that tactical atomic weapons should be considered no different than bullets.) "It is foolish to talk about the possibility that the weapons which might be used in the event war breaks out in the Pacific would be limited to the conventional Korean and World War II types of explosives," he said. The vice president added that the United States was "not prepared to fight that kind of war. Our forces could not fight an effective war in the Pacific with those types of explosives if they wanted to." If this was not the New Look of "massive retaliation," more "bang for the buck," then what was? If there was any doubt on the part of his listeners, he was sure to erase it when he uttered the

coup de grace that "tactical atomic explosives are now conventional and will be used against the targets of any aggressive force."²⁰

Nixon took the hard-line on not allowing the Communist Chinese to add an inch to the territory they controlled, although this did not reflect what Eisenhower had been saying privately. Was Nixon, with Dulles's tacit consent, trying to pressure Eisenhower to follow a different course, as he seemingly had in his remarks the year before about the "hypothetical" insertion of American troops in Vietnam to prevent a Communist takeover? No wonder that in 1956, Eisenhower suggested to his vice president that he "chart his own course" and get some "administrative" experience in a cabinet post rather than hold on to the nation's second highest office. After all, it was Eisenhower who was president and the last thing Ike wanted in 1956 was anything that might lead to the impression that in essence, the GOP was offering a Nixon-Eisenhower ticket.

Nixon was resolute as he implied that opponents of going to the limit over the offshore islands were naive. "Those who suggest that we could get peace in the Pacific by giving up additional territory to the Communists simply do not know the kind of animal we are dealing with," he chimed. Then, transforming himself into a history professor, he offered that "History has proved to us again and again that concessions of territory only whet the appetite of dictatorial aggressors and this has proved particularly true of the men in the Kremlin

and Peking." Nixon then expanded on his revulsion toward appeasement of the Chinese Communists. "The only way to guarantee that there will be no war," he added, "is to surrender completely to the enemy." War, to Nixon, seemed preferable to the expansion of communism influence to the islands in the Strait. "A policy of firmness may not now avoid war if the Communists embark on new aggression," he said. "But a policy of weakness and partial surrender now would inevitably lead to either a big war or complete surrender later." This was the reprise of an old Nixon chorus going back to the MacArthur episode of 1951 and the debate over the Korean War. But the vice president was sure to indicate that should war come, the blame would rest solely on Peking's shoulders. "We have made it crystal clear to the world that if war comes the responsibility will rest squarely on the Communists."²¹

Nixon claimed that despite the risks involved in the administration's policy, in the long run it gave the United States "the best chance to attain our objective of peace without surrender." And Nixon, considering geopolitical implications and the importance of perceptions of American resolve by allies as well as enemies, pointed out that the Philippines and Japan were closely observing the Quemoy-Matsu crisis to see if the United States would withdraw from places where the Communists were applying pressure.²²

Nixon, the partisan Republican, then muddied the name of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Yalta agreements, which from the

Old Guard's view were the cause of all of the ills in international affairs in the postwar period. Here, Nixon took on the mantle of the Old Guard, or at least was politically shrewd enough to pander to it. (The Yalta agreements had just been published, reigniting the issue.) But Nixon was slightly more generous to FDR and his cohorts than he was to the Truman-Acheson crowd. Speaking of Yalta, the vice president said he was convinced that "decisions were made not because of a deliberate intent to sell out but that at the time the leaders did not know what the Communist animal was like." But this was really Nixon's technique of ascribing guilt while seemingly exonerating the accused. He still managed to twist the knife ever sharper into the Democrats by saying that "one of the major reasons" for the Chinese Communists's success was "due to the concessions made at Yalta."²³ (It is surprising that Nixon did not invoke the name of Alger Hiss as one of FDR's advisers at the wartime conference in the Crimea.) Nixon was just trying to gain political capital. The Yalta accords clearly show that Stalin pledged to support the Nationalists and Chiang rather than Mao and the Communists in the immediate postwar period. And historians Michael Schaller and Gordon H. Chang have shown how dubious Stalin was about his Communist neighbors south of the border.²⁴

The vice president deliberately toned down his rhetoric in Cleveland on April 3 when he spoke before the American Association of School Administrators. But politically, Nixon

had to gauge his audience, and could not appear excessively hawkish before this crowd of educators responsible for preparing America's young people for the future. With the stench of death and casualties from Korea and World War II still so freshly in the nostrils of the nation, Nixon could hardly exhibit great enthusiasm for sending American boys off to war before this group. But measuring an audience, or a local or national constituency is the mark of a smart, effective and successful politician. Nixon certainly had all three of these qualities.

He strongly denied that there was a "war party" in the United States and that neither the Eisenhower administration, Congress, or the nation's military leaders wanted war. He delicately ignored the small matter that Admiral Radford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Admiral Robert B. Carney, the navy's chief of naval operations, had been loudly beating the drums for offensive military action, including the use of nuclear weapons, to thwart Communist designs on the offshore islands. Nixon also was soft-pedaling the bellicose line he had taken just two weeks before in Chicago. The very term, "war party," Nixon charged, was a "big lie" that the Communist propagandists were stirring up to cause problems and he assured the educators that no "trigger-happy" decisions would be made by the administration during the present crisis.²⁵

With the Republicans in control of the White House, Nixon suddenly espoused bipartisanship. Of course, it had been

different when he had been a prominent spokesman for the opposition during Mr. Truman's war in Korea. He urged that the country "advocate vigorously the policies that we think are best designed to avoid war and obtain peace" but he expressed the desire that this be done "without questioning the motives of those who disagree with us." One of the chief architects of postwar virulent partisanship was now calling for national unity. But the view is vastly different for the party in power than it is for the opposition. Nixon also reiterated that there would be no major war unless the Communists started it and he stated his confidence in the leadership of Eisenhower and Dulles. The vice president maintained that the guiding light for the administration remained "peace without surrender" and as he had noted so many times in the past, he said that this required the free world to be stronger than the Communists both militarily and economically.²⁶

Nixon enunciated his faith in firmness, fairness and friendship: the determination to use American military strength against aggression while at the same time to exhibit "readiness to join with other nations in converting the power of the atom to peaceful uses" and "willingness to participate in big power conferences when conditions are such that there would be a chance to reduce world tensions."²⁷

Alluding to the crisis in the Formosan Strait, Nixon said that the administration's policy had been questioned and that opponents had "suggested...that the United States should

announce to the world now that certain named areas [i.e., the offshore islands] would not be defended by us if they were attacked. Apparently," he added, "they believe such an action would avoid war." The vice president again took on the guise of a history professor to draw a parallel from the past. He lashed into his favorite target, Dean Acheson, to restir the charge that Acheson's January 1950 speech on the defense perimeter of the United States had brought on the Communist aggression in Korea. Nixon also invoked Danzig and the cry at the time of "Why die for Danzig?" The vice president pointed out that no one died for Danzig then but that millions died not long after. "History shows that surrender of territory, in itself, never satisfies an aggressor; it only increases his appetite."²⁸ But in the case of the Chinese Communists, no one disputed that the offshore islands were sovereign territory. The question, of course, was which China would rule them?

Nixon put a peculiar spin on the subject of nuclear weapons. He had been in favor of using them, if necessary, to contain the Chinese Communists. Now, through a bit of rhetorical legerdemain, he stated that "this terrible new weapon, the atomic bomb...may, in the end, prove to be a boon as a great equalizer." Nixon's argument was that as the arsenals of the two superpowers increased, the matter of who had the "most" weapons would be dwarfed if both sides had "enough" and therefore, "a military leader will not advise political leaders to wage war, because they will be risking

national suicide."²⁹ Rather than appearing as a war monger, he virtually took on the aura of a peacenik. However, he neglected to say what political leaders might conclude in their own right concerning the use of the "terrible" weapon. But he was downplaying the nuclear threat because he fully understood that that was what his audience wanted to hear. His backers in southern California had not previously awarded him the honor of being named "Salesman of the Year" because Nixon could not successfully sell his ideas as merchandise designed for public consumption.

But Nixon displayed an open mind to the educators in exhorting them to teach America's schoolchildren more about communism rather than less. This was tantamount to Jesuits devoting themselves to studying Lutheran theology so as to be better prepared to deny it. As for how Nixon could square this up with the ban on Communist teachers, Nixon gave the pat explanation that they would be under strict party orders not to teach about communism as it really is. Instead, Nixon proposed that the young be taught about Communist ideology in comparison to American theories of government and learn that Communists promised the people much and delivered little. Nixon, who so eloquently and effectively expressed his own traditional philosophy of education in his 1990 book, In the Arena, also put in a plug for American children to learn foreign languages and to attain a "genuine respect for the cultures, traditions, and customs of other people" around the world. He stated that America would win its struggle against

communism and that he hoped it could be won without a war. The reason for his optimism was simple: America was on the right side. Here, again a little American idealism and moralism could go a long way in the domestic political marketplace and in the rationalizing of foreign policy. He concluded his remarks by keeping the door open to the possibility of renewed Chinese-American friendship someday despite the current crisis. He held out the hope that the time would come when the peoples of the two countries would live together in peace and friendship.³⁰

By late April, tensions abated somewhat when Chou En-lai sounded a conciliatory note at Bandung by saying that China did not seek war with the United States. But for Nixon, the tempest still loomed, although he, too, continued to tone down his rhetoric. In a May 7 New York speech before the Society of American Military Engineers, Nixon forcefully stated the case for Eisenhower to have the option of taking action "to maintain peace without surrendering" (his favorite "buzz words") because the president was ultimately the "person with the most complete, up-to-date knowledge of all the facts." He added that the decision on how to achieve this had to finally rest with the president and he urged that the nation rally around Eisenhower in that time of crisis. Although he gave lip service to welcoming debate on the Quemoy-Matsu crisis, he nevertheless proposed that America's interests would be better served if there were less pronouncements on the situation by "those who did not have all the facts."³¹

This was strikingly consistent with Nixon's own conduct and vision as president of his constitutional powers as commander-in-chief when he ordered the incursion into Cambodia and vetoed the War Powers Act, which he perceived as designed to emasculate the President's ability to exert American military might. With the notable exception of his distaste for Truman's firing of MacArthur (which in Nixon's view prevented the more drastic military action in Korea he advocated), Nixon was a staunch proponent of a powerful executive, who in essence would have more control than Congress concerning military and foreign affairs. The difference between Nixon and Eisenhower in the presidency was that Eisenhower was far more solicitous of Congress. In seeking the Formosa Resolution and Eisenhower Doctrine, Ike was also more effective in achieving his goal of giving the chief executive the freedom of action while politically mollifying Congress and American public opinion. Nixon, on the other hand, all too often aroused the contempt of Congress over his conduct of the Vietnam War, not to mention his conception of paramount presidential power and executive privilege which so offended the institutional pride of those lawmakers who jealously guarded their constitutional role in matters of war and peace.

Downwind from Geneva

Following the death of Stalin in 1953, the Russians under the "triumverate" transitional leadership of Nikita Khrushchev,

Nikolai Bulganin, and Georgi Malenkov had begun a "peace offensive" aimed "against" the West. Washington was skeptical about what it feared to be just another Soviet propaganda ploy. But even Churchill in 1953 had called for a summit between the Russians and the Western allies. This was all the more complicated from Washington's perspective when, as already mentioned, at Bandung in April 1955, Chou En-lai appeared to take the bite out of his bark in proclaiming that China did not seek war with the United States. The temperature accordingly declined in the Formosan Strait and American attention turned back toward the old nemesis, Moscow. But the pressure for a summit to ease international tensions, and abate the fear that the two superpowers would bring the world to a premature apocalypse through nuclear war, finally induced the Eisenhower administration to agree to a conference at the highest levels with the Russians, British, and French at Geneva to be held in July 1955. The most serious political problem for the White House was ironically not how best to save the world from self-destruction but how to engage in discussions with the Kremlin without unduly inciting the Old Guard of the Republican Party to stage a revolution of its own against the American Presidential Palace of Power. It was a shaky tightrope that Eisenhower had to walk and he needed to be as agile as the army rangers who scaled the cliffs at Normandy in the first wave of the "Crusade" to liberate Europe.

No one was more skeptical of the "fresh air" from the East

than the vice president. Suspicions of Soviet intentions were another constant throughout Nixon's career. Such misgivings were not evolutionary on his part. Not only was he wary of smoking a peace pipe with the Russians in 1955, but he was one of the few voices during the Gorbymania of the late 1980s that dared question the motives of that latter-day saint of communism, Mikhail Gorbachev's "Glasnost" offensive.³² Even as president, in pursuing his policy of detente with the Russians, Nixon did not romanticize the relationship, sensing that the national interests of both superpowers at the time dictated the need for improved relations. Despite his recurrent invocations of Wilsonian rhetoric, idealism ultimately played a far smaller role in Nixon's view of international affairs than the realpolitik of power and national interest.

During this period, Nixon further cemented his already good and cordial working and personal relationship with Dulles as the secretary of state turned ever readily to the Vice President for political advice. The older gentleman who had been Nixon's tutor in "The Way of the World" found himself just as often his protegee's student in "The Way of American Politics"; particularly that never ending saga dramatically played in the United States Congress.

Dulles called Nixon May 19 to get his impressions of potential domestic political ramifications and how best to deal with Congress concerning the upcoming Geneva Summit.

Nixon advised against congressional participation and he said the door should be shut on disarmament advisor Harold Stassen, Nelson Rockefeller (who was doing everything possible to influence the administration's foreign policy through a variety of presidential appointments during the Eisenhower era), and Ambassador to the United Nations Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. Nixon's great fear, one that would haunt him in the future, was the possibility of leaks to the press. He told Dulles that "you can't have a squadron" at a summit because it would just provide more players who could talk to the press. But even more importantly, from a purely domestic political standpoint, was that his future enemy Rockefeller was "considered part of the previous [i.e., Truman] administration" and that the "Taftish group" would not be pleased at a high profile role for Lodge despite the "good job" the ambassador had done at the U.N. As for Stassen, Nixon told the secretary of state that the American people just would not trust him.³³ But Rockefeller headed the so-called Quantico Panel that recommended the "Open Skies" proposal and after the Geneva Summit convened, Eisenhower had Dulles summon Rockefeller and Stassen to the lakeside conference from Paris, where they had both been eagerly waiting in the wings to come share the limelight in Switzerland. Nixon had stayed home and may have been more haunted than touched by the "Spirit of Geneva."

The vice president expressed his reservations about the Kremlin's intent in a June 2 speech before the Rotary

International Convention in Chicago. He applauded the Eisenhower administration for having "firmed up" its "diplomatic policies" concerning Taiwan and especially lauded the Formosa Resolution for "giving the President power to take steps to defend Formosa." Nixon claimed that the new found "firmness" (the implication being of course that the Truman team had been most decidedly infirm) was responsible for the Chinese Communists having "virtually ceased their threatening actions in the Formosan Straits." He noted that the Chinese had already released four American pilots they had held prisoner. As further proof of the dividends of toughness toward the Communist world, Nixon reminded the Rotarians that the Russians consented to attend the "Big Four Conference" slated for Geneva and had offered a disarmament proposal.³⁴

But the Californian was not about to be snookered by Khrushchev and his comrades, and was quick to take the air out of the Russian trial balloon. Nixon warned that "this is no time for unguarded optimism" and urged "caution" in light of history. (Nixon, to his credit, understood that the present had a past, something that average politicians of the Post Cold War era seemingly fail to grasp.) The vice president believed that Communist doctrine still held out the ultimate goal of "conquer[ing] the world by force, if necessary, but by other means if possible." To Nixon's mind, Geneva clearly fell into that devious and diabolical category of "other means." The Kremlin's disarmament proposal was "full of booby traps," he cautioned. Yet, he resoundingly supported the

American effort aimed at "exploring every road that could possibly lead to peace." As if by cue, the Rotarians broke into applause.³⁵

Nixon then turned Wilsonian before the very eyes of the conventioners. He pointed out that geographic isolation no longer protected the United States from "man's conquest of the air and the atom." Just three days after Memorial Day, he reminded his listeners of the thousands of Americans who had died in the three foreign wars of the 20th Century, "not because of glory of war or the rewards of conquest...[but] to make the world safe for democracy." Americans had fought "against dictatorship, against fascism" he told an audience that undoubtedly was replete with veterans of World War II and he hit a chord when he chimed that "we can partially repay the debt we owe to our war dead" by finding "the road that leads to peace." But Wilsonian or not, the vice president implored the group to remember that if the Communists were given "an inch they are likely to take 1,000 miles" and that "strength with firmness is the only language they understand."³⁶

Nixon headed south to the heart of the Lone Star State to deliver another speech on June 11 before the Texas Press Association in Galveston. He reiterated his skepticism of Communist intentions. "No one knows why the Communist leaders in both Peking and Moscow have made conciliatory moves during the past few weeks," he told the Texans, "but we must never forget that it is standard Communist tactics to retreat at times in order to move forward more effectively toward their

announced goal of world domination." Nixon must have had in mind Lenin's dictum, "One step back, two steps forward" as he referred to the Russians as the "master conspirators in the Kremlin." From Nixon's vantage point, the Communists had two major foreign policy goals: the neutralization of Germany and the admission of Communist China to the United Nations. He claimed that the Communists had been unable through threats to stop Germany's inclusion in the Western Alliance and he further claimed that they were losing support from the "all-important neutrals in Asia." Nixon reasoned that there was no surprise in this new tactic of seemingly conciliatory rhetoric and he predicted that America be on the lookout for other "spectacular conciliatory moves, both before and during" the Geneva Summit. The bottom line for Nixon was that the free world should "not be lulled into a false sense of security" in this time of "apparent conciliation."³⁷

Although nothing concrete was accomplished in Geneva in July, there was much talk of the "Spirit of Geneva." Although the Soviets had rejected Eisenhower's "Open Skies" proposal, the general consensus was that tensions between the two superpowers had eased and that the world was not on the brink of nuclear self-destruction. If anything, the summit served to enhance Eisenhower's stature both at home and abroad, not to mention the international image of the United States.

Nixon, however, was not about to be caught up in the euphoria. The vice president and Dulles again compared notes on August 23 prior to the American Bar Association's annual

convention in Philadelphia. Both were to speak before the national lawyer's group and the international outlook after Geneva was to be the subject. As one indication of Dulles's increasing confidence in the vice president, he had shown him a draft of his speech, which Nixon approved. Nixon then divulged the gist of what he planned to tell the lawyers. Dulles, also a skeptic of Geneva (as was Eisenhower privately), advised Nixon to stress that prior to Geneva the president said "the purpose is to develop a new spirit" but that it was "not an end in itself." Nixon replied that Geneva could be understood as a "prologue" to be followed by "the Act." The vice president added that he would probably be called a "warmonger" but that he did not mind since he thought it "good to prick the bubble of optimism."³⁸

In his August 25 brief to the Philadelphia lawyers, Nixon offered an appraisal of Geneva. He said that the United States had been successful because it had avoided "the surrender of any free world interests." But he did not hesitate to throw cold water on the perception of Geneva representing an historic breakthrough. As to whether or not the summit contributed to making any genuine and significant progress for peace, Nixon asked the lawyers to take into account the "sobering thought" that the Russian leaders had not changed their position in the least on what he termed the "two great issues considered at the Conference, disarmament and unification of Germany."³⁹

Nixon then reminded the attorneys that "the Geneva

Conference was not an end in itself." Rather, "it was a means to an end" and following his direction from Dulles on this part of the script, he added that Eisenhower's view of the "purpose of the Conference was not to settle these complicated issues but to develop, if we could, the spirit and procedures for reaching agreement on such issues at later conferences." Nixon suggested a number of steps that he advised the Communists to take if they were sincere about peace. He insisted that the Chinese Communists withdraw their troops from Korea, consent to free elections and unify that country. Nixon, who could always come up with a very effective turn of phrase, added that what the Communists "will determine whether there is a real thaw in the cold war or just a brief warm spell before an even bigger freeze."⁴⁰

On August 29, Nixon traveled up to Boston to deliver the keynote address to the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Encampment. He started his speech with a recitation of the "roadblocks" to peace posed by the Soviets in Europe, but devoted a considerable segment of his remarks to why the United States had to remain firm in its policy of nonrecognition of China. Although the China issue had taken a back seat to American preoccupation with the summit with the Soviets at Geneva, Nixon gauged his audience and instinctively knew that China would have an emotional and political appeal to the veterans. After all, his listeners included men who had recently fought the Chinese enemy in Korea.

The vice president enumerated the reasons why the Chinese

Communist government did not measure up to the requirements described in the United Nations Charter for membership in the international organization. The Communist Chinese were responsible for the deaths of "thousands of American boys...because the Communist Chinese supported the attack on South Korea." Nixon also pointed to Korea's continued division which he explained by Peking's refusal to hold free elections as well as the continued presence of Communist Chinese troops in North Korea "in direct violation of the truce." Nixon played on the veterans's emotions by reminding them that the Chinese still held Americans as prisoners. Furthermore, the vice president again branded the Chinese Communists as aggressors saying that "they encourage, incite, and support insurrection, rebellion, and subversion in every free country of Asia, and particularly in Indonesia, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand and Malaya." Not least, according to Nixon, they had "not renounced their previous threat to take Formosa by force."⁴¹

From Nixon's point of view, this naughty behavior by the wayward Chinese Communists simply made it unthinkable that they could sit at the same table with the family of civilized nations. And of course, the corollary to this was that the United States could not countenance the thought of rewarding such rampant juvenile delinquency by appearing to acquiesce to it through diplomatic recognition of the Communist regime. Although Gordon Chang has overstated the case by claiming that China was the "main enemy," his other point is well taken that

there was a certain tinge of "racism" in the American attitude toward the Chinese Communists.⁴² It was as if they were some sort of misbehaved children who needed to be taught proper manners. Such an attitude, disguised by rhetoric though it might be, could only serve to offend the Chinese, whose civilization was far older than young America and even Western Civilization, itself. However, this does not mean that Nixon, himself, was a "racist." Far from it, for he was one of the few in the administration who realized the need to respect the dignity of the Chinese and all the peoples of color throughout Asia and Africa, as well as blacks here in the United States. Yet, Nixon was much like other Americans of the time who naturally assumed the superiority of not only Western Civilization in general, but American know-how in particular.

But as he had so many times in the past, Nixon refused to shut the door completely on the prospect of ever recognizing the Communist regime in Peking. He took this stance even before this audience of veterans. If only the Chinese Communists would undergo some kind of what psychologists would call "behavior modification," then, Nixon certainly implied, there might very well be the prospect of eventual alteration in the U.S. position against admission of Peking to the United Nations. Playing again to the emotions of the veterans, he first demanded that the Chinese release all American prisoners and take their troops and materiel out of North Korea, consent to "free U.N.-supervised elections and unification of the

country." In essence, Nixon was trying to make the veterans of the Korean War feel that they had not fought in vain. The vice president also demanded that Peking renounce the use of force against the "Formosa area" which could only be interpreted to include the offshore islands as well. Finally, he called for the Chinese Communists to "discontinue the undeclared war they are waging against established free governments through the operations of their Peking-controlled and directed organizations for infiltration, subversion, sabotage, and insurrection." He said the United States was "willing to go half-way" in trying to remove differences between the nations and he again invoked the Wilsonian chorus that the peoples of China, Russia and America could and should be friends. The only thing getting in the way of that natural friendship was the Communist governments, not the people. "We are confident," he said, "that if the governments of the Soviet Union and Communist China reflect the will and true spirit of their people the barriers to friendship and peace which have been erected by those governments will be removed." But between the lines, Nixon was clearly saying that Peking did not have to revert to Nationalist Chinese control (which was a total fantasy to begin with) as the sine qua non for the reestablishment of relations with China and its admission to the United Nations.⁴³

Despite having inspired more than his share of unfavorable press as a result of his off-the-cuff comments on sending American troops to Indochina, and his role as Eisenhower's

hatchet man in the 1954 campaign, Nixon showed the signs of a resurgence in his standing among the Washington journalists. James Reston, who had thrashed Nixon after his June 1954 speech in Milwaukee brutally lambasting Democratic foreign policy, was now back in Nixon's corner. Writing in The New York Times, "Scotty" Reston praised the vice president for having changed his tactics and discounted the popular assumption circulating in Washington that Nixon would "play the same role in the campaign of 1956 as he did in the campaign in 1954." Reston disputed the notion espoused by the intellectual columnist Walter Lippmann (Reston always prided himself on being a "working stiff", a newspaperman's newspaperman) that Nixon was really at one with the GOP right wing and who should be dropped from the 1956 ticket because he was too divisive. Reston thought that Eisenhower, assuming the president chose to seek re-election, would keep Nixon. But Reston overstated his case by saying that Eisenhower "likes and admires" Nixon. Yet, Reston was more right than wrong. Eisenhower's behavior the next year in hedging on the choice of Nixon to be his running mate was not anticipated by Reston but the ultimate decision to keep Nixon, rather than "dump" him, was on the mark. In praise of the vice president, the journalist said that Nixon, "like most 42-year-olds...is changing and learning from his experience." The Timesman correctly claimed that Nixon was now being "judged...against the standards that apply to a potential President" and Reston wrote this three weeks before Eisenhower's heart attack.

Reston also praised Nixon for not accepting fees for public speaking engagements, in stark contrast to his predecessor, Alben Barkley.⁴⁴ In Reston's mind, the Nixon of 1955 seemed far removed from the overly rambunctious, eager beaver of a young man on the make whose integrity had been questioned and vilified in the 1952 "fund scandal."

Too Many Raw Onions

Nixon's standing in the press was even more enhanced in the wake of the national scare engendered by the president's heart attack. (On the day of the attack, Eisenhower had first complained of discomfort which his friends on the golf course in Denver attributed to his eating too many raw onions on his hamburger. They chided him for it but that night he awoke in extreme pain from the coronary.) Nixon impressed even his previous detractors with the restraint he exhibited in the immediate aftermath of Eisenhower's illness and in the prolonged period of convalescence. The accepted interpretation of events surrounding the president's illness has it that his chief of staff, Sherman Adams, who was not known for his love of Nixon, wanted to ensure that the vice president was frozen out of any direct access to Eisenhower. Adams's repugnance at Nixon was certainly true but the grubbing, middle-class Nixon accepted the snubbing quite graciously and proved that he had far more class than the Yankee former governor of New Hampshire descended from Mayflower stock.

If anything, Nixon was extremely sensitive to Adams's

position as Eisenhower's chief of staff, as shown in the memoranda of several conversations he held with Dulles at the time. Nixon told New York Times columnist Arthur Krock that the impression had to be maintained that the president was in charge and the government had to carry on as Eisenhower would have led it. Also, Nixon explained that he was extremely wary of any perception that he was trying to make "personal, which is political capital out of this distressing situation."

(Nixon realized the need to avoid the kind of situation that occurred after Woodrow Wilson's stroke, which the vice president called an "interregnum [that] was tragic." But Eisenhower's steady progress in Denver seemed to allay fear of such a dire predicament--although, of course, the same question was to rise in 1957 when Eisenhower suffered a stroke.) Even The New Republic's TRB, as tough a critic of Nixon as there was, praised him for having handled "himself with discretion and dignity" since the president's heart attack. Nixon, rather than being the overly rambunctious earnest understudy that many expected, proved to be a class act in an unsettling and potentially perilous and precarious situation.⁴⁵

As the president recovered, Nixon again took to the road to carry the torch for Eisenhower. He delivered a major foreign policy address to The New York Herald Tribune Forum on October 18, and as usual, he discussed the speech with Dulles beforehand. Dulles suggested that Nixon should strike "a pretty high and non-controversial note," although as if to

assuage the vice president, the secretary said that he "realized" Nixon already knew this. (Of course, if Dulles was so confident that Nixon knew how to conduct himself, why bother to point out proper modes of behavior? The last thing Dulles wanted was for Nixon to go on the warpath as the president recuperated and as the "Big 4" Foreign Ministers were preparing to convene later that month in Geneva to follow up that summer's summit and try to put some flesh and bones on the "spirit of Geneva.") Dulles told Nixon it was important that such a tone be set because the vice president had been "cast in the role of 'hatchet' man." But Dulles was hardly going soft as he further advised Nixon that Eisenhower's theme was "peaceful change" and "this idea that we are not going to use force against each other doesn't mean that we accept the status quo." Then, Dulles seemed to take a tack goading Nixon on a bit as he suggested that "it would not be out of order" to stress that "we are struggling" now in the Far East and Middle East. He was referring to the mounting tensions between Britain and Egypt over the Suez Canal which was to culminate in Egyptian President Abdel Gamal Nasser nationalizing the canal, and an October 1956 joint invasion of Egypt by British, French, and Israeli troops). Dulles feared that in the aftermath of Geneva, the Russians might use force by "proxy" in the Middle East. In a stark role reversal, it was Nixon who cautioned the secretary that such comments might be "going a bit far" and Dulles had to concede that much to his star student. But Dulles did say that Nixon could mention

"the renunciation of force" issue concerning Communist China, i.e., that the Chinese had refused to make such a renunciation. Nixon was to incorporate that thought in his New York speech.⁴⁶

But apparently the student had reconsidered his tutor's thoughts on the growing morass in the Middle East. Nixon, having turned the matter over in his mind, asked Dulles what he thought of his saying "It is unfortunate that just before the For Min Conf [sic] begins we are witnessing what appears to be an attempt to stimulate by proxy an arms race which could increase the chances for armed conflict in the ME [Middle East--sic]." Dulles gave his assent to that approach. Nixon also advised the secretary that he intended to say that in reference to that old-time Geneva spirit, the "time for words had passed; the time for deeds had come."⁴⁷ Nixon, although originally instructed to seek a higher level, was still going to keep his feet on the ground of realistic skepticism. This stand had been consistent with the one he had taken since the first "peace soundings" emanated from Moscow.

In his speech to the forum sponsored by the voice of the Republican Eastern Establishment, Nixon warned against being too trusting or naive as far as Soviet intentions were concerned. Nevertheless, he put a more optimistic spin on the international situation than he had in the recent past. He said that the foreign ministers meeting slated for October 27 held "more promise" than any other conference between the East

and West in the last ten years. The New York Times commented that Nixon's speech was "notable for its nonpartisan, and even bipartisan tone." Even though the nation and the world's focus was fixed on Soviet-American relations and Europe at the time, Nixon still noted that Communist China's refusal to "renounce the use of force" was one of the many elements unsettling the globe, along with Soviet domination of Eastern Europe and the fear of surprise attack. Nixon denounced "what appears to be an attempt to stimulate by proxy an arms race...in the Middle East." He was actually referring to Czechoslovakia's willingness to provide arms for Egypt.⁴⁸

But despite all of these "time bombs" ticking away in the world, Nixon saw the situation potentially balanced by the United Nations, the combined strength of America and the free world, atomic power, and the "spirit of Geneva" which he cautioned did not mean "naive acceptance of good words for good intentions." Yet, he still tried to arouse enthusiasm for the upcoming gathering of the "the Big 4" foreign ministers at Geneva.⁴⁹

Nixon had backed foreign aid since his first term representing California's 12th Congressional District. This stand was anathema to the Republican right wing. He continued to support foreign aid not only through the Marshall Plan but as vice president, he consistently supported the domestically controversial foreign assistance programs. Nixon told Dulles that the administration should do even more about foreign

economic aid, or at least have the White House propose that Congress allocate more money for it. He advised that such a request should be made to "seem somewhat more dramatic" and he believed that this was "sound" policy and "good politics."⁵⁰

But it certainly was not "good politics" as far as the Old Guard was concerned. Nixon had never agreed with the "Neanderthals" on America's role in international affairs. He was once more distancing himself from the Old Guard and trying to appeal to a wider constituency. The vice president knew that the United States could not shrink from the responsibilities inherent in being a superpower. Nixon always preferred the challenge of the international arena to what he considered the more mundane matters of domestic affairs. Also, as the 1956 election approached, whether or not Eisenhower would run (and it was by no means certain that he would since the health issue had not been laid to rest), Nixon realized the Old Guard would have no where to go other than the Republican Party, so he could take them for granted to a certain extent. Just as in his 1950 California Senate victory, and the 1952 national election, he knew that Republicans could not win with the conservative vote alone. Looking ahead to his own much-hoped for turn at seeking the White House, whether it be 1956 or 1960, Nixon had to do what was politically appealing to the broadest constituency. It so happened that in the case of foreign aid, what was good politically within the full electorate also coincided with his own firm beliefs on what the United States should do. In this

instance, what was good for Richard Nixon politically, might very well also be good for the United States and vice versa.

Opening Salvos of the 1956 Campaign

Unlike in 1952, China and American foreign policy toward Asia were not destined to play the key role in the 1956 presidential election. Nixon had predicted three weeks before Eisenhower's heart attack that the Battle of 1956 would be fought over the major issue of "the differences of economic philosophy" between the president and his Democratic opponent, "whoever he is going to be." In virtually the same breath, Nixon added that foreign policy would not be an issue but the Democrats would still have to defend the Truman administration's policies.⁵¹ This was Nixon's none too subtle way of saying that despite the stated emphasis on the economy, he would do his best to keep alive the "Achesonphobia" he had stirred up in the campaigns of 1950, 1952, and 1954. Nixon persistently tried to haunt the American people with a spectre--the spectre of the ghoulis, mustachioed Yale man in the striped pants, Dean Acheson.

Nixon reinjected his rationale for foreign economic aid in a January 17, 1956, Philadelphia speech. Building on his conversation with Dulles just the month before, Nixon called for a "new definition for internationalist" which he proceeded to define as a "nationalist who realizes that what is good for our friends and allies abroad is in the final analysis good for us." He warned his audience at a Poor Richard Dinner (in

honor of Ben Franklin, not the vice president) that the free world faced defeat not in "hot war but...in cold war" in which America's enemies would use psychological, political and economic tactics in trying to take over territory. This had become an old Nixon theme, but he never tired of saying that blatant armed aggression was not the only way for the Communists to make inroads. Foreign aid, wisely distributed, was for Nixon a vital armament in the cold war against communism. While the vice president charged that the Russians and Chinese offered foreign aid as a means of achieving domination of other countries, the U.S. granted aid "because we want every country...to be strong enough economically and politically to be independent of any foreign domination." Foreign aid was a means of shoring up the strength of friendly nations, not buying their loyalty to the United States, Nixon said.⁵² If perchance this just happened to be in the best interests of the United States, so much the better.

It was on to Chicago after the Philadelphia speech where Nixon spoke on January 20 to an enthusiastic crowd of over 4,000 Republicans at a "Salute to Eisenhower" dinner. Nixon displayed no bipartisan magnanimity before this group as indicated in The New York Times comment that the vice president had returned "to his slashing platform style of 1952...in what many in his audience regarded as the manner of a man who was running for high office."⁵³ The evening may have been billed as a hearty salute to the general, but since Ike had not yet publicly decided what course he would chart

for himself, Nixon wanted to be sure to be in position, young as he was at 43, for a shot at the GOP nomination for president should Eisenhower bow out. Nixon, as usual, went on the attack against Adlai Stevenson, who had recently offered his own critique of Dulles for the secretary's "brinksmanship" diplomacy, much ballyhooed in an article by James Shepley in Life magazine. It was the first sparring between Stevenson and Nixon in a year that would see the two frequently come to vicious verbal blows and impugn each other's fitness to be president. (The bogeyman that Stevenson created in an effort to frighten the American people was Nixon, who was the villain in the Democrat's nightmare scenario as the possible, even probable, successor to President Eisenhower. Nixon's screamer, in turn, had the weak-kneed Adlai as commander-in-chief.⁵⁴)

Nixon attempted to revitalize the offshore islands as a political issue when he derided Stevenson for having "quavered over our strong stand when the Chinese Communists threatened Quemoy and Matsu and suggested that perhaps we had better force our Allies to give up these areas in order to avoid the risk of war." To add insult to injury, the vice president further accused Stevenson of "indecision, weakness, retreat and surrender."⁵⁵ True to form, Nixon also made his traditional stab at the devil incarnate, Acheson, much to the appreciation of his fellow party members.

Back in New York for the Lincoln Day Dinner at the Waldorf-Astoria, Nixon again hit the Democrats hard, warning

his Republican comrades that the country faced a stark choice in 1956 between the Eisenhower program and "something more radical."⁵⁶ No interpreters were needed to translate that turn of phrase. Nixon might as well have cited the "Democratic threat" to America posed by liberals within that party. One wonders who Nixon really thought presented the most danger to the survival of the American way of life: the evil men in the Kremlin or the misguided leadership of the subversive, conspiratorial, appeasing, anglophilic, and revolutionary Democratic Party.

Throughout the winter, spring and even up until the Republican National Convention that August, Eisenhower let Nixon "twist, twist slowly in the wind" as to whether or not the younger man would keep his place on the GOP ticket. Nixon had to be on his best behavior and even though the Lincoln Day speech was a fighting partisan attack, it was given on the one day of the year when Republicans were allowed to let it all hang out. Eisenhower put Nixon through prolonged agony (torture might be a more apt description) as to what Nixon's fate would ultimately be. The president camouflaged his desire to dump Nixon by trying to persuade the vice president to take an "administrative" post in the cabinet (except for the most prestigious posts of secretary of state or attorney general) so that the Californian could acquire the experience needed to make him more "mature." As if that was not enough for Nixon to have to deal with, Eisenhower insisted that the "choice" of remaining on the ticket was Nixon's and that he

"chart his own course." Nixon, the experienced political survivor, managed to rally enough support within the GOP so that Eisenhower had to keep him despite the fact that the president, in his heart of hearts, wanted to dispose of him. But that was not politically expedient given Nixon's strong constituency among the Republican Party regulars.

Return To The Asialand

On May 11, Dulles sounded Nixon out on whether he would be willing to go to Manila in honor of the 10th anniversary of Philippine independence that July 4th. (The Philippines having been an American commonwealth, saw fit to have the same independence day as the mother country). Nixon wondered what Dulles "thought about the worthwhileness of the affair." To put it mildly, Nixon was not eager for a grand return to the archipelago.

In feeling Nixon out, Dulles asked if the trip was too close to August 11, which was a week before the Republicans convened their national convention. It is possible that Nixon may have been uneasy about being out of the country so close to the convention since it might allow his enemies within the party time to undercut his position as running mate-select for the 1956 ticket. As it turned out, it was difficult enough for Nixon to hold onto the No. 2 spot. Despite Nixon having Eisenhower's "endorsement," Harold Stassen worked behind the scenes at the convention in a last ditch effort to depose the Californian in favor of Governor Christian A. Herter, Sr. of

Massachusetts.

Nixon took the trip which included another meeting with Chiang in Taiwan and a stop in Saigon. Even if he really had not wanted to go, he simply had no choice for being vice president was a bit like being expendable in wartime. His initial reluctance is quite understandable and perhaps one of the best examples of domestic political considerations influencing the "conduct" of foreign affairs. But in fairness to Nixon, he was fully prepared to do whatever Dulles and Eisenhower asked him to do.

Dulles said that should Nixon go, the Philippine independence celebration would present a good opportunity to make an appeal to the Asian people. The secretary advised Nixon to "delicately" suggest that the Philippines, having achieved their own independence should "do more in helping others, i.e., Vietnam, etc." Dulles told Nixon that "there was a tendency on the part of the Filipinos to be on the 'gimme' side" and that it would be good if they "build up freedom" in Asia. Just how Dulles expected the Filipinos to do this was unclear, but perhaps he may have meant a wider role for them in SEATO.⁵⁷

Nixon and Pat spent less than two weeks touring Asia rather than the two months they had traveled the continent three years before. Nixon set off some fireworks in his Fourth of July oration in Manila when he warned the "neutral" nations against thinking they could be safe by maintaining friendship with Moscow and Peking. Nixon's concern was that

in rejecting collective security arrangements like SEATO, neutralists were leaving themselves open to what he often referred to as "communist colonial imperialism," playing on the recent memory in Asia of European colonialism.

The vice president saw two strains of neutralism in Asia. The first was on the part of those newly independent countries who "feel that their own internal problems compel them to abstain, at least for the moment, from mutual security pacts and associations." Nixon said the United States could "understand" such attitudes, especially when these countries "may feel that they are too geographically exposed to risk provoking communist colonial imperialism." In a suave debater's analogy, Nixon told the Filipinos that America, too, had once sought neutrality and that although that policy worked fine in the 19th Century, Americans "learned from [the] hard experience" of the two world wars that what worked in the previous century was "completely inadequate" for the present.⁵⁸

In an intriguing choice of words considering his own recent ordeal at the hands of President Eisenhower, Nixon said that the U.S. believed "in the right of each individual nation to chart its own course" even if America did not completely agree with that decision. However, he added that it was "only natural" for America to "feel closer to those who stand with us as allies in the effort to keep the world free."⁵⁹

Nixon next expressed his distaste for a second "brand of neutralism," one which "makes no moral distinction between the

Communist world and the free world." The vice president proclaimed that the U.S. had "no sympathy" with this point of view and challenged it on the grounds that it did not distinguish between democracy and dictatorship. He acknowledged that there were indeed, "faults in the nations of the free world...but can anything that we have done compare with the history of Communism recently portrayed by Nikita Khrushchev himself?" (Nixon was referring to Khrushchev's denunciation of the Stalin purges of the 1930s). For extra impact, Nixon said he realized "there are those who feel that friendly neutrality toward the Kremlin and Peiping may spare them." He then quoted an old proverb as a caveat to those neutralists: "He who sups with the devil, must have a long spoon." He further warned of Communist ruthlessness, that they were "cold and calculating masters" and that "those who feel they can outmaneuver them are taking a fearful risk." Nixon exhorted the Filipinos to assist in the cause by "interpreting our views and intentions to your neighbors," thereby, following Dulles's prescription for delicately suggesting to America's former colonial subjects that they do more than just be on the receiving end.⁶⁰

The next stop was Saigon which presented another delicate diplomatic backdrop since Nixon's arrival would coincide with the second anniversary of the beginning of rule by President Ngo Dinh Diem, which ultimately led to Vietnamese independence from France. The United Press reported that "an informed source" said that Nixon would try not to "steal the limelight

from Mr. Diem and will try to avoid any suggestions that he came to Saigon to help celebrate the Diem anniversary."⁶¹

Nixon met with Diem on July 6 and spoke before the Vietnamese National Constituent Assembly, the first guest speaker ever invited to appear before that body. He praised Diem and delivered a letter from Eisenhower congratulating the new Vietnamese government for its "courage."⁶² Just two years after the fall of Dien Bien Phu and the partition of Vietnam, that country had for the time being actually taken a lower priority in American concerns in Asia. For the moment, South Vietnam seemed relatively stable although the Eisenhower administration would have preferred, to say the least, that Ho Chi Minh not control North Vietnam. But in an election year, Nixon had to take the low profile of support for the Diem regime without rattling sabers that the voters back home might fear would ultimately be held by American boys--a fear that was to become a reality in the not too distant future.

From Saigon it was on to Taiwan where Nixon delivered another letter from Eisenhower to Chiang. Although China was not at the forefront as the November election neared, Eisenhower thought it politically prudent to use the Nixon trip as a pretext to restate American support for the generalissimo. Eisenhower's letter tried to relieve the aging Chiang by assuring him that he should have "no misapprehension" about the "steadfastness" of U.S. support for the Republic of China.⁶³ Eisenhower was really just covering his right flank here to ensure the support of the Old

Guard and appease the Knowland wing of the GOP, but the "amateur" politician shrewdly ascertained that what he referred to as "mossbacks" had no where else to go but his column.

The New York Times reported that Eisenhower's message was intended to "relieve at least some of the doubts and suspicions that have existed here [Taipei] regarding the future course of United States policy on China." The "paper of record" also noted that "extra uneasiness" had been "generated" by the recent publication of Robert Donovan's Eisenhower: The Inside Story in which the highly respected reporter had accurately portrayed Eisenhower as not wanting to be forced into any ironclad position regarding American policy toward Peking.⁶⁴

The vice president held a press conference July 8 before departing for brief stopovers in Bangkok and Karachi on the return trip home. He categorically rejected the notion that Eisenhower's attitude on Peking had "softened." Chou En-lai had recently proposed that he and Dulles meet but Washington spurned that offer. Nevertheless, Taipei was worried and Nixon's remarks apparently eased the trepidation somewhat. Nixon told reporters that he had never "heard" Eisenhower suggest that the United States alter its policy of nonrecognition of Peking and opposition to the regime's admission to the U.N.⁶⁵ Of course, Nixon was not telling the "truth" but one should not call him a liar. The realpolitik truth (that the U.S. government privately gave at

least some thought to the day in the distant future when reality would have to be faced) was limited to the top secret National Security Council meetings.

During a four-hour stopover in Karachi, Nixon equated receiving aid from the Soviets to having a "rope tied around [the] neck." The Russians were generous in their offers of assistance, according to the vice president, because they had the ulterior motive of making the countries that received aid "satellites"--either economic, political, military or "all three." Yet, in virtually the same breath Nixon dismissed the notion that the United States should instantaneously reject helping nations that might accept help from the Communists.⁶⁶ Knowing Nixon and Dulles's disdain for "Nehruism," it may have been no accident that India was omitted from the Nixon tour, but it should be pointed out that Nehru was in London for the Conference of the Commonwealth. Perhaps knowing that there was no love lost between Messrs. Nehru and Nixon, a visit to New Dehli was deemed diplomatically unnecessary, if not unwise. One persistent sticking point at this time resulted from remarks by Eisenhower in June that gave the impression that he held a far more moderate, and even sympathetic, view toward the neutrals than either his vice president or secretary of state. Also, since Nehru was abroad when Nixon reached Asia, one wonders whether or not the trip may have been timed when it was not only to help the Philippines celebrate its independence but to avoid any possibility of having to meet with the leader of the

non-aligned world on his home turf.

As for Nixon's warning to the neutrals that economic aid from the Russians led to "satellitism," A.M. Rosenthal of The New York Times wrote that at least in Karachi, America's ally, the government was not quaking in its boots over the vice president's foreboding. The general sense in Pakistan, according to Rosenthal, was why not take assistance from whoever offers it? The Karachi papers downplayed the Nixon story and it was dismissed although such a reaction did not mean that Pakistan was moving into the Soviet camp.⁶⁷ It simply illustrated that the newly independent nation had its own interests to protect and that if push came to shove, those interests, naturally, would be seen as more important than the whims of Washington.

As if the Pakistanis's lukewarm reception to their old friend Nixon's unsolicited advice was not bad enough, the next day the vice president's mentor, Dulles, undercut Nixon even more by backing off from his own previous hardline against the neutrals. Now, the secretary of state maintained that "very few, if any" neutrals were immoral. Nixon must have been exceedingly grateful for having such good friends at home in the administration. It was one thing for Eisenhower to leave Nixon dangling, but it must have really smarted when Dulles appeared to pull the rug out from under him, too. However, the real heat came from the opposition when Democrats Senator Estes Kefauver of Tennessee (soon to carry his party's standard on the second spot of the national ticket) and New

York Congressman Emmanuel Celler let scored Nixon over his recent comments. Celler charged Nixon with having an "open feud" with Nehru and urged Eisenhower to disavow Nixon's assault on neutralism which the Brooklyn congressman maintained were endangering American-Indian friendship.⁶⁸

Nixon's second time around in Asia received scant press attention compared to his trip in 1953. Although Time played up Nixon's welcoming party at Washington's airport which included Dulles, Knowland and Republican National Chairman Len Hall as an indication of administration backing of the Nixon hard-line against the neutrals (Nixon's cheering section at Henry Luce's influential magazine apparently chose to overlook Dulles's remarks), most of the press seemed more concerned with whether or not Eisenhower would indeed deign to retain Nixon as his second in command. The focus was on the upcoming election rather than any Nixon thesis on the political situation in Asia. Upon returning to the country, Nixon did go up to Gettysburg to see Eisenhower, who was recuperating from an operation the previous month for ileitis. Although he reportedly briefed the President on his trip, newspaper reports concentrated on politics back here on the home front.⁶⁹ With Americans no longer losing their lives in an Asian war, the vast, populous continent had rapidly receded from the hearts and minds of the voters.

The 1956 Election

Nixon continued to take the hard-line publicly against

Peking. In a September 6 speech before the American Legion in Los Angeles, Nixon attacked what he called the "new look" in Soviet diplomacy and explained why the West should not be taken in by it. He pandered to the legionnaires on China when he chided the infamous "some" who said that "from a practical business standpoint we are foolish to persist in our refusal to recognize Red China and to admit its representatives to the United Nations." Nixon declared that the U.S. would "not yield to blackmail" and rejected "cowardly expediency" as he dismissed Communist China as a "bully." He lashed out against the Democratic opposition who was "well-meaning but mistaken" in having the United States "seek the surrender of Quemoy and Matsu."⁷⁰ The vice president, a legionnaire himself, was just giving a warmed over version of his speech the previous year to the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

As the campaign progressed, the Mephistopheles for Nixon was, not surprisingly, the Democratic presidential nominee, Stevenson. Nixon told Dulles that Stevenson was "irresponsible" on foreign policy and defense and Dulles countered that the country could not "afford" a "trial and error Pres. [sic]"⁷¹ Both of these themes became stanzas in Nixon's rhetorical battle with the Democrat that fall.

Stevenson got into political trouble over two controversial proposals made early in the campaign. These ideas were laid out before the legionnaires in Los Angeles the day before Nixon addressed the convention. Stevenson stirred up a storm by suggesting a world-wide ban on hydrogen bomb

tests and that the country convert from a military draft to an all volunteer force. (Stevenson knew of rumors that the administration was thinking of scrapping the draft as part of its military modernization program.⁷² This was a preemptive strike by Stevenson but unfortunately for him, it just left him all the more vulnerable to Republican massive retaliation.)

Nixon immediately picked up on this and charged that Stevenson was naive and his policies could only endanger America's national security. Politics is full of irony, of course, and it was Nixon as president who would end the draft and seek nuclear arms reductions with the Russians. But that was in the distant future and Nixon seized on Stevenson's stand to taint the Democrat as being unfit to lead the nation. After all, Nixon argued, who better to watch over the defense of America at home and abroad than the greatest soldier of the 20th Century, General Dwight D. Eisenhower. Stevenson, the darling of the liberal Democrats, the egghead, simply was not up to the job. It is ironic, of course, that Eisenhower had first proposed "atoms for peace," although he seriously doubted that the Russians would accept the offer. But the president reaped the harvest of propaganda benefits for the free world's cause and his own political benefit. Stevenson had the misfortune of making a well-intended, even rational proposal at the wrong time in the nation's history. Political expediency ruled the roost and Nixon treated Stevenson's good will as a sign of weakness to be capitalized on by the GOP.

As for Stevenson, he did show political courage although one has to doubt the efficacy of his political judgment. He was sailing against the wind for what possible political gain could he make by trying to take on Eisenhower over defense issues? It was a no-win situation for the Democratic nominee. Although Nixon certainly took the low road in questioning Stevenson's qualifications to be president, Stevenson ultimately degraded himself by desperately striking out against Nixon and trying to frighten the American people with the spectre of Nixon as president should Eisenhower not make it through the next four years. Such drastic efforts to induce Nixonphobia in the body politic were unbecoming to Stevenson, who was an eloquent, idealistic visionary if ultimately an ineffectual politician. The "health issue" concerning Eisenhower undoubtedly stuck in the minds of those who detested Nixon, but it seemed as though Adlai had adopted the voice of Nixon, himself, to go after the vice president. Stevenson seemed to be an actor in the wrong play and this hurt him because he had established such a solid reputation as a reflective gentleman in his politics, no matter what the opposition hurled at him. It seemed that all he needed now was a persistent five o'clock shadow to make him Nixon's equal.

Whatever slim chance Stevenson had of sending Eisenhower to an early retirement at the Gettysburg farm was dashed with the culmination of crises over Suez and the brutal Soviet squelching of the Hungarian uprising. Stevenson was cursed

with the bad luck of having these crises erupt on the eve of the election and with the world facing turmoil, the American people chose to stay with War Hero Eisenhower.⁷³

The China issue simply did not figure in the election outcome for it seemed that the last thing the American people wanted to hear about was Quemoy, Matsu or the Communist threat in Vietnam. "Peace and Prosperity" was what they wanted and what the Republicans played up to the hilt. What had been one of the hottest political issues of the last seven years, not to mention the "brinksmanship" of 1955 over the islands in the strait, had temporarily cooled off. But China was not fated to remain dormant for long and Nixon would once again find himself in the midst of a storm between the two nations and the subsequent domestic political ramifications at home.

Quemoy-Matsu Encore

A long intermission in the melodrama of the islands in the strait lasted from April 1955 until August 23, 1958, when the Chinese Communists renewed shelling of Quemoy and Matsu. Chiang declined to follow the American government's advice three years before to reduce the Nationalist presence on the principal offshore islands. Rather, he had stubbornly increased his military forces on Quemoy to nearly 100,000 ground troops, flying in the face of Eisenhower's private judgment that the islands were not strategically important to the survival of Chiang's regime on Taiwan.

But publicly, the president took a different tack and

ordered an increase in the U.S. naval presence in the Formosa Strait. On September 4, Dulles met with Eisenhower in Newport, Rhode Island, where the president was vacationing. The secretary of state then held a news conference, where he cited the Formosa Resolution of 1955 and unequivocally stated United States resolve to defend the islands from any Communist invasion. Dulles actually took a far harder line than did Eisenhower (or the Formosa Resolution). A week later, on September 11, the president tried to assure the nation that it was not on the brink of the apocalypse and confidently stated that he thought peace far more likely than war. On September 6, Chou En-lai had called for the resumption of ambassadorial level diplomatic contacts in Warsaw between the U.S. and Chinese Communist ambassadors to Poland. This lessened tensions somewhat but the Chinese Communists continued to shell Quemoy while the United States successfully assisted the Chinese in resupplying the islands. The Communists called off the bombardment for a week in October and then resumed it on an every other day basis, which prompted Eisenhower to quip that he "wondered if we were in a Gilbert and Sullivan war." The crisis soon fizzled out like a wet firecracker but Quemoy-Matsu did intrude into the 1958 mid-term congressional campaign largely due to Nixon sniping at the Democrats for criticizing the administration on the issue.⁷⁴

Nor did Foggy Bottom escape Nixon's sharp tongue. The vice president was a little trigger-happy when on September 27 he lashed out against the State Department for what he wrongly

assumed was a leak. The vice president was angry that the State Department, in responding to a routine question from the press, had said that the White House mail was running four to one against the administration's Quemoy-Matsu policy. Nixon's charge that the State Department was trying to "sabotage" the administration's Far East policy drew not only the wrath of the usual Nixon critics, but the unhappiness of Dulles as well. All of the talk being encouraged by the vice president's supporters of the "new Nixon" seemed to have been for naught.⁷⁵

Nixon had confided to Dulles as early as September 25 that he thought the situation in the strait was not necessarily harmful to the Republicans in the upcoming November election and that a "strong line" should be taken through the campaign because it "is bound in the end to be more effective" than either retreat or surrender.⁷⁶

The vice president adamantly insisted on October 2 in San Francisco that the administration was not "retreating" on the islands in the wake of Dulles's comment a couple of days before that the Nationalists might cut the size of their forces on the rocks. Nixon stuck to the hard-line and told the reporters that he had cleared his remarks with Dulles, so as not to leave himself vulnerable like the week before when he lashed out against the imaginary saboteurs at State. He warned that if the islands were handed over to the Communists, it would be interpreted as a "reward for aggression and an invitation for the Communists to use similar

tactics to nibble away parts of the free world."⁷⁷

Up the coast in Portland, Oregon the next day, Nixon proposed that the United Nations oversee a referendum in Communist China and the Soviet bloc on whether the people of those countries wanted to be ruled by the Communists. It was a proposal that Nixon knew the Chinese and Soviets would never agree to. He made it simply to counter a separate idea put forth by his old nemesis, Adlai Stevenson, who had spoken out strongly against administration policy in the Formosa Strait and suggested that the United Nations supervise an election on Taiwan to determine if the people there wanted an independent government or to continue under Chiang's regime.⁷⁸

Nixon turned up the heat in Chicago on October 13 when he reopened fire on his favorite target, Dean Acheson. Someone should have told Nixon that Acheson had been out of office for nearly six years and that indeed, the Republicans were the party in power. But Nixon raised Acheson up as another bogeyman. The only difference in the castigation of the Democrats this time was that Nixon branded the Democratic misdeeds of the past as the "Acheson foreign policy" rather than "Truman-Acheson." Acheson had been one of the most vocal critics of the Eisenhower administration over the offshore islands, saying that they were not worth one American life. In defense of the overall administration foreign policy, Nixon declared his favorite standby that "In a nutshell, the Acheson foreign policy resulted in war and the Eisenhower-Dulles policy resulted in peace" alluding to the Acheson "defense

perimeter" speech of 1950 in which the then secretary of state placed Korea outside of the U.S. defense perimeter. The Nixon interpretation, repeated ad nauseum, held that the Acheson "policy" of "retreat and appeasement" led to the "loss of China" and ultimately, the Korean War.⁷⁹ Nixon wanted the voters to be sure that the Republicans would hold fast and not give up an inch of the offshore islands.

In a press conference on October 14, Dulles made some remarks which were taken as a rebuke of Nixon since the secretary of state said that he did not think that foreign policy should be injected into the campaign. Eisenhower made a similar comment as well. But Dulles issued another statement the next day which seemed to give Nixon the benefit of the doubt by saying that Nixon could respond to attacks from the Democrats on the Eisenhower policy. Dulles, however, lamented the loss of the spirit of bipartisanship past but praised the many Democrats who had supported the administration in the international arena.⁸⁰

Although Dulles appeared to be backtracking, Nixon was smarting from the sting of the rod inflicted on his knuckles by the schoolmaster, especially since it turned out that Dulles had actually asked Nixon to give a speech scoring the Democrats on Quemoy-Matsu! In fact, Dulles had even written the draft of the address he criticized Nixon for making! Meade Alcorn, who was then chairman of the National Republican Committee told Herbert S. Parmet in an April 1984 interview that Nixon was livid about the press's interpretation of

Dulles's words as a rebuke to Nixon when the secretary had put Nixon up to the speech in the first place. Nixon, himself, confirmed Alcorn's account in a June 1984 interview with Parmet. Alcorn claimed that he and Democratic National Chairman Stephen Mitchell had an understanding in the 1958 campaign that Quemoy-Matsu would be kept out of the political debate. But Democratic Senator George Smathers of Florida (who was actually a friend of both Nixon's and John F. Kennedy's) broke the truce and attacked the administration over the the islands. Dulles asked Nixon to respond and prepared the draft of the speech. Nixon had good reason to be piqued and Alcorn claimed that soon after a meeting took place in the White House between the president, vice president and secretary of state to smooth over the trouble that Nixon had inadvertently been hurled into by his superiors.⁸¹ He was again being the point man but as the press portrayed the incident, he was taking the heat from Dulles and even Eisenhower rather than the opposition. That was too much to ask of anyone and Nixon understandably was angry.

Eisenhower, too, had to recant his initial back of the hand to Nixon. He sent the vice president a telegram more or less giving him the green light to stand up for the Republican administration's foreign policy. "Questions and criticism have involved...our relationship with Nationalist China, the defense of Quemoy, Matsu, etc.," the president's telegram read. "These actions, when criticized, should be supported by our side. No one can do this more effectively than you."⁸²

Although Eisenhower, like Dulles, mourned the passing of the "Golden Age of Bipartisanship" in foreign policy, it seems that the old general and the even older dean of American diplomacy finally had to publicly come to grips with the reality that yes, indeed, foreign policy can and does become a major political issue in the course of an election campaign. At least Nixon was honest enough to tell it like it is; namely, that foreign policy is not above the discourse of political debate. Unfortunately for the vice president, he was left dangling again for a time by the commander-in-chief and even his mentor, the secretary of state. The Eisenhower-Nixon relationship had all the elements of the classic Freudian father-son competition and Eisenhower, in that all too human desire to hold on to the reins of power, was not eager to be succeeded by anyone, let alone the young, often brash, Californian who he never liked much anyway.

After the Communist Chinese resumed their on again, off again bombardment, Nixon claimed in Baltimore on October 21 that such action would not deter the United States from following its "firm policy." As usual, he castigated "radical" Democrats who were "bitterly partisan" in their criticism of the Eisenhower administration but praised Lyndon Johnson, who had supported the president. He added that the U.S. "learned once and for all that in dealing with dictators--first Hitler and then Korea" that a "weak policy is a war policy" while a "firm policy is a peace policy."⁸³

The next day in Providence, Nixon once more distanced

himself from the Chiang devotees of the China Lobby by saying that the free and independent government on Taiwan was ultimately more important as a symbol than Chiang Kai-Shek, himself. So much for the George Washington of the Chinese Revolution. On that very day, Dulles was meeting in Taipei with the generalissimo to try and get Chiang to discard his delusion that an invasion would bring about his glorious return to the mainland. Dulles may have despised the Communist Chinese but Eisenhower simply did not have the appetite to bring America to war over the islands. Dulles got Chiang to agree to a "non-force" declaration in qualifying his desire to "liberate" the Chinese people on the mainland through political and peaceful means rather than force of arms.⁸⁴ (The Chinese Communists, also, had often spoken of "liberating" Taiwan.) Of course, the irony is that Chiang never had the power to pose any serious threat to Peking but Washington frequently had to soothe the generalissimo's ego.

The 1958 election turned out to be a disaster for the Republicans with the Democrats dramatically increasing their hold on both the House and the Senate. Despite Nixon's nonstop campaigning, the GOP suffered a serious setback and Nixon took most of the blame, as he had in 1954, since he had been the primary spokesman for the Republicans. By election day, the offshore islands had sunk as a determining issue of the campaign and the controversy really lay in Nixon's brutal attacks on the opposition. But to Nixon's credit, he did not shy away from a fight that he knew was going to be next to

impossible to win.

Looking to the future, Nixon's seemingly tenable grasp on the 1960 Republican presidential nomination suddenly appeared to be less than a sure thing after Nelson Rockefeller's landslide victory for governor of New York. The New York Times even ran a headline two days after the election that stated the case succinctly: "Results Weaken Nixon Hold on '60."⁸⁵ Yet, Nixon's partisanship, although far from gentlemanly, paid off at least in terms of his winning the GOP nomination two years later. Not even Rockefeller's millions could compensate for the position of leadership Nixon had earned within the Republican Party. Sometimes there is just no substitute for pure hard work and while Nixon went down with a losing cause in 1958, the party faithful would not forget that he was out there fighting, while Rockefeller made virtually every possible effort to disassociate himself from the national Republican Party and the Eisenhower administration. Nixon's tactics were often reprehensible but politics is a nasty business and Nixon was willing to do battle. The importance of the 1958 election is that Nixon bore the torch for the GOP and even got the president to concede that foreign policy was not entirely out of place in the rough and tumble of political campaigning. Despite Nixon's initial embarrassment and anger over Dulles and Eisenhower's apparent criticism for the speech the secretary of state had asked him to give, Nixon still emerged politically alive.

The campaign also added to the enduring deep-seated emotions of the legions of Nixon haters in the Democratic Party. If they hated him, he had certainly brought much of that wrath upon himself through his own bellicosity. But those who saw his standing diminished by the 1958 vote underestimated Nixon. Then again, he had often been underestimated and his political obituary was written many times only for his enemies to see him ultimately survive.

China had reemerged for at least a while as an important issue in 1958 due to the crisis in the strait. The bits of rock and the length to which the United States should go in defending them would also play a role in the 1960 campaign when Nixon squared off with John F. Kennedy in quest of the presidential prize.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER 4: ISLANDS IN THE STRAIT

- 1) Ann C. Whitman File, NSC Series, Box 6, Minutes of 213th NSC Meeting, 9 September 1954, p. 4, DDEL.
- 2) Ibid., p. 7.
- 3) Ibid., p. 8.
- 4) ACW File, NSC Series, Box 6, Minutes of 214th Meeting of NSC, held at Lowry Air force Base, Denver, 12 September 1954, DDEL.
- 5) Ibid.
- 6) Ibid.
- 7) Ibid. Notes of interview with Richard Nixon conducted by Herbert S. Parmet in New York City, 4 June 1984, which author was allowed to read.
- 8) For a discussion of Nixon's poker winnings in the Pacific Theater see Fawn M. Brodie, Richard Nixon: The Shaping of His Character (New York: Norton, 1981) and Roger Morris, Richard Milhous Nixon: The Rise of An American Politician (New York: Henry Holt, 1990). Also see Earl Mazo, Richard Nixon: A Personal and Political Portrait (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959) and Stephen E. Ambrose, Nixon: The Education of a Politician, 1913-1962 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987).
- 9) ACW File, NSC Series, Box 6, Minutes of 228th Meeting of NSC, 9 December 1954, DDEL.
- 10) Ibid.
- 11) Ibid.
- 12) Townsend Hoopes, The Devil and John Foster Dulles (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), pp. 270-275. See also Robert A. Divine, Eisenhower and the Cold War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 56-61 and Dwight D. Eisenhower, Mandate for Change (New York: Signet Books, 1963), pp. 549-576 and Herbert S. Parmet, Eisenhower and the American Crusades (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1972), pp. 396-399.
- 13) ACW File, NSC Series, Box 6, Minutes of 231st Meeting of NSC, 13 January 1955, DDEL.
- 14) Ibid.
- 15) ACW File, NSC Series, Box 6, Minutes of 240th Meeting of NSC, 10 March 1955, DDEL. See also White House Confidential

File (WHCF), Cabinet Series, Box 4, Cabinet Meeting of 11 March 1955, DDEL for Nixon's report to the cabinet on the Latin American trip. This report carried much of the same message but was far less detailed than Nixon's report to the NSC. In addition, see Ambrose, Nixon, pp. 365-368.

16) For the Neorevisionist line, see Gordon H. Chang, Friends and Enemies: The United States, China and the Soviet Union, 1948-1972 (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990), Chapter 4, "To the Nuclear Brink," pp. 116-142. Also see H.W. Brands, Jr., "The Age of Vulnerability: Eisenhower and the National Insecurity State," American Historical Review Volume 94, Number 4 (October 1989): 963-989 and H.W. Brands, Jr., "Testing Massive Retaliation: Credibility and Crisis Management in the Taiwan Strait," International Security Volume 12, Number 4 (Spring 1988): 124-151. For a contemporary favorable account portraying Eisenhower's temperance in the earlier stages of this tendentious situation, see Chalmers M. Roberts, "Battle on the Rim of Hell: President vs. War Hawks," The Reporter, 16 December 1954, pp. 11-14.

17) New York Times, 15 March 1955.

18) John Foster Dulles Files from DDEL, Telephone Conversations, Box 3, Telephone Call from Nixon, 16 March 1955, included in John Foster Dulles Papers at Seeley G. Mudd Library, Princeton University.

19) New York Times, 18 March 1955.

20) Ibid.

21) Ibid.

22) Ibid.

23) Ibid.

24) See Michael Schaller, The United States and China in the Twentieth Century (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 103-106 and Chang, Friends and Enemies, p. 6.

25) New York Times, 4 April 1955.

26) Ibid.

27) Nixon Pre-Presidential Papers, NARA-LA. Reprint of Nixon speech before the American Association of School Administrators in Cleveland, Ohio. Appearances File, Series 207, Box 28, Folder 12 (1 of 2), 3 April 1955. See also White House Confidential File--Office File, Box 339, 1955 (1), DDEL, Excerpts from Address of Vice President of United States Before the American Association of School Administrators in

Cleveland, Ohio, 3 April 1955.

28) Ibid.

29) Ibid.

30) Ibid. For pertinent passages on Nixon's philosophy of education, see Richard Nixon, In the Arena: A Memoir of Victory, Defeat and Renewal (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), pp. 94-102.

31) New York Times, 7 May 1955.

32) Nixon, In the Arena; Richard Nixon, 1999 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988); and Richard Nixon, "American Foreign Policy: The Bush Agenda," Foreign Affairs Volume 68, Number 1, "America and the World 1988-89," pp. 199-219. Also, see Richard Nixon, "Should the U.S. Help Gorbachev," Time, 18 December 1989, p. 94.

33) JFD Files from DDEL. Telephone Conversations, Box 4, Telephone Call to Nixon, 19 May 1955, included in JFD Papers, Seeley G. Mudd Library, Princeton University.

34) Nixon Pre-Presidential Papers, Appearances File, Box 31, Folder 4 (1 of 4), Address given by Nixon at 46th Annual Rotary International Convention in Chicago, Illinois, 2 June 1955, NARA-LA.

35) Ibid.

36) Ibid.

37) White House Confidential File--Office File, Box 339, 1955 (1), Excerpts from Address of Vice President of United States Before Texas Press Association in Galveston, Texas, 11 June 1955, DDEL.

38) JFD Files of DDEL, Telephone Conversations, Box 4, Telephone Call to Nixon, 23 August 1955, included in JFD Papers at Seeley G. Mudd Library of Princeton University. For a more detailed description of Eisenhower's attitude toward the Geneva Summit, see Parmet, Eisenhower and the American Crusades, pp. 402-407.

39) Nixon Pre-Presidential Papers, Appearances File, Series 207, Box 34, Folder 13, Nixon speech before American Bar Association in Chicago, 25 August 1955. Speech reprinted in American Bar Association Journal Volume 41, Number 11, November 1955 (Chicago: American Bar Association), NARA-LA.

40) Ibid., Nixon Pre-Presidential papers, NARA-LA, Nixon speech to American Bar Association in Chicago, 25 August 1955.

- 41) Nixon Pre-Presidential Papers, Appearances File, Series 207, Box 35, Folder 7, Nixon speech to National Veterans of Foreign War Convention in Boston, 29 August 1955, NARA-LA.
- 42) Chang, Friends and Enemies, Ch. 5, "China the Main Enemy?," pp. 143-174.
- 43) Nixon Pre-Presidential Papers, Nixon speech to VFW, 29 August 1955, NARA-LA.
- 44) New York Times, 4 September 1955.
- 45) See JFD Files, DDEL, Telephone Conversations, Box 4, conversations between Nixon and Dulles, 25,26,29,30 September 1955 included in the JFD Papers at the Seeley G. Mudd Library, Princeton University. Also, see Arthur Krock Papers, Box 1, Black Book 2, Private Memorandum, 26 September 1955, Seeley G. Mudd Library of Princeton University and "Washington Wire, TRB," The New Republic, 17 October 1955, p. 2.
- 46) JFD Files, DDEL, Telephone Conversations, Box 4, Telephone Conversation with Nixon, 15 October 1955, included in JFD Papers, Seeley G. Mudd Library, Princeton University.
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- 48) New York Times, 18 October 1955, p. 1.
- 49) Ibid.
- 50) JFD Files, DDEL, Subject, Box 6, Memorandum of Conversation with Nixon, 7 December 1955, included in JFD Papers at Seeley G. Mudd Library of Princeton University.
- 51) New York Times, 6 September 1955.
- 52) Nixon Pre-Presidential Papers, Appearances File, Series 207, Box 46, Folder 1, Speech draft material for "Poor Richard Dinner" in Philadelphia, 17 January 1956. NARA-LA.
- 53) New York Times, 21 January 1956.
- 54) James Shepley, "How Dulles Averted War," Life, 16 January 1956, pp. 70-80. Also see JFD Files, DDEL, Telephone Conversations, Box 5, Telephone Call from Nixon in Detroit, 31 October 1956, included in JFD Papers at Seeley G. Mudd Library of Princeton University.
- 55) New York Times, 21 January 1956.
- 56) New York Times, 14 February 1956.

57) JFD Files, DDEL, Telephone Conversations, Box 5, Telephone Conversation with Nixon, 11 May 1956, included in JFD Papers, Seeley G. Mudd Library, Princeton University.

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59) Ibid.

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62) New York Times, 7 July 1956.

63) New York Times, 8 July 1956. Also see San Diego Union, 8 July 1956.

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66) New York Times, 10 July 1956.

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72) Robert A. Divine, Foreign Policy and U.S. Presidential Elections, 1952-1960, Volume 2 (New York: New Viewpoints, A Division of Franklin Watts, Inc., 1974), p. 136.

73) Ibid. Divine gives an excellent account of foreign policy issues in the 1956 election from pp. 87-180.

74) For full and telling descriptions of the second Quemoy-Matsu episode see Dwight D. Eisenhower, The White House Years: Waging Peace, 1956-1961 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday &

Company, 1965), pp. 292-304 (The "Gilbert and Sullivan war" remark can be found on p. 304.); Gordon H. Chang, Friends and Enemies, pp. 184-202; Charles C. Alexander, Holding the Line: The Eisenhower Era, 1952-1961 (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1975), pp. 235-237; Robert A. Divine, Eisenhower and the Cold War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 66-70; Townsend Hoopes, The Devil and John Foster Dulles (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), pp. 442-459; Herbert S. Parmet, Eisenhower and the American Crusades (New York: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 533-535; Herbert S. Parmet, Richard Nixon and His America (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1990), pp. 336-344. For Dulles's statement to the press from Newport, see Statement by the Secretary of State, 4 September 1958, JFD Files, DDEL, White House Memoranda, Box 7, included in JFD Papers, Seeley G. Mudd Library, Princeton University.

75) See Stephen E. Ambrose, Nixon: The Education of a Politician, 1913-1962 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), pp. 496-501 and Parmet, Richard Nixon and His America, pp. 336-344.

76) Telephone Call from the Vice President, 25 September 1958, JFD Files, DDEL, Telephone Conversations, Box 9, included in JFD Papers, Seeley G. Mudd Library, Princeton University.

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78) New York Times, 4 October 1958.

79) New York Times, 14 October 1958 and Statement of the Vice President in Chicago, 13 October 1958, JFD Papers, Correspondence, Box 133, Seeley G. Mudd Library, Princeton University.

80) Statement by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, 15 October 1958, JFD Papers, Correspondence, Box 133.

81) Interview with Meade Alcorn in Hartford, Connecticut on 18 April 1984 conducted by Herbert S. Parmet. Also, interview with Richard Nixon on 5 June 1984 in New York City by Parmet. Transcripts and notes of each interview given to author by Parmet.

82) New York Times, 17 October 1958, p. 16. See also Ann C. Whitman File, DDE Diary, Box 36, DDE Dictation, Telegram from Eisenhower to Nixon, 16 October 1958, DDEL. Also see Whitman File, DDE Diary, Box 36, DDE Diary, DDE dictation, draft of letter from Eisenhower to Nixon, 15 October 1958, DDEL.

83) New York Times, 22 October 1958.

84) New York Times, 23, 24 October 1958; Memorandum of Conversation with the President, 24 October 1958, White House Memoranda, Box 7, JFD Files, DDEL included in JFD Papers, Seeley G. Mudd Library, Princeton University; See also Chang, Friends and Enemies, pp. 198-199.

85) New York Times, 6 November 1958.

CHAPTER 5: DICK AND JACK

Richard Nixon had once again done battle for the Republican Party in 1958. His detractors in both parties blamed him for the GOP's poor showing that year but Nixon, ever the party man, had decided not to duck the inevitable criticism that would come with the party's unimpressive performance. He proudly waved the bloody shirt, albeit in defeat. He would make the best of the situation, as he so often did. After all, he had gone down with the good ship GOP when others had abandoned it.

Nixon, who had been considered the front runner for the 1960 Republican nomination, awoke the morning after the election to a living nightmare for any hard working middle class American boy who had struggled up the ladder in politics: a man by the name of Nelson Rockefeller had won the New York governorship in a landslide, and this was the period in the country's political history when New York was still truly the Empire State, the big playing card in presidential elections. Was all of Nixon's hard work of the last 12 years, fighting in the trenches of political warfare, to be for naught as John D. Rockefeller's dyslexic grandson positioned himself to take the grand prize? Nixon was not a quitter then and he was not going to stand on the sidelines (this was not Whittier College football) and allow Governor Rockefeller to take away the crown that he thought was rightly his (no matter what the opinion of the bald, elderly general in the Oval Office).

Nixon was fortunate to be coming into his political maturity (even though Ike seemed to be forever wondering if the young Californian would ever grow up) at a time before liberal, moderate Republicans had gone the way of the buffalo. Nixon could hold down the center and plan to lure the support of both the right-wing and those namby pamby moderate Eastern Establishment New York Herald Tribune types who had engineered the great Eisenhower victories of 1952 and 1956. Nixon, a great student of his own defeats, was to follow a similar, and ultimately victorious path in 1968. But that was still in the future. The gods were not to smile upon the man from sunny Southern California his first time running atop the ticket.

But as the 1960 election approached, the vice president had only one recourse: To work harder than any potential opponents within the party apparatus and ready himself to call in his chits from all of the dedicated Republicans for whom he had campaigned during both the times of feast and famine. (If one thing could be said accurately about Richard Nixon, he was never above politics in the Eisenhoweran sense of the term, and it was this very quality that would lead him not only to his later triumphs but also to his decline, fall and disgrace, not to mention his public relations plotted post-presidential rehabilitation as elder American statesman of world affairs.)

And Nixon did just that. He was out on the circuit in 1959 giving serious speeches, most of which he crafted himself, in the waning age of oratorical politics before Madison Avenue and the 30-second sound bite revolutionized the

American Republic. China was not to be a major issue until the 1960 presidential debates with that handsome, full-head-of-wavy-hair junior senator from Massachusetts, John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Even then, it seemed more a matter of geography than potential gain or loss of international prestige. But foreign affairs undoubtedly were to prove to be the crux of that election. Nixon was fresh from victory at the "Battle of Caracas" in 1958, where he and his wife, Pat, suffered the humiliation of being spat upon with the minor footnote that he was lucky to escape with his life from an anti-Yanqui mob that had surrounded his limousine. But the Navy veteran did get revenge of a sort when he kicked a Communist demonstrator in the shin. The world traveler from the small Quaker town wanted to keep a high profile as America's up and coming leader in 1959 with steady work in the international arena. He'd show Rockefeller and the other father-made millionaire, Kennedy, that experience and hard work could beat money any day. This was America and to Nixon, himself, he was some latter day proof of the American Dream, a Lincoln for the 1960s.

Be Sociable. Have a Pepsi

The high point of 1959 for Nixon was his trip to Moscow in July where he held his own in the now legendary "Kitchen Debate" with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev at the American Exhibition. As black and white television had saved Nixon's career during the fund crisis, color television was to give

the vice president a boost as the lean Californian and chubby Russian were to play to the color cameras as they each chimed in with what they believed to be the virtues of their own societies. Nixon, still the young and dashing debater, praised the American system of capitalism as he stood in a "model" middle class home of the much lauded "American worker" while Krushchev historionically indicated to the vice president that the Soviet Union would pass the United States and wave "bye-bye" as the "Paradise of the Proletariat" played out its dialectic and catapulted into the future leaving the country that brought the world Disneyland back in the past. It made for great television and Nixon, only a year after the showdown in Caracas, once again was seen around the world on the tube as having stood up to the Communists--this time, in the person of the leader of the Soviet Union.

While praising communism and excoriating capitalism and the United States, it was no small symbolic point that Chairman Khrushchev took a sip of Pepsi at the exhibition, which that corporate giant was to be sure to immortalize with a photo using its advertising campaign slogan "Be Sociable, Have a Pepsi." The old Russian could shout and stamp his feet all he wanted, but the Capitalists had the last laugh at the Chairman's expense. It seemed that Communist leaders made for good advertising copy for capitalist enterprises.

Off and Running

Nixon became a formal candidate for the Republican

presidential nomination in January 1960. The vice president had probably breathed a sigh of relief just after Christmas when Rockefeller withdrew from the race. But Nixon was shrewd enough to know that he still had to keep his eye on the New York governor and maintain his guard. Kennedy also declared his candidacy that month and was the clear front runner for the Democrats. Kennedy opened the campaign barrage with an attack on Eisenhower, claiming that the old general was not a strong president. Nixon defended the 34th president by lauding Eisenhower as a "persuader" and he pointed out that Eisenhower had handled the crises over Quemoy-Matsu without getting the United States into war, as well as similarly handling the Suez crisis of 1956 and the Lebanon crisis of 1958.¹ It was as if the vice president were just discovering the benefits of Theodore Roosevelt's dictum, "Walk Softly, but Carry a Big Stick." One can only surmise that Nixon was trying to reassure the electorate that he was no mad man and that despite his bellicose positions throughout the 1950s, the American people could expect a President Nixon in 1961 to lead the nation in the calm, persuasive and effective manner of the "Great Hero" Ike.

The vice president portrayed himself as a "progressive conservative" in an April 23rd Washington speech before the American Society of Newspaper Editors. Indeed, Nixon was holding onto the center within the GOP and looking, as he had since his first California congressional campaign, to court the votes of independents and those Democrats who he thought

might choose him as an alternative to a more liberal Democratic candidate. Nixon used the opportunity to continue his strong backing of foreign aid and he observed that the future of America as a world power depended upon the peoples of Asia and Africa.²

In his remarks that day, Nixon raised the spectre of what later in the decade became known as the Sino-Soviet split. Speaking of Khrushchev, Nixon told the assembled editors that "while it is probably too early to conclude that he [Khrushchev] may be troubled by his Chinese ally...he may well be deeply concerned by the nightmare which is taking form on his long common border with China." Nixon was then asked by one of the editors how the American and Chinese governments and their people could "develop greater intercommunication?" Nixon's response was revealing of his consistency throughout the period under study on China. He broke down the question into two parts: when the U.S. should recognize Communist China and the fact that the two countries could have relations of a kind without formal recognition. He did not sound like a front man for the China Lobby but like a realistic statesman who had thought through a very delicate and complicated issue. Nixon maintained that the United States should recognize Peking and support its admission to the U.N. when the latter "qualifies for recognition and for admission to the U.N. as a peace loving nation in its international policies." The vice president disputed the notion that it was impossible to have disarmament agreements with the Chinese without formal

recognition of their government. He pointed out that the U.S. and China had been negotiating for the last two years over American prisoners held by Peking (Nixon was referring to pilots who had been downed by the Chinese).³

Nixon insisted to the editors that the United States maintain its position of nonrecognition and opposition to Peking's admission to the U.N and he described the Communist regime as an "outlaw government." But as Nixon always seemed to do in discussing this highly sensitive matter, he left himself an "escape clause" in which he kept open the possibility that the United States would change its policy when the Communist Chinese changed theirs. "Looking to the future," Nixon said, "I would say that there will be certain facts and circumstances which will be motivating them toward a change in direction of their policies just as there may be facts and circumstances which...may be motivating us." Was Nixon being prescient or was this something that academic psychologists call a self-fulfilling prophecy, to be achieved when Nixon was to become president? Nixon reaffirmed the view that the Chinese could be brought into disarmament negotiations with the Russians and the United States even though Washington did not recognize Peking. At the same time, walking a political tightrope, the vice president called for the United States "to keep before the world our position that our failure to recognize and our opposition to support them [the Communist Chinese] for admission to the United Nations is based on sound principles of international morality." But

Nixon added this capper: that the American "policy can and will be changed once the Chinese Communist Government merits its change."⁴ The lure was cast upon the waters--recognition of Peking might well be ahead (sometime in the undefined future). Nixon put the ball squarely in China's court. The question was really up to the Chinese, or so it would seem according to the vice president's remarks. Only the Chinese could earn American recognition. Good faith but especially good works would be rewarded. China would have to abandon its "outlaw ways" and live by the creed of the United Nations Charter. But Nixon said nothing about China giving up communism. All those years in southern California high school and college debates paid off for Nixon, who could master the nuance of a political argument and manage to satisfy a constituency far broader than the Asia Firsters. Nixon said nothing about driving Mao from Peking nor did he declare that Chiang would have to be allowed to reestablish his government on the mainland. His position on China was founded on the bedrock of realpolitik and not the wishful, pipe dream that kept the China Lobby living in "hope of heaven"--of a return to Peking and a Paradise Regained.

As mentioned above, Nixon also used the forum of newsmen to reiterate his support for foreign aid. In addition, he warned that if the United States should change its policy of reciprocal trade, it would have dangerous repercussions. He particularly was concerned that if the United States raised its artificial tariff barriers with Japan, it would only

succeed in forcing Japan to turn to Communist China, which to say the least, would be detrimental to American interests in Asia.⁵ Herbert S. Parmet has suggested that worry over inadvertently leading Japan into the arms of China was also a widespread concern within the State Department.

Nixon had a revealing private conversation in early May with one prominent newsman, The New York Times's Arthur Krock. Nixon categorized the most important area of rivalry with the Soviet Union as the "economic" which echoed the stance he had been taking for more than the last decade, namely that the United States needed to be economically strong as well as militarily powerful. The most significant comment Nixon made to Krock was that he viewed himself as a consistent internationalist. Nixon complained to Krock that "it was a prevalent practice to accuse him [Nixon] of having switched from insularity to internationalism for political reasons." Nixon saw this as an "effort to prove he is without conviction or principle." The vice president then told the distinguished Washington columnist that "My record, from the time I entered the House, completely refutes this charge or insinuation. It shows that I have voted for all international legislation, even before the Greek-Turk aid bill, and Chris Herter [then secretary of state who had headed the 1947 Herter Committee of which Nixon was a member; the committee consisted of congressmen who went to Europe to witness first hand the devastation wrought by the war and to recommend what course American aid should take in Western Europe's reconstruction]

can verify this so far as the House is concerned if anyone doubts my statement. What the internationalists among the liberals really have against me is my part in exposing Alger Hiss, which embarrassed many of them and angered more. This is the real animation of their untrue representation that I am a Johnny-come-lately on the foreign policy they are aligned with."⁶

Nixon was right insofar as he had been consistent on his record as an internationalist for he had supported the Marshall Plan and the Truman policy in Europe. As for his sense that liberals were "against" him because he had unmasked Alger Hiss, he was not wrong. As Herbert Parmet quoted the late poet Delmore Schwartz in a lecture on Nixon, "Just because you are paranoid does not mean there is not anyone after you."⁷

Nixon also made clear to Krock one difference he had with Eisenhower: If Nixon were at the helm, he intimated to Krock that there would be more forceful presidential leadership in the area of civil rights. Nixon told Krock that "I think the President alone can exercise the essential moral leadership against racial discriminations, and should do so." The only thing left unsaid was that Eisenhower was not exercising that moral leadership, was not utilizing the "Bully Pulpit" that was the presidency.⁸

On May 15, Nixon made a splash by being interviewed for over three hours on David Susskind's live television program "Open End." With that much time on camera, Susskind had to

ask Nixon about China. Nixon restated his oft said public position that the U.S. should oppose Communist China's entry to the United Nations as long as Peking defied the U.N. articles. But before the national television audience, the vice president was sure to sound more hawkish on the China question than he had before the editors' meeting. After all, this go-round with Susskind was televised for domestic political consumption. He told Susskind that "There is no nation in the world today which is more an outlaw nation than Red China" and that Mao "might welcome" a third World War as a way for Communism to grow around the globe. Nixon also commented that "admission of Red China to the U.N. at this point, and its recognition by the United States could well set in motion a chain of events in Southeast Asia which would result in communization of that area." This latter remark was merely a reiteration of what he had been saying during the Korean War and also during the Indochina Crisis of 1954--that it was China that posed the most serious threat to the stability of Asia.⁹

But the eyes of the world that week were on the Paris Summit, which was to shortly be torpedoed by the Russians in their anger over the shooting down of the American U-2 spy plane. China was continuing to fade from the forefront as the bellicose Khrushchev stole the headlines and made hearts pound around the world as it seemed that the apocalypse might well come in the time of the chairman. The world situation was tense and this sense of danger was to be infused into the 1960

campaign. The stage appeared to be set for a world which would not be able to survive "half-slave and half-free" or half under the dominion of the United States, heir to Lincoln, and half under the iron glove of the Soviets, heirs to Lenin.

On May 31, Nixon addressed the Council of Ministers of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in Washington. Nixon told the SEATO ministers that their collective security alliance was even more important than when it was founded six years before, particularly in the aftermath of the derailed Paris Summit. The presidential candidate noted that SEATO had been established "when Communist aggression was directly challenging Viet-Nam, Laos, Cambodia, and other countries of southeast Asia and when the unity of the non-Communist countries was by no means so clear as it is today." Nixon claimed that during its six years of existence, "overt Communist aggression has been deterred" but he observed that "probing actions, indirect aggression, and subversion have continued." As examples, he pointed to incidents along the Chinese-Indian border, "the rebellion in Laos stimulated across the north Vietnamese border" and "the continuing Communist-instigated violence in South Vietnam." Nixon acidly commented that Communism had not changed in the years since SEATO's founding, but that the "free countries" of the region had "gained greatly in strength at home and in their posture of preparedness and solidarity."¹⁰

Nixon was especially harsh in his criticism of the Communist Chinese government before the SEATO ministers. He

was not talking now to the editors of America's leading newspapers but to representatives of countries for whom China posed the most serious threat. Nixon could always play to an audience and he knew what these Asian politicians wanted to hear. They would not walk away dissatisfied for the Californian was humming the tune for which they yearned. The vice president scored Peking on its reaction to the torpedoing of the Paris summit. "Peiping [Peking], almost unique among the capitals of the world," Nixon said, "has received the news of Mr. Khrushchev's sabotage at Paris with undisguised satisfaction." Nixon portrayed Mao rather than Khrushchev as the main impediment to peace, adding credence to historian Gordon Chang's view that China was the "main enemy" of the United States. "The Chinese Communists have long been openly disgruntled with even the appearance of peaceful intent by the Soviet leaders," Nixon commented and he claimed that Peking "made no secret of their unswerving adherence to the Stalinist line." Nixon seemed to be saying that at least Khrushchev had the good sense to denounce Stalin. Nixon also charged Mao with having said just two months before the doomed Paris Summit that "rather than fearing an atomic war, a third world war might assure his ultimate goal of a Communist world."¹¹

The vice president then made an intriguing charge against the Chinese saying that the Peking leadership had "seized upon the failure of the [Paris] conference as an opportunity for renewed emphasis on the 'orthodox' Communist philosophy of the need for force as an essential ingredient in world Communist

tactics." Nixon was certainly perceptive for he had just outlined the basic tenets of Maoism on the international scene. Was Nixon ready to stand up for his friend Nikita? Compared to Mao, it would seem that Khrushchev was manageable despite his bluster, braggadocio, and boorish behavior. "Fortunately, there are good indications even since the Paris conference that this view is not shared by Mr. Khrushchev," Nixon concluded.¹²

Meanwhile, back in the down and dirty world of American presidential politics, it seemed for a few days in June that Nixon's worst case scenario nightmare might well become a reality. Rockefeller was stirring, vehemently criticizing Nixon and seemingly ready and rearing to forget his disavowal of candidacy for top gun on the GOP ticket. He had previously stated firmly that he would not accept the No. 2 spot on the ticket. His renouncing of a presidential candidacy the prior December seemed far less firm. The scion of one of America's wealthiest families challenged Nixon to make clear his positions prior to the Republican convention. Nixon countered his nemesis by offering to submit to televised questioning by Rockefeller. But this did not satisfy the New York Republican who proceeded to spurn the Nixon offer.¹³ Had Nixon bowed humbly, kowtowed and kissed the ring of the governor, it is still doubtful that Rockefeller would have been appeased. Rockefeller had always gotten whatever he wanted and it was unimaginable to him to think that he could not have the presidency of the United States for the asking. As to why

Nixon was so eager to please the Pontiff of New York Politics, the answer has already been alluded to. In that time, now appearing as ancient history, a Republican needed the support of the liberal, Northeastern GOP establishment-and Rockefeller embodied that "interest group" which was soon on its way to becoming yet just another minority in the American polity. Nixon ultimately met with Rockefeller on the governor's home turf (quite literally, for they met in the Rockefeller triplex apartment on Fifth Avenue) and hammered out what became known as the "Treaty of Fifth Avenue" in which Rockefeller tried to influence the Republican Platform toward a more liberal vein. Some of Nixon's critics on the right labeled the results of the meeting the "Surrender at Fifth Avenue." But the platform was not the most important thing and Nixon knew it. The nomination was the only game in town. A Rockefeller candidacy never got off the ground and Nixon succeeded in beating the richest kid on the block (and in the world) and emerged as the Republican presidential nominee in Chicago in late July. As Robert Divine has shrewdly pointed out, the "deal" with Rockefeller was helpful to Nixon because it gave him the advantage of being able to separate himself somewhat from the Eisenhower record without repudiating the Old Man on his stinginess regarding further expenditures for defense.¹⁴

On July 28, Nixon gave his acceptance speech before the party faithful in the town where 100 years before, the Republicans had crowned Lincoln as their choice for President. Nixon went immediately on the offensive, castigating the

Democrats for criticizing America in a period which saw an onslaught of Communist propaganda from the Kremlin aimed at Washington (Kennedy's pointed critique of the Eisenhower administration in his acceptance of the Democratic nomination two weeks prior in Los Angeles was construed by Nixon to be nothing less than an attack from within the borders of the United States). Nixon struck back at the Man from Massachusetts by bellowing "I say that at a time the Communists are running us down abroad, it is time to speak up for America at home." The vice president further poured on the rhetoric in which he depicted America as being in "a race for survival in which our lives, our fortunes, our liberties are at stake." It was as if the Americans were the Greeks faced with the threat from the East mounted by the Russians as Persians led by Cyrus. As if on cue, Nixon sang his standard chorus in which he warned his fellow countrymen "that appeasement leads not to peace but to war" and he called for sound leadership (that apparently only he could provide) that would "steer us through these years, avoiding the extremes of belligerency on the one hand, and appeasement on the other."¹⁵ Nixon had the doubly difficult task of convincing the electorate that he was tough but not reckless and not eager to push America towards the Apocalypse. The last thing he wanted was for the voters to recall his readiness in 1954 to commit American ground troops in Vietnam. Such memories made for problems in election years.

Nixon also invoked another of his favorite themes that

rang with consistency throughout the 1950s: the need for America to fight "another kind of aggression, aggression without war, where the aggressor comes not as a conqueror, but as a champion of peace, of freedom, offering progress and plenty and hope to the unfortunates of the earth."¹⁶ It was this very kind of propaganda war that Nixon had been warning about since the dismissal of General MacArthur.

With his finest rhetorical flourish, Nixon called for "victory for the free world...But let the victory we seek be not victory over any other nation or any other people. Let it be the victory of freedom over tyranny," he added, "of plenty over hunger, of health over disease in every country of the world." The vice president then went on to say that "When Mr. Khrushchev says our grandchildren will live under Communism, let us say his grandchildren will live in freedom."¹⁷ Nixon, staunch Republican that he was, had the memory of an elephant. He was to requote this line on Khrushchev in a 1990 interview with Mike Wallace of the CBS-TV program 60 Minutes, in which the then rehabilitated although formerly disgraced ex-president mused on the World and the Soviet Union in the Age of Gorbachev.

Nixon's antidote to the plague of communism was the ideals of the American Revolution, from his point of view the one and only paradigm for revolution. The vice president told the Republicans assembled in Chicago "that our answer to the threat of Communist revolution is renewed devotion to the great ideals of the American Revolution, ideals that caught

the imagination of the world one hundred and eighty years ago and that still live in the minds and hearts of people everywhere."¹⁸ The Republican candidate had issued a clarion call of Vive La Revolution Americaine.

Nixon, ever steady on the volatile issue of civil rights, was sure to also remind the 1960 members of the party of Lincoln that racial discrimination here at home tarnished America's image abroad. He called for "ending the prejudice which one hundred years after Lincoln, to our shame, still embarrasses us abroad and saps our strength at home."¹² The Republicans adjourned from Chicago with Nixon wearing the mantle of the GOP, eager to take on that young upstart, Kennedy, the Democracy's torchbearer.

In the International Arena

Columnist C.L. Sulzberger of The New York Times called Nixon "open-minded and sensitive" and wrote that should he be elevated to the presidency, "he doesn't intend to be bound by past methods and conceptions in formulating foreign policy." The vice president had expressed his litany of concerns in the international arena to Sulzberger, which the journalist dutifully recorded in his column. Nixon emphasized that "the Communists have identified themselves with the aspirations of other peoples but we speak only for Americans" and he suggested that "the Voice of America should seek more to be the voice of other peoples." Nixon retained far more sensitivity than most American political leaders of the day to

the need to identify and respect the pride of the people of the developing world. For Nixon, the propaganda war remained as important in 1960 as it had been to his view of the world in 1951 and 1954. "We do not adequately let others know that we do not want to dominate them and that we believe in their economic progress for their sake as well as in our interests," he told Sulzberger. Nixon then reiterated his theme of a revitalized American Revolution as the grand example of change around the world, not just a means of preserving the status quo. "We must get across that ours is the true revolution and talk more of the promise of the American revolution, less of the menace of the Communist revolution," Nixon said. He was doing his best to accentuate the positive for all the developing world to see. "And we must make plain that we do not expect others to share all our views and imitate all our actions," the vice president concluded.²⁰

He included his standard defense of foreign aid, then not a popular stand for a Republican candidate for president to make. Nixon never lacked "the vision thing." "We are not wedded to the status quo," he said. "We recognize that the world is in a process of change and that the popular masses want a better way of life." Nixon showed a keen sensitivity as to how American intentions were often misinterpreted and misconstrued around the world. "Unfortunately," he added, "the image we present is often distorted. Indeed, we are not for change merely for the sake of change, as Russia is; but we do not oppose change." Nixon was definitely of a mind of his

own in his emerging geopolitical strategy. Decidedly anti-Communist, yes, but not knee-jerk in any sense of the term. He even remarked that the United States should assist "independent" nations like Spain or Yugoslavia. The latter nation may have been independent of Moscow but it was still decidedly under the grip of Tito. Nixon also supported economic aid to Poland to "encourage its national forces."²¹ (Nixon and his wife, Pat, had been enthusiastically received during a stopover in Poland the year before on their way back from the Moscow visit with Khrushchev.) Nixon was biting at the rein to be independent of General Ike. It was finally his turn to be in the limelight.

America, the Catholic periodical of opinion ran an article by Robert Pell on Nixon's foreign policies. On the question of China and the possibility of a Sino-Soviet split, Pell maintained that Nixon "believes it is highly dangerous to stress political differences between Soviet Russia and Communist China and to predicate policies on a potential collapse of the existing alliance between Moscow and Peiping [Peking]." Pell portrayed Nixon as believing that Moscow and Peking had to be assumed to be close allies based on the 30-year Treaty of Friendship the two nations signed in 1950. As has been pointed out earlier, historian Gordon Chang has made a case that Nixon and other key members of the Eisenhower administration actually suspected the rift between the two Communist giants and looked upon China as the "main enemy."²² Nixon, in his May 1960 remarks to the SEATO

ministers had made clear that he thought the Chinese far more extreme and dangerous than the pudgy, bald Russian chairman. More attention was paid to the Soviets in 1960 but then again, the United States and Soviet Union were the only two superpowers, each capable of destroying the world with nuclear weapons. (Yes, the British had nuclear capabilities but by 1960 the British were no longer seen as being key players on the international scene--the torch had been passed to a new generation, on the Western side of the Atlantic...)

Pell further maintained that Nixon was "wholly reluctant...to 'move forward' toward formal recognition of Peiping." Pell pointed to Nixon's concern with the "overseas Chinese"--some eleven or twelve millions scattered throughout Asia. Nixon had voiced concern about the overseas Chinese in 1953 during his Grand Tour of Asia. According to Pell, Nixon believed that if the United States recognized Peking, the obvious next step would be admission to the United Nations for the Communist country, and then the overseas Chinese would owe their allegiance to Peking rather than Taipei. The America piece said that recognition of Peking by the United States would "betray" America's allies in Asia and Nixon considered this to be disastrous. Nixon told America that he supported blocking Chinese Communist expansion in Southeast Asia through the utilization of the SEATO alliance and he favored "'boxing' the outlaw Chinese Government with air and naval bases and a mobile striking force, until it shows a minimum disposition to obey some of the rules of a civilized state and live with its

neighbors in a reasonably genuine stable status quo."²³

The article then claimed that it might be possible for the United States to reconsider the "hard" policy towards China if indeed, Peking modified its ideology and stopped pressuring Taiwan. But America said for Nixon "it is not a question of whether with regard to Communist China. It is a problem of if, and, much more remotely, when, in dealing with a regime which has transformed a weak, fragmented nation into a monolithic totalitarian state in an incredibly short period of time and is projecting its influence far beyond its borders." America concluded this portrait of Nixon on China as having the vice president very pessimistic and expecting a "prolonged struggle" between Washington and Peking. The best that could be hoped for in this view was that the struggle might be conducted by "non-military" means.²⁴

America had presented the stereotypical, hard old party line but it obviously had not listened closely to Nixon's speeches during his vice presidential years. The journal completely mixed the nuances that Nixon had drawn in many discussions of the China issue, both in public speeches and private remarks. Nixon was not for recognition but he had a far more realpolitik sense of the diplomatic problem posed by the Peking regime and was not taken in by the pipe dream of Chiang returning one day to save China from the Communists. Pell must not have been aware of Nixon's sensitive remarks before the American newspaper editors the previous April as well as the very speeches he gave on Taiwan back in 1953

lauding the friendship between the American and Chinese peoples. But for the readership of America, Nixon was politically astute enough to "spoon feed" his audience the hard-line it wanted to hear without getting into the various complexities of the issue. After all, he was out to win a presidential election, not teach a political science course on the foreign affairs of the United States.

"The Great Debates"

Nixon pledged the night he received the nomination to campaign in all 50 states of the Union, despite the better judgment passed along to him by his advisors of concentrating on the key states in the Electoral College. But Nixon, ever the loner, decided to heed his own counsel. One wonders why he bothered to have a campaign staff at all in 1960 since he kept all political strategy close to the vest, making all the major decisions himself. After eight years in the wings as understudy to Eisenhower, the vice president had a will to power, or at least the will to run the show the way he saw fit with no ifs, ands, or buts, not to mention stern written reprimands from the aging commander-in-chief. The young Californian had won the nomination and he was going to call the signals in this game, no matter what Ike really thought of him and his qualifications for the Supreme Office in the Land.

But 1960 was not to be Richard Milhous Nixon's luckiest year. Nixon was not going to yield the South to Democratic Kennedy without a fight--therein lay one reason for the

50-state pledge. After all, Republican President Eisenhower, of the Party of Lincoln, had actually carried a few Southern states in 1956, and Nixon, during what might be termed the gestation period of his "Southern strategy" as president, wanted to build on Ike's electoral success in the vital political region. The only problem in 1960 was that the good folks in the Southern states who had voted for Ike in 1956 had done just that; in their minds, they were not voting Republican but for America's bald-headed war hero. Also, although Nixon undoubtedly took the high road and kept the "religious issue" out of the campaign, any good national politician in 1960 worth his salt would fully know that the South, although solidly Democratic, was nearly as solidly Protestant, and that many of the southern Democrats might not feel at ease voting for the Catholic Kennedy. In addition, as Tom Wicker points out, Nixon took an early campaign trip to Atlanta where he was warmly received by an integrated crowd. In the South before the Voting Rights Act of 1965, blacks did not make up a large part of the electorate, but those few that voted might make a difference in some of the southern states. Nixon had a far more consistent pro-civil rights record entering the campaign than the junior senator from Massachusetts, a fact not lost on blacks. But any chance Nixon had of gaining an appreciable part of the black vote, north or south, vanished when Martin Luther King was jailed in Georgia and Kennedy personally telephoned Mrs. Coretta Scott King to offer assurance shortly before Bobby Kennedy called

the judge in the case to ask that King be released.²⁵

Nixon later wrote in Six Crises that it was improper for Bobby Kennedy, as a lawyer, to have called the judge and that Nixon, himself, did not try to contact the judge because it would not have been ethical. But the nuances of Nixon's legal reasoning and his adherence to strict judicial ethics went well over the heads of the electorate, and in the end, his conduct in this incident cost him crucial votes.²⁶ Despite what Nixon wrote, he may have had a simple case of political anxiety that intercession on King's behalf would alienate white voters. Although he actually had a positive record on civil rights, he could not possibly expect that a Republican would be able to cut into the old New Deal coalition to garner a majority of the black vote. So, perhaps Nixon just took a gamble here over King that backfired on him.

While campaigning in Greensboro, North Carolina in August, Nixon knocked his knee on a car door. A little pain at first, but after all, Nixon had ridden the bench on Whittier College's football team, dreaming of the chance to play with the pain, so the irritation in his knee only seemed a minor inconvenience at first. But in a few days, he had to be hospitalized for a severe infection, which kept him off the campaign trail for two weeks. Yet the determined young Californian, only 47 years old, with the presidency within his grasp, emerged from the hospital campaigning harder than ever and he refused to back away from his promise to visit every state in the land. It was true grit.

The only problem was that the even younger Democratic nominee, Jack Kennedy, was pacing himself and even managed to take in a few sun rays while campaigning in Nixon's home state. There was nothing trivial about Nixon's driving himself into the ground and Kennedy, actually a man in poor health, appeared fit, tanned and rested. Something revolutionary was about to take place in American politics that fall. The "little boxes" in living rooms all across the land that had so drastically molded, effected, manipulated and dominated American life in the preceding decade were now going to have their turn to alter the face of American democracy forever. The candidates had agreed to debate, face to face, live on the three major networks, to be televised nationally. Nixon had been advised not to debate for the consensus among his staff was that the debates could only benefit Kennedy who was still considered to be not as widely known as Nixon, despite being the Democracy's choice for the White House. But Nixon took the more difficult road and agreed to meet Kennedy on the tube. He may well have been overconfident that with his finely honed high school and collegiate debating skills, he could make mincemeat out of the young upstart. Nixon defended his decision to debate Kennedy in his post-mortem of the campaign, as written in Six Crises.²⁷ And Nixon undoubtedly did the right thing in 1960 although he would be wise enough not to debate in either 1968 or 1972.

Some 80 million Americans tuned into the debate on Monday night, September 26 as the two candidates squared off in

Chicago. This first "debate" was limited to domestic issues.²⁸ As numerous commentators have noted, it was not a debate at all. Although each candidate had an opening statement, the duration of the program consisted of journalists asking each nominee questions. It was far more like a joint appearance on "Meet the Press" than a genuine back and forth, reeling and rocking debate. It rapidly entered the folklore of American politics with far more attention paid to the beads of perspiration on the vice president's forehead and chin, his ill-fitting white shirt collar and eternal five o'clock shadow rather than to the substance of what was said. Kennedy was cool, calm, collected and confident, in his blue shirt and California golden sun tan. The oft-repeated story is that radio listeners thought Nixon had an edge over Kennedy but this was the Age of Television and Kennedy had been seen around the country holding forth with the supposedly more widely known Nixon (One says "supposedly" since there had been numerous Gallup Polls from 1958 on showing Kennedy in the lead over Nixon; if, indeed that was the case, how could it possibly be that Nixon was so much better "known"? Yes, the vice president had been in the national political limelight for a longer time than JFK, but the Gallup Polls belie the notion of Kennedy as an out-of-nowhere candidate, little more than a stranger in a strange land by September 1960. How else could an alleged "unknown" have led a "known" candidate for President in the nation's most prestigious poll?). America was entering a dark

age from which there would be no return, when the nation's politics would center on imagery and gadgetry and as is so often said by the legions of media critics, style over substance. Going back and rereading or watching tapes of the broadcast, the two candidates seem far more articulate than any presidential candidates since and with a grasp of details that sometimes is clouded over by the rhetoric of the moment. But it was undeniably the end of one era and the beginning of another. The dominance of "talking heads" and 30-second television manipulations from Madison Avenue would not be too many years in the future. As the years would pass and politics would become more and more manipulative and reduced to bumper stickers and television commercials, the rhetoric and joy of American political oratory as well as the vibrancy of American Democracy would be the ultimate casualty.

The second encounter between the two former junior naval officers of World War II took place in Washington on October 7. After Kennedy objected to the bright lights and the cold temperature in the television studio, and had them adjusted to his liking, (did the Irish "Brahmin" want the heat up so that Nixon's sweat glands would be moving again?) he and the vice president settled down to a vigorous discussion of foreign policy, focusing on those tempestuous pieces of real estate, Quemoy and Matsu.²⁹ Nixon was back in familiar territory and he seized the day by attacking Kennedy's position, portraying it as somehow being too soft in the glare of the threat that communism posed to the free world. Kennedy

actually fell into a trap on this and politics being what it is, should have known better than to try to make ostensibly rational and reasonable arguments on the highly charged emotional China issue, especially when zealots of the opposition were poised to stir up the ashes and remind the American people that the Democrats under Truman had "lost China." Kennedy's idea was that the defense of a few strategically worthless piles of rock just off the coast of the Chinese mainland simply was not worth the effort, nor was it militarily feasible, when the important thing was keeping Taiwan and the Pescadores free of the Communists. This was too sophisticated for an electorate still vastly anti-Communist in the manner of a Pavlovian dog who salivates upon hearing a bell. (One has difficulty thinking of the Republic of China as wholly "free" under Chiang Kai-Shek, although Chiang with all his faults--and they were many--was still preferable to Mao across the strait.) Kennedy's rhetoric might have played in Harvard Yard but it certainly was not going to "play in Peoria" (yet, an ironic afterthought: it was in carrying Illinois that JFK clinched the election victory). Nixon had been playing the China issue to the hilt since 1949, perfecting his pitch during the MacArthur controversy and the two "crises" of the previous decade over the Formosa Strait. It is not unfair to say that he pounced on Kennedy, much like a lion in his den awaiting his moment.

One problem for Nixon though was that there were 20

million fewer viewers of this television debate, a mere 60 million rather than the 80 million Americans who had tuned in for the first round. Nixon had placed himself on a strict regimen of four milkshakes a day so that his neck would fit properly into his collar and that he might look healthy enough for the nation's top job. But many historians concede, the damage had been done in the first debate, and despite Nixon's stronger showing the second time around, that first impression lingered in the political air. Nevertheless, the vice president had struck a rhetorical blow against Kennedy over the delicate matter of the offshore islands, and Kennedy's eyes were a bit puffy when the bell rang.

Although Kennedy explicitly said that Taiwan should be defended, he suggested that the "line" be drawn over Formosa rather than Quemoy and Matsu. He indirectly suggested that the Chinese Nationalists withdraw from those offshore islands.³⁰ The Democratic candidate objected to the Formosa Resolution passed by the Senate in January 1955 which deliberately, on the part of the Eisenhower administration, left open to question how far the United States would actually go in its defense of Taiwan and the so-called "other areas," which were buzz words for the Quemoy and Matsu island groups. The General President, in his best Eisenhowerean fashion, had wanted to keep the Chinese Communists guessing as to what the United States would do in the event Peking chose an all-out attack on the offshore islands. In this instance, Kennedy knocked vagueness, but it was that very vagueness and patience

that Eisenhower aspired to in times of international crises--the nation may not have done a lot of moving in the 1950s but Eisenhower commanded the nation through rocky seas in the oceans of foreign affairs.

Nixon retorted to Kennedy's pronouncement on those islands in the strait by lashing out that the Harvard graduate's approach was "the same kind of wooly headed thinking that led to disaster in Korea."³¹ From the MacArthur controversy and throughout the 1950s, this was Nixon's cue to lash into the Democrats by charging that the Korean War would never have occurred if the Democrats, namely the Truman administration, had not "lost" China and if then Secretary of State Dean Acheson had not omitted Korea from the U.S. "defense perimeter" in his famous speech before the National Press Club in Washington on January 12, 1950. Nixon recited that chorus, a stanza that was consistent for him throughout the preceding decade. Nixon attacked Kennedy over his statement that the offshore islands were indefensible by reminiscing about those golden days when the GOP formed the opposition rather than being the party in power subject to the "vigorous" stinging criticism of Democrats hungry for the White House. "I remember the period from immediately before the Korean War," the vice president said. "South Korea was supposed to be indefensible as well. Generals testified to that and Secretary Acheson made a very famous speech at the Press Club early in the year [1950] that....started indicating in effect that South Korea was beyond the defense zone of the United

States."³²

With those familiar words off his chest, Nixon could now pounce on JFK over the offshore islands, the issue directly at hand. "...The question is not these two little pieces of real estate--they are unimportant...It's the principle involved," the vice president said.

The Republican then elaborated upon that principle. "These two islands are in the area of freedom. The Nationalists have these two islands. We should not force our Nationalist allies to get off of them and give them to the Communists," Nixon told the national television audience.

He then evoked the nightmare of the domino theory. Nixon further countered Kennedy by warning that if the offshore islands came under Peking's orbit, it would "start a chain reaction because the Communists aren't after Quemoy and Matus. They're after Formosa. In my opinion, this is the same kind of wooly headed thinking that led to disaster for America in Korea. I'm against it. I would never tolerate it as President of the United States. and I will hope that Senator Kennedy will change his mind if he should be elected," Nixon concluded.³³ In his adept handling of this issue, rhetorically and politically, Nixon was proving he was a master of sophistry. Nixon certainly performed (and perform is the key word) better in the second debate.

James Reston wrote in The New York Times that the vice president had "clearly made a comeback after his disappointing showing in the first debate."³⁴ But The New Republic

excoriated Nixon's posture on the offshore islands as "demagogic." The liberal magazine attacked Nixon for having stated that the defense of those islands was necessary because of "the principle involved." The journal said "'Principle' is a solemn word, and the voters had better be clear what this principle would mean if applied. The practical result of the new Nixon Doctrine is U.S. involvement in a war with Communist China at any time the Communists launch an all-out attack on these offshore islands," the editorial warned. The New Republic was concerned that such a military pursuit would only isolate America from its friends in that vital region of the world. "In such a war, it can be predicted with almost absolute certainty that the United States would fight without Asian allies and very little support from any other quarter. One can be sure also that an attempt to implement this doctrine would destroy probably for all time, the slim remaining possibility that Formosan independence could be established by separating the future status of that island from that of Quemoy and Matsu." The weekly further scored the vice president by stating "What Mr. Nixon said perfectly illustrates how dimly he comprehends the character of a responsible foreign policy."³⁵ Such a searing critique was to be expected from The New Republic but in the height of the Cold War Nixon seemed to have struck a nerve against Kennedy's attempt to insert reason into the political campaign.

The Nixon camp was ready to play up the "islands in the strait" issue to try to indicate that the young, inexperienced

Democratic nominee was, indeed, "soft" on communism and too lacking in the qualities of discernment to hold the highest office in the land. "Charlie" McWhorter, one of Nixon's campaign advisers prepared a 14-point memo on October 12 for the Republican candidate concerning "Political arguments on Quemoy-Matsu issue." (Were these, indeed, the Second 14 Points of American diplomatic history?). McWhorter smelled blood and sensed that political dividends could be earned by exploiting the issue. The politico's advice to Nixon, given just before the third debate, is important for its revelations of the thinking within the Nixon campaign and also because Nixon did use some of the arguments put forth by McWhorter in the further debates on Quemoy and Matsu. McWhorter exhibited a lot of savvy, and although Nixon ultimately made all the decisions and relied on himself, he thought enough of McWhorter to bring him back to work on the 1968 campaign.

McWhorter wrote to Nixon that "The American people have begun to grasp the naivete and danger of Senator Kennedy's announced intentions--if elected--to force our ally, Nationalist China, to withdraw its forces from Quemoy and Matsu islands. Senator Kennedy has resorted to a cheap demagogic argument when he asks American mothers whether they want their sons to die in a war for a couple of rocks."³⁶ McWhorter exhibited quite a talent for political phraseology.

The politco then emphasized to Nixon that the Formosan Resolution had worked well and at the time of its passage, Janaury 1955, had enjoyed overwhelming, if not unanimous,

support within the Congress and the nation. McWhorter reminded Nixon that it was the "policy of the United States government to resist invasion of these islands if (underlining added) it should be decided that such an invasion was part of an attempt to launch an attack upon Formosa." This was the very Eisenhoweran ambiguity designed to keep the Communist Chinese guessing as to what kind of U.S. response they could expect if they did indeed attack the offshore islands. McWhorter then pointed out that "This policy of the Eisenhower administration has worked. We have stood firm and the Chinese Communists have not launched an invasion upon these islands or Formosa, which is their announced objective."³⁷ Of course, this was another way to insert a Hail to the Commander in Chief, the great Ike, whose record Kennedy was thrashing at every opportunity. After all, Poor Richard did have to run on the Eisenhower record, no matter what he thought of the Old Man, and the general, despite his misgivings about the vice president, found Nixon far more palatable than the young "upstart" Kennedy.

McWhorter then put in a rhetorical flourish about Danzig and World War II, something that Nixon would employ during the future debates (although one wonders if Nixon needed McWhorter to make the historical analogy in order for him to use it in his speeches). The staff man wrote Nixon that "The last time the people of the free world heard leaders who asked whether they wanted their sons to fight for 'so-called' unimportant areas was when British mothers were asked whether they wanted

their sons to die for Danzig in 1938. This was at a time when firmness against aggression by Hitler might have averted the enormous tragedy in human suffering which he caused."³⁸ In 1960, the memory of World War II was fresh in the minds of the electorate and there was political capital to be gained in frightening the voters into thinking that if a tough stand was not taken then, it would only lead to more difficult times later. What was ironic was that Nixon was, in essence, arguing that the United States should go to war, if necessary, to keep the offshore rocks in Taipei's orbit although from Nixon's point of view, he thought that the hardline approach was the only way to avoid war.

McWhorter also suggested to Nixon that "The type of naive thinking represented by Senator Kennedy's position on Quemoy and Matsu can only lead to surrender on the installment plan. A bully or a blackmailer can only be handled by a policy of firmness, strength and no concession."³⁹ That was tough talk and Nixon would also use the line "surrender on the installment plan" although since the Korean War he had called for "Peace Without Surrender," a phrase intended to sully the opposition Democrats with the appeasement smear.

In a politically charged stab at Kennedy's immense wealth, McWhorter wittily stated that "These are not Jack's islands to turn over to the Communists. They are held by our ally, the Chinese Nationalists, with whom we have a mutual defense treaty." (McWhorter was referring, of course, to the Mutual Defense Treaty between Taiwan and the United States,

negotiated by John Foster Dulles and signed by both parties in December 1954.) McWhorter, a pious Republican operative who was unwilling to forgive the sins of the Truman-Acheson foreign policy, twisted the knife a little more into Kennedy and knocked Acheson when he wrote that "Senator Kennedy talks of a 'New Frontier.' Presumably this 'New Frontier' is new because it marks a retreat and defeat for the boundaries of freedom. The last time we heard an announcement of such a 'new frontier' for American defenses it constituted an open invitation to aggression in South Korea which the Communists gladly accepted."⁴⁰ The last sentence cutting away at Acheson was music to Nixon's ears, since he had been making that attack on the Democratic diplomat since the controversy surrounding the MacArthur dismissal. The then California senator's highly spirited (not to mention highly politically calculated) defense of the General was combined with Nixon's own unsparingly vitriolic assaults on Truman and Acheson's Asia policy-with Nixon levying the ultimate insult that the Democrats had, in essence, no Asian policy at all.

On October 13, Nixon was in Los Angeles for the third debate. This time around the two candidates for president would be separated by a continent with Nixon in a studio in Hollywood and Kennedy in another one in New York. In addition to the debate that day, Nixon spoke at the University of Southern California, his wife Pat's alma mater. The vice president praised Eisenhower's Formosa Resolution of 1955 and made a lot of political hay about the fact that Kennedy had

supported an amendment to that measure (voted for by only 12 Senators) that would have, according to Nixon, "denied to the President the power of the President to defend the two offshore islands of Quemoy and Matsu."⁴¹ Nixon would harp on the same point in the third debate.

Nixon defended the status quo of American policy towards the islands. He claimed that the Eisenhower policy, backed by the Formosan Resolution, had "worked." "It has meant that the Chinese Communists in that five years [since the Formosan Resolution] have not launched an attack upon Formosa or the offshore islands of a massive type," the vice president told the eager collegians, conveniently omitting that the Chinese Communists had sprinkled the offshore islands with artillery shells in the spring of 1955, right on the heels of the Formosan Resolution, and that the artillery assault had been resumed in 1958, fomenting the second Formosan Strait crisis. If "massive," as Nixon used the term, meant that there had been no amphibious assault on the islands with crack Red Chinese troops, he was technically right. But others might disagree and point out that artillery attacks from guns mounted just a few miles away could be considered "massive" by any one who might have the misfortune to fall into the line of fire.

Nixon advocated the United States standing firm vis-a-vis its position over the islands. As he had often suggested in the past, any American move that might even be perceived as a sign of "weakness" by the Chinese Communists (or any

Communists in the Nixon worldview), could lead to war, no matter what the original intentions. "And I say the moment you change the policy, and in effect, draw a line back of those islands and say: Now we'll surrender these to you, in effect, we'll turn them over, that this is a policy that does not lead to peace," Nixon said.⁴²

"It is one which will inevitably encourage the Communists and could lead to war," the vice president warned. "I'll tell you why," and he proceeded to draw the Danzig analogy to these rocks in the strait. Nixon, now the historian, told the students, who he could then assume had some grounding in recent international history, that "The record with dictators is as consistent as anything in the world's history. We have to go back only to World War II. You remember Hitler. first it was the Rhineland, then it was Austria, then it was Danzig, then it was Sudetenland, and every time they said he only wants this, but after all, in the end, there had to come a place when he had to be stopped."⁴³

Then Nixon drew the inevitable analogy, for rhetorical purposes, between Communists and Nazis. "...When you're dealing with a dictator, be he a Communist or a Nazi, or a Fascist, or any kind of dictator, surrendering territory to him at the point of a gun does not lead to peace, it does not satisfy him, even if he says it will, it only whets his appetite. And it means that it encourages him to push you further."⁴⁴ Communists and fascists, like bullies, had to be stood up to.

Nixon then turned his guns on the Asian giant, whom he not unjustifiably considered a menace to peace and stability throughout that emerging region. "Now I do not want to see," he lectured the students, "the United States adopt the policy at this time which will encourage a dictator, Mao Tse-tung, to push us to the point where we will get into a war. And," he added, "that's why I say that this is a period over the last 7 1/2 years [referring to the tenure of the Eisenhower administration] in which we have not had retreat in the face of Communism,"⁴⁵ conveniently omitting that half of North Vietnam fell under the domination of the Communists after Eisenhower took office, not that one could suggest that was a failure of the administration. After all, the French had been defeated despite American support (and Nixon's willingness to up the ante in that struggle back in 1954) but North Vietnam was a far bigger chunk of real estate than the rocks off the Chinese mainland, and it was far too much land and too many people to ignore. Then, of course, Nixon could not point with pride to what had happened in Indochina as a result of Geneva. Nixon, the rhetorician, could have undoubtedly made a sophistic argument that the situation in Vietnam was anything but a retreat and that rather, it was a stand against further aggression by the Communists.

The vice president then fell back on a little football jargon, one of his favorite approaches to any matter on earth. "This is no time to change that policy," he said. "This is a time to extend freedom, to extend it without war, and you

can't extend freedom by running backwards, and on this I disagree with Senator Kennedy as I have indicated," he concluded, wrapping up his position on those politically volatile offshore islands.⁴⁶

That same day prior to the evening's debate with Kennedy, Nixon campaign aide Fred Seaton received a telephone call in Los Angeles from Secretary of State Christian Herter back at Foggy Bottom. Herter's call was a not so subtle effort on the part of the administration to make sure that Nixon did not get too fired up over Quemoy and Matsu and "overcommit" the United States "militarily" in the course of debate. It seems that Kennedy may not have been the only one with misgivings about the islands but Herter primarily wanted to ensure that Nixon understood the administration position on the Formosa Resolution, although that is not to suggest that Eisenhower publicly would have gone as far as Kennedy did. This Herter call could have been yet another exercise in Eisenhowerian efforts to rein in his party's choice as his successor. According to the memorandum of the telephone conversation, Herter "wanted to be sure that there was no misunderstanding that the Congressional authorization for use of troops requires a determination on the part of the President that an attack on Quemoy or Matsu is an attack on Formosa and this is a finding the President must make."⁴⁷ Herter was reminding Nixon through Seaton of the leeway the Formosa Resolution granted Eisenhower, or his successor, as president.

The memorandum further recorded that Herter told Seaton

that "ever since the bombardment [of the offshore islands] the ChiComs [Chinese Communists] have said it was preliminary to taking of Formosa but if the time came to move only on Quemoy and Matsu and they made no move toward Formosa we might find ourselves in a very difficult situation." Herter, apparently speaking for the administration, undoubtedly dreaded the thought of the United States having to defend those "pieces of real estate" for their own intrinsic value, which certainly appeared to be far less from State's point of view than from Nixon's, who was earnestly trying to garner votes on a most politically sensitive although potentially militarily catastrophic issue. Herter summed up by telling Seaton that he "hoped the Vice President, in the heat of debate, would not get himself too far committed from a military point of view."⁴⁸ The secretary of state had said at the beginning of the conversation that the advice about to follow was all being done "in the spirit of being helpful to the vice president" yet it all had the aura of another attempt from the powers that be to keep Poor Richard in line and leave him chastized. Seaton reassured Herter that he could be "sure" Nixon followed the line the secretary outlined.

But even more interesting was the brief discussion that ensued between the Nixon aide and the nation's senior diplomat concerning Chinese admission to the United Nations. Seaton exhibited some flexibility on Nixon's behalf on this matter which was well in keeping with the position and rhetoric the vice president had employed since his Grand Tour of Asia in

1953. Seaton told Herter that on this score, Nixon "would plan to indicate that as matters now stand and if the Chicom attitude and behavior does not change if he were President he would seriously consider instructing [sic] the US to use its veto, but would take a look if their actions changed."⁴⁹

The "Big If," of course, surrounded whether or not the Chinese would ever change. Mao is reputed to have said that "If the Americans do not recognize us in 100 years, they will recognize us in 101." What Mao may not have anticipated is that in Nixon, he had a shrewd opponent who had an oddly oriental-style patience in which he would be willing to mark his time and await the politically opportune moment to strike a deal that would be as beneficial to Washington as to Peking. There would be nothing unduly idealistic about Nixon's later play as President for a "generation of peace." It would be marked by the pragmatism and realpolitik that are the sine quo non of bringing any idealism into the life of nations, rather than allowing those much vaunted ideals to remain in the realm of some stratospheric spirit.

The coast-to-coast debate on the night of October 13th had its most dramatic (or more accurately, melodramatic) moments centered on the offshore islands. Russell Baker summed up the tempest that had ensued best when he wrote in his lead for The New York Times that Kennedy and Nixon "bitterly accused each other before a national television audience...of advocating policies on Quemoy and Matsu that would lead to war." Baker further noted that "while the rhetorical temperature of the

third debate was torrid, the actual policy difference between the two Presidential candidates appeared to have narrowed considerably, Mr. Nixon pulled back from the strong position he took last week."⁵⁰ It would seem that Seaton may have passed Herter's advice along to the Republican presidential candidate.

Baker further observed that although Nixon in the second debate had stated that the defense of Quemoy and Matsu was "a matter of 'principle' because no territory 'in the area of freedom' should be surrendered," the vice president was "much less categorical" in the third round. Although it would not be fair to say in the parlance of the time that Nixon had "backed down," he was sure this time around to say that Quemoy and Matsu would only be defended if an attack upon those islands were "a prelude to an attack on Formosa" which Baker pointed out had been the Eisenhower administration position.⁵¹ That had, in fact, been the policy since the passage of the Formosa Resolution in 1955.

Baker got to the heart of the matter when he observed that in this particular political rumble over Quemoy and Matsu, Kennedy "sought to deprive Mr. Nixon of the 'peace' issue and Mr. Nixon sought to depict Kennedy as a man dangerously ignorant of the ways of dictators." During the interim between the second and third debates, Kennedy had attacked the Nixon position on the islands as "trigger-happy leadership." This charge must have made Nixon's blood boil and he was to take it head on in Round Three by using what was an old GOP

campaign curve: namely, that the Democrats had "led" the nation into war three times in the 20th century while Republicans had vigilantly kept the peace on their watch.⁵² (This charge was to be repeated by Republican vice presidential candidate, Senator Bob Dole of Kansas in the 1976 nationally televised debate with his Democratic counterpart, Senator Walter Mondale of Minnesota.)

Nixon shot back at Kennedy's "trigger-happy" rhetoric by declaring that he resented it. "I resent it because it's an implication that Republicans have been trigger-happy and therefore, would lead this nation into war," he said. "There were three Democratic Presidents who led us into war," Nixon added. "I do not mean by that that one party is a war party and the other party is a peace party," he expounded although that was exactly what he meant--certainly, that was the political implication. (Nixon had also used this "war and peace party" disclaimer to attack Democrats nearly ten years before over the worsening situation in the Korean War.) "But," Nixon said in party-defense, "I do say that any statement to the effect that the Republican party is trigger-happy is belied by the record."⁵³

Nixon then proceeded to drag up the old Democratic "mess" on Korea as if this was the 1952 campaign and not the 1960 campaign. He was one politician with an historical memory, a species that would not too far in the future vanish from the American political landscape. "We had a war when we came into power in 1953," the candidate said in case anyone had

forgotten. "We got rid of that. We stayed out of others," he stated with the pride of a prince of peace. "And certainly that doesn't indicate that we're trigger-happy."⁵⁴

As a further test of just how trigger-happy Nixon might be in the midst of an international crisis, one correspondent (the third debate really resembled a joint news conference for the two presidential contenders) asked him point-blank how he would react as president if the Communist Chinese invaded Quemoy and Matsu. Would he deploy the Seventh Fleet to stop the Reds and resort to nuclear weapons if conventional forces could not do the job?

Nixon was too clever to fall for this one. He first took the high ground and simply responded that it would be "completely irresponsible" to say what he would do in such a case. But he was not going to roll over and play dead either. To make clear that he still would not "surrender" free territory, he added "In the event that their [the Chinese Communists] attack [on the offshore islands] then were a prelude to an attack on Formosa, there isn't any question but that the United States would then again, as in the case of Berlin, honor our treaty obligations and stand by our ally Formosa."⁵⁵ (Just how far the United States would go to defend the territorial and political integrity of West Berlin was also an issue in 1960, actually a far more volatile one as the Berlin Crisis of 1961 would all too soon prove.)

Nixon was still talking tough and trying to present the Democratic Kennedy as weak and inexperienced. He further

castigated his opponent's stance on the offshore islands by portraying Kennedy's approach as the more likely to lead to war than the apparently unyielding position that Nixon was espousing. "To do what Senator Kennedy has suggested," the vice president declared, "to suggest that we will surrender these islands or force our Chinese Nationalist allies to surrender them in advance is not something that would lead to peace, it is something that would lead, in my opinion, to war."⁵⁶

Nixon next reprised the chorus on dealing with dictators and the need to stop them early rather than late. He again raised the spectre of Hitler. Nixon suggested that "surrender" was part of the "history of dealing with dictators. This is something that Senator Kennedy and all Americans must know," he said, with no small trace of condescension towards the junior senator from Massachusetts. "We tried this with Hitler," Nixon added, "and it didn't work. He wanted...Austria...and then he went on to the Sudetenland and then Danzig, and each time it was thought this was all he wanted."⁵⁷

The Republican candidate then refocused on the issue of the offshore islands. "Now what do the Chinese Communists want?," he asked. "They don't just want Quemoy and Matsu. They don't want just Formosa. They want the world," Nixon claimed without blinking an eyelash as to how the Colossus to the North of China might react should Peking try to conquer the globe on its own. "And," he continued, "the question is

if you surrender or indicate in advance that you're not going to defend any part of the free world, and you figure that going to satisfy them. It only whets their appetite," Nixon warned, "and then the question comes when do you stop them?"⁵⁸ Nixon was again insisting on the primacy of always keeping the Communists guessing as to American intentions.

Nixon may have had mixed feelings about Eisenhower playing too high profile a role in the campaign but he was quick to invoke the name of the Great Old Man in an effort to gain some political capital over Quemoy and Matsu. "I've often heard President Eisenhower, in discussing this question," Nixon said of his good friend Ike, "make the statement that if we once start the process of indicating that this point or that point is not the place to stop those who threaten the peace and freedom of the world, where do we stop them?"⁵⁹ But Nixon's statement belies the private reservations over the strategic importance of the offshore islands Eisenhower expressed in National Security Council meetings during the first Quemoy-Matsu crisis of 1954-55. However, Nixon was not about to take advantage of the opportunity before a national television audience to try to foster yet another "New Nixon," this time in the guise as a revisionist historian of the Eisenhower presidency.⁶⁰

Nixon concluded this portion of the debate by advocating holding fast and not giving in. "And I say that those of us who stand against surrender of territory--this or any other--in the face of blackmail and in face of force by the

Communists are standing for the course that will lead to peace."⁶¹ Nixon, of course, was referring to himself as opposed to the stance of Kennedy. The vice president may have been less bellicose in his rhetoric, and reigned himself in to some degree as Herter had requested, but he was still on the offensive, trying to make himself appear to be the stronger, tougher candidate. For Nixon, long before his Presidency and the Vietnam War, "peace through strength" was the axiom upon which he viewed America's place in the world.

Douglas Cater of The Reporter magazine, serving on the panel of newsmen posing the questions for the candidates, pointedly asked Nixon to respond to critics who claimed that Nixon had "overstated" the position of the Eisenhower administration concerning its commitment to defend the offshore islands. The journalist also cited Nixon's off-the-record comments in 1954 on the possibility of sending American troops to Indochina as another example of Nixonian overstatement. Nixon dismissed the criticism as invalid although it was true that he had taken a far harder line than Eisenhower on Indochina in 1954 just as he had over Quemoy and Matsu throughout the volatile periods in 1954-55 and 1958.⁶² If Nixon had not been off target from the administration line, why else would Herter have bothered to call Nixon aide Fred Seaton? But now in the campaign, although he very much wanted to be his own man, he could not disrespectfully refute the Eisenhower record. On Indochina, Nixon said that "...It was essential during that period that

the United States make it clear that we would not tolerate Indochina falling under Communist domination. Now, as a result of our taking the strong stand that we did," he added, "the civil war there was ended and today, at least in the south of Indochina, the Communists have moved out and we do have a strong, free bastion there."⁶³

Here, as he had earlier in the debate, Nixon skirted around the fact that North Vietnam was now under the domination of a certain Communist named Ho Chi Minh. He was also exaggerating the strength of the "free bastion" of South Vietnam. History would all too soon reveal it as weak, and indeed, even then with a remaining pernicious presence of Communists who had not moved out of the South and would ultimately triumph over the American-backed government in Saigon. But Nixon cannot be blamed or praised for the situation as it stood in 1960. He had, after all, been vice president and not commander-in-chief and one cannot forget that holding the second spot affords at least an occasional political advantage in what is often an "unsplendid misery" of the frequently ignominious office.

In response to the charge that he was not at one with the General's administration on Quemoy and Matsu, rather than addressing the matter of whether he had strayed from the Ike line, Nixon took the opportunity once more to rail against Kennedy's position on the islands. He reiterated his own view that for the United States to tip its hand as to what it would or would not do merely would "encourage them [Chinese

Communists] to more aggression."⁶⁴

Kennedy had been making much throughout the campaign and in the debates on what he called America's declining "prestige" in the world during the Eisenhower years. He predicated his campaign on a call for a "new frontier" complete with the new, "vigorous" leadership he hoped to provide. Nixon turned the rhetoric of prestige against Kennedy in the third debate by playing up the great prestige at stake in the maintenance of the status quo on the offshore islands through their defense by the United States. Nixon, coming into his own a couple of debates too late, said that he could "think of nothing that will be a greater blow to the prestige of the United States among the free nations in Asia than for us to take Senator Kennedy's advice to go against what a majority of the members of the Senate, both Democratic and Republican, said in 1955, and to say in advance we will surrender an area to the Communists."⁶⁵ (Nixon was referring again to the Formosa Resolution)

"...If the United States is going to maintain its strength and prestige," Nixon continued, "we must not only be strong militarily and economically, we must be firm diplomatically." The vice president then resorted to his rendition of a rhyme by concluding that "Certainly we have been speaking, I know, of whether we should have retreat or defeat. Let's remember that the way to win is not to retreat and not to surrender."⁶⁶

New York Times columnist James Reston incisively

criticized both Nixon and Kennedy for having allowed Quemoy and Matsu to become a campaign issue in the first place, although he felt that the Democrat had handled the question far better in the debate. Reston wrote that "the experts in Washington are furious at both Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Nixon for getting into this Quemoy-Matsu controversy." Reston also revealed that unnamed officials were "surprised at the Vice President--and this included many of his colleagues in the State and Defense Departments--for committing himself to a policy of going beyond President Eisenhower and asserting that these two small islands are part of the free world and should be defended as a matter of principle." Nixon, had in the end, strayed from the "suggestions" imparted by Secretary of State Christian Herter. Reston conceded that Nixon "may have made some progress among voters with his no-surrender stand" but "won little support among the experts." Then again, Nixon was in the midst of a presidential campaign and not an academic forum. But Reston further criticized Nixon's presentation as "general and often emotional" and scored him for lacking the discretion not to discuss it. The newsman charged Nixon with having "elevated what the State Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff regarded as a tactical question into an issue of fundamental principle." Reston made it clear he thought Nixon put politics before the good of the nation.⁶⁷

An old Nixon ally, retired Admiral Arthur W. Radford, who had been chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the

first Quemoy-Matsu crisis of 1954-55 (and had endorsed the use of nuclear weapons against the Chinese Communists) was quick to denounce Kennedy. The retired Navy man, who had endorsed Nixon in the 1960 campaign, raised the cry that Kennedy's position on the offshore islands "could certainly start a war if they are believed by the Red Chinese." Radford feared the old domino effect, that if the two islands were "lost," other Asian nations would be vulnerable to the Communists.⁶⁸ Even the old Nixon nemesis, Nelson Rockefeller, went out of his way to support the vice president's stance on the issue.⁶⁹ But after all, Rockefeller was first and last a rabid cold warrior whose reputation as a liberal Eastern Republican belied the depths of his ardor to fight pernicious communism. The Cold War was the one item on the nation's political agenda that could truly bring the two frequent antagonists together.

Nixon had indeed won some political points over the issue, James Reston's acerbic, although not unjustified, criticism notwithstanding. Yet, the offshore islands were hardly a major source of concern in 1960, despite the temperatures raised over them in 1954-55 and 1958, and the extent to which Nixon and Kennedy tried to capitalize on them. The truth is that the focus of American foreign affairs had returned to Europe and the Soviet Union. The more immediate and important concern was maintaining the status quo in Berlin. (And yet another "offshore island," far more strategic geopolitically to the United States, was to emerge as a more significant issue in the fourth debate and latter part of the campaign.

That island was thousands of miles away from the Chinese mainland but only 90 miles from the continental United States. That particular collection of rocks nearly 700 hundred miles long was Fidel Castro's Cuba.) Even historian Robert Divine has shrewdly remarked that the give-and-take over the islands was emblematic of how the television debates could create an "artificial issue."⁷⁰ It was as if the tiny islands had been transformed into giant land masses the size of continents.

Divine also writes that the commander-in-chief, himself, was "disturbed" over the infusion of the islands into the campaign.⁷¹ Quemoy and Matsu had given the general enough "angina" in the last six years and the Old Man undoubtedly would have preferred not to see this volatile issue reignited, especially after having successfully steered the Good Ship United States through treacherous waters during the two previous crises over the islands in the strait. The debate over the islands must have been just another example of his young junior officer vice president giving him headaches, but Eisenhower's virtually visceral hatred for the even younger (and to Ike's mind, callow) Kennedy would make him allow for the continued errant ways of his not-first-choice for heir to the throne.

But Eisenhower was definitely unhappy, especially since as Divine points out, the Chinese Nationalists said they "would fight to the death" to defend Quemoy and Matsu not to mention growing trepidation that Mao and his friends in Peking might

well view the election of Kennedy as an invitation to invade the rocks off the mainland. Eisenhower still firmly believed that the United States should not tip its hand over any actions it might take concerning the islands, and he spoke to Nixon the day after Debate Three. The president announced through a statement that he and his second-in-command were in agreement after all on this dormant issue that had been brought back to life like some kind of vampire. Was Ike using a carrot (or stick) to bring Nixon back to the more preferred Eisenhowerian ambiguities? This actually had the effect of taking a little heat off Kennedy, who had been talking over the heads of the American public. Nixon would have preferred to keep the heat up on Kennedy but the issue soon faded in part because of its complexities and nuances and no doubt, as mentioned earlier, because China was not the paramount foreign policy issue anyway.⁷²

With the previous night's battle of words with Kennedy still clearly in the mind of the press and public, Nixon gave another foreign policy speech in Beverly Hills, California on October 14. He took advantage of the occasion to hedge a bit on Quemoy and Matsu and to make himself appear to be at one with the Eisenhower policy on the defense of the offshore islands. Rather than talking tough about any disaster that would ensue from surrendering "one inch" of free ground, Nixon made it a point to talk about the defense of Quemoy and Matsu in the context of the protection of Taiwan.⁷³ This was precisely the gist of the deliberate ambiguity that Eisenhower

had effected all along in the Formosa Resolution. Once again, Nixon had been corrected, if not actually sent to the woodshed, by the Old Bald Man in the Oval Office.

Although Nixon had pulled back somewhat on Quemoy-Matsu per se, he continued to hack away at Kennedy over China, next fixing his focus on the issue of Peking's admission to the United Nations. In an October 17 speech in Buffalo, a staunch anti-Communist stronghold replete with an array of ethnic voters, Nixon slashed at one of his all-time favorite targets, Adlai Stevenson. Nixon claimed that Stevenson supported a "deal with the Communist Chinese which would have us trade, for a worthless guarantee of freedom for Formosa," United States backing for Communist China's admission to the United Nations.⁷⁴ Stevenson, was a "foreign policy advisor" to the Kennedy campaign, and although the Democratic nominee, himself, had publicly opposed Peking's admission to the international organization, Nixon trotted out his old self to try and impugn Kennedy by association. Nixon had used this technique time and time again in the previous decade but had more often than not tried to smear Democratic candidates by any association with the diabolical Dean Acheson, Truman's secretary of state.

To stir things up, Nixon demanded that Kennedy clarify his position on Communist Chinese entry into the U.N. This was a low blow since Kennedy had already supported the Eisenhower administration's stance on the matter. Nixon further demanded that Kennedy disavow Stevenson's statement. Then

grandstanding for that nearly-Pavlovian anticommunist vote from Erie County (Buffalo and its environs), the Republican nominee said "The American people cannot make sense of a campaign in which the candidate says one thing on foreign affairs and one of his principal advisors says the opposite while campaigning for the candidate."⁷⁵ All of a sudden, it seemed like Richard Nixon was calling for politics without politics (Stevenson may have been a nominal "advisor" to Kennedy but his true importance in the campaign was to serve as a link and reassurance to Democratic liberals, without whom Kennedy could not win. So, politically, Stevenson had to mollify his constituency with some rhetoric that JFK might not have used. After all, Nixon was hardly at one with either Nelson Rockefeller or Barry Goldwater, but he welcomed their support in the general election. That is not inconsistent in a campaign, that is just good politics.). Actually The New York Times reported that Kennedy was making "inroads" into "traditional Republican pluralities in western New York" and that Nixon's attack on Stevenson was intended to try to put a finger in that dike. Stevenson had done poorly in this part of New York State in both 1952 and 1956, and Nixon was banking on rubbing some of Stevenson's unpopularity off onto Kennedy.⁷⁶ Even John Foster Dulles had fared well in this area when he ran for election in his own right as U.S. senator from New York, despite losing statewide. (Dulles had been appointed by New York Governor Thomas Dewey to fill a vacancy in the upper chamber.) The future secretary of state had run

a strong Republican, anticommunist campaign, eerily and demagogically invoking the Yalta agreements and the subsequent "enslavement of Eastern Europe" in a brazen attempt to get ethnic votes. However, Kennedy was destined to do well in 1960 among those same ethnic voters who despised Communism. The descendant of Irish Catholic immigrants had particular appeal to those who despised that Soviet variety of Communism which oppressed so many of the voters' own people in Eastern Europe.

Nixon still tried to cash in on Quemoy-Matsu before this upstate New York audience. The vice president accused Kennedy of "glib double-talk" on the question and raised anew the question of the Democrat's powers of judgment and experience when he asked "How can the American people have confidence in a man who shoots from the hip on matters that gravely affect the security of our country?" Nixon suggested that Kennedy had "made us sitting ducks for the Communists to push around...by drawing a surrender line that would surrender Quemoy and Matsu to the Communists at gunpoint." To top of this round of criticism, Nixon concluded that Kennedy showed "a very dangerous immaturity in world affairs."⁷⁷ On this last score, at least, Eisenhower would agree with him about the young upstart's lack of maturity, even though Nixon was still hardly Ike's own pride and joy.

Nixon's own gut political instinct was to continue to go for the jugular over the offshore islands issue. Nixon wrote two years later in his first of what would eventually amount

to several memoirs, Six Crises, that his campaign's polls showed that both Republicans and Democrats favored his hardline position on the Chinese Nationalist-held islands and that even Kennedy's own surveys were showing very much the same thing. But Nixon claimed that his aide, Fred Seaton, had "received a curious message from Washington." The gist of it was that Chester Bowles, a Kennedy foreign affairs advisor best known for founding the phenomenally successful Manhattan advertising firm of Benton & Bowles, had called on Secretary of State Christian Herter "to indicate Kennedy's concern over the way the Quemoy-Matsu debate was developing." Bowles had imparted to Herter that the Democratic nominee did not want to give the impression that the country was divided in its "support of the Eisenhower administration's firm stand against Communist aggression." Bowles reportedly said that Kennedy was now willing to "modify" his position for the sake of presenting a united front on this issue. (It is striking how a politician will suddenly see the spectre of the "national interest" and the imperative of "national unity" when a political argument is not going in his favor.) Nixon recalled that he asked Seaton what he thought of this overture and that Seaton responded that "Bowles and Kennedy--if Kennedy was aware of what Bowles had done--were using this device for the purpose of getting me [Nixon] to lay off on an issue that was becoming increasingly unpopular for Kennedy."⁷⁸

Nixon had his own response. "My own reaction," he wrote, "was that if Kennedy did modify his position, I would have no

choice but to drop the issue--except for continuing to point to the whole 'shoot first, think later' approach as indicative of his lack of experience in the foreign policy area." Nixon, as historian of his own life and campaign, naturally wanted to appear as though he had dutifully taken the high road when the expedient thing would have been to politically exploit the issue to the hilt. "While I recognized that I had Kennedy over the barrel on an issue which was turning sour for him," Nixon reminisced, "I believed that he had the right to change his mind. It was important that the the Chinese Communists be given no encouragement to start trouble in the Formosa Straits because of a hassle in the American presidential campaign."⁷⁹ This was Nixon at his best, but the artist of the portrait for posterity was Nixon himself. The most likely explanation is that Nixon had gotten a lot out of the issue but there was only a finite amount of political gold to be extracted when other issues like the big bearish Khrushchev, Berlin and Castro's Cuba had to be considered, not to mention a host of domestic matters.

In an October 18 speech before the American Legion in Tampa, Nixon urged that the United States exercise its veto power to ban Communist China from the United Nations until Peking stopped violating international law. This was in keeping with virtually all his pronouncements on the issue since the Communists had marched into Peking. Nixon referred again to the Stevenson speech in which the former Democratic presidential candidate proposed that America support seating

Communist China in the U.N. in exchange for Peking's promise to guarantee Taiwan's freedom. "Such a promise," Nixon warned, would be respected only as long as it served the Communists' purpose." For Nixon, the important thing was not what the Peking Communists would say they would agree to, but what they actually did. He remained unimpressed with their track record, citing Communist Chinese aggression in Korea, "continued violence against a member of the United Nations, free China...ruthless seizure of Tibet, military raids against India and Nepal and illegal and unprincipled imprisonment of American civilians [these were American pilots] which we have been objecting to and which they will do nothing about." The Republican presidential candidate then backed the use of an American veto in the United Nations "of any effort to admit a nation that does not comply as Red China does not comply [with United Nations principles.]"⁸⁰ Nixon was still taking the hard line, although changing the emphasis from the ironclad defense of Quemoy and Matsu to the question of recognition of Peking and whether or not that government should be represented in the U.N.

No doubt Nixon was adamant about such opposition as things then stood, but this was, after all, in the heat of a presidential campaign. Nixon was not going to remind potential voters of the subtleties involved and his own past remarks at various stages in his vice presidency when he did not rule out recognition or admission of Peking to the family of nations once Communist China learned to act according to

international law and the U.N. charter. But elections are won with votes and Nixon was all too aware of how Kennedy had erred in trying to show some sophisticated discernment over the offshore islands. Nixon was not going to follow suit now over the recognition question. Why lose votes on a sure thing?

Nixon and Kennedy squared off for the fourth and last time in debate on October 21 in New York. Nixon later wrote in Six Crises that, except to point out Kennedy's poor judgment, he more or less let the offshore islands issue drop after the third debate. However, Quemoy and Matsu still figured prominently in the final debate, although Cuba dominated the proceedings. Nixon sang the same old song on Quemoy and Matsu, praising the Eisenhower policy as outlined (or more correctly, not outlined) in the Formosa Resolution. The vice president also played up his favorite theme of the need for never making any concessions to the Communists. Alluding to those by now internationally known group of islands, he charged Kennedy with having made "recommendations with regard to--again--slicing off a piece of free territory, and abandoning it, in effect, to the Communists." Trying to present himself as the one candidate who could truly preserve the peace, Nixon accused his Democratic opponent of showing a "lack of understanding of dictators, a lack of understanding of Communists, because every time you make such a concession it does not lead to peace. It only encourages them to

blackmail you. It encourages them to begin a war."⁸¹ Nixon hardly was ready to let Quemoy and Matsu fade away, let alone die as a political issue.

Later in the debate, Nixon reiterated that the offshore islands would remain "as a campaign issue just as long as Senator Kennedy persists in what I think is a fundamental error." The error, Nixon maintained, was that Kennedy voted for a Senate amendment in 1955 which omitted Quemoy and Matsu from the American defense commitment. Nixon then offered to drop the issue, if Kennedy would retract his previous views. Kennedy countered that the Eisenhower administration itself had sent delegations to Chiang to try and convince him to abandon the islands but he also made it a point to say he supported the Eisenhower policy.⁸² It seemed that both Kennedy and Nixon were backpeddling on an issue whose nuances were not going to be understood by the average American voter anyway.

James Reston commented that the fourth debate was "highly repetitive" and he noted that "few observers" in Washington thought that the "discussion of strategic plans for dealing with Cuba and Quemoy and Matsu...[was] in the national interest."⁸³ The New Republic raked Nixon over the coals on his handling of the Strait issue. In an editorial pungently titled "It's No Debate," the magazine said "Those Peskydoreys never did have much chance of exciting the passions of a large number of voters, but before the argument ends over which candidate was or was not willing to stand by our treaty

commitments in the Formosa Straits, a parting observation is in order about about Mr. Nixon's manner of handling issues in general."⁸⁴

"Given a concrete problem, he invokes what he calls a principle; in this instance, that of not giving an inch to dictators," the journal observed. "It is proffered not as a point in argument, but as a device to foreclose argument," The New Republic said, breaking through what it considered to be Nixon's sophistry. "What is provident and what is feasible are no longer to be valid considerations. Indeed, there is to be no issue--only a slogan intended to stop discussion, to identify the Vice President with virtue, and his opponent with fuzzy-mindedness, woolly-headedness, moral slackness, etc."⁸⁵ But then again, The New Republic was never exactly in the Nixon camp.

The debates were certainly "historic" but no one reading the transcripts over three decades later could ever confuse them with being "great." Nixon, himself, discounted their ultimate bearing on the election by showing that the polls differed little from before the first debate until after the fourth debate and that Kennedy's winning margin on election day was less than a tenth of a percentage point in the popular vote.⁸⁶ China, through the means of the offshore islands, was one of several foreign policy issues discussed, although in reality, the islands were not at the heart of the China question in 1960. Although both candidates relied heavily on warmed-over rhetoric and cliché, one cannot help but be

impressed with the relatively high level of discourse, redundant though it might have been, when compared with the banal utterances of America's politicians as we approach the 21st century.

The Nixon "Surge" Falls Short

In the final two weeks of the campaign, Nixon went on the old familiar path of the partisan attack. He later described his sense of the momentum beginning to turn towards his favor and against Kennedy's in those last decisive days.⁸⁷ He continued to hit hard on Cuba, only this time he had charged Kennedy with being irresponsible for advocating a U.S.-backed invasion. Nixon never forgave Kennedy for this because he assumed the Central Intelligence Agency had made JFK privy to its plans for an invasion of the island nation by anti-Castro rebels. Nixon had maintained publicly that such an invasion would be irresponsible and an abrogation of U.S. treaty commitments under the Organization of American States. Privately, however, Nixon advocated the forceful removal of Castro and felt frustrated that Kennedy should use the issue in what the vice president considered an improper way which potentially could damage the national security. For once, Nixon appeared to be the "soft" politician as far as communism was concerned, which certainly must have struck the American people as yet another "new Nixon."

In an all out effort to win ethnic votes of people whose roots lay behind the Iron Curtain, Nixon made a rather

ridiculous Eisenhowerian promise which amounted to a pledge to "go to Eastern Europe," so to speak, "to carry the message of freedom into the Communist world." Nixon then topped himself by saying he would ask Eisenhower, Herbert Hoover and Harry Truman to travel together to that Communist dominated region to bring the flame of freedom to Eastern Europe.⁸⁶ The very idea of the two old antagonists, Truman and Eisenhower, spending any time together, no matter what the cause, was just plain ridiculous. To further aggravate this rather tawdry political pipe dream, it should be remembered that Truman's distaste for the Republican nominee for president in 1960 was no secret.

Eisenhower took off his nonpartisan gloves, altered his near legendary above the battle posture, and made several appearances for Nixon in the last week of the campaign. Eisenhower's dander was up over Kennedy's persistent charges that America had lost prestige under the Republican administration and that a "missile gap" existed with the Soviets soaring ahead in such vital areas as "rocket thrust." Nothing could anger the world's greatest living general more and he socked it to Kennedy, the man he liked to term the "upstart", on the campaign trail. Eisenhower was apparently willing to do even more, but Nixon claims that the president's physician and his wife, Mamie, feared that too much campaigning would be a strain on the Old Man's heart.⁸⁹ A more likely explanation is that Nixon felt compelled to win on his own. He knew Eisenhower could help his cause, but he did

not want to be beholden to the outgoing president. It is hard to imagine that Nixon had not built up great resentment towards Eisenhower over the latter's inconsistent and often inconsiderate treatment of his vice president.

Nixon issued a statement from Los Angeles on November 5, summing up the campaign. He again attacked Kennedy on Quemoy and Matsu, claiming that the Democrat had "argued in favor of open and avowed retreat from a position which he [Kennedy] finds uncomfortably close to the Communist menace." Nixon continued, "It is as though we could settle something by the mere act of withdrawing to a new position. Closeness is not the evil," he said. "So long as they hold their aggressive design for world conquest, the Communists will always be close. The more we withdraw," he concluded, "the closer and the faster they will come on."⁹⁰ Nixon had toned down his rhetoric but he had not really retreated from the aggressive stance he had previously espoused over these bits of "real estate" at the horizon of the free world.

On November 8, in the closest presidential election in modern times, the American people chose John F. Kennedy as their next president. The popular vote margin was only some 113,000 and political scientists have gone to great lengths in the last 30 years to show how if a few thousand votes had been changed in Illinois, Missouri, Texas and some other states, Nixon, indeed, might have been the one elected 35th President of the United States rather than the man from Massachusetts. Undoubtedly there were voting irregularities in Illinois and

Texas, the former state providing Kennedy's electoral vote margin. Although not a few of the Nixon people urged the defeated candidate to contest the election, the vice president, much to his credit, declined to do so fearing that it would only make the nation's transition to a new administration all the more unstable. It is not that Nixon did not feel that there had been irregularities or illegalities in the election process. Nixon did save the country the further grief of a recount but it should also be noted that such a procedure would have taken time and it would have been extremely difficult and costly to overturn even the narrow margin of victory that Kennedy had gained.

In his classic, yet somewhat embarrassingly dated book, The Making of the President 1960, Theodore H. White lionizes the presidential election process and the two candidates in a way that would simply not be possible for the cynical American public and press at the end of the 20th Century. White portrays the election as won by the glamorous Kennedy and his incredible, impeccable, brilliant, well-greased machine of a political organization led by the handsome candidate with irresistible charisma and charm. But White does not see the election as merely Kennedy's victory. He views it as having been lost by a fumbling Nixon who never quite recovered from the first debate and made numerous other mistakes in the campaign. Yet, Tom Wicker comes much closer to the truth when he points out that Nixon was running as the Republican candidate, clearly the head of the minority party. Nixon was

also no Eisenhower in terms of popularity, yet what might truly be seen as remarkable, is how close Nixon came to victory in 1960. Wicker also notes that the so-called Kennedy "magic" was not felt by nearly half the electorate.⁹¹

Bringing Them Together

With the election having been such a squeaker, Kennedy went out of his way to invite Nixon to meet with him on November 14, less than a week after the vote, in Key Biscayne, Florida where Nixon was unwinding after the campaign. Kennedy, although the declared winner, would obviously benefit politically from meeting his former opponent. If anything, such a get together would inspire a spirit of national unity, something much desired by a president-elect who has won the highest office in the land by only slightly more than 100,000 votes. There had been some speculation that Kennedy would offer Nixon a position in the new Democratic administration. Indeed, in the course of their discussion, Kennedy offered Nixon some amorphous, undefined post in the administration. Nixon recalled that he thought Kennedy was just doing what was expected of him and he turned down the offer, undoubtedly much to Kennedy's relief.⁹² It is impossible to imagine Nixon being a part of the Kennedy team. He felt his calling was clearly to remain a leader, preferably the leader, of the nuts and bolts of any democracy, the loyal opposition.

Kennedy and Nixon met for over one hour and the Republican took advantage of the meeting to speak his mind again on the

China issue. Writing in Six Crises, Nixon recalled that he was under the impression that Chester Bowles and other Kennedy foreign policy advisors were trying to get the President-elect to reevaluate the American position vis-a-vis the recognition of Red China and that country's admission to the United Nations. Kennedy assured Nixon that he was against U.S. recognition of Red China. But Kennedy then went on to tell Nixon that "strong arguments had been presented to him in favor of the so-called 'two-Chinas policy.'" The idea behind this was that Nationalist China would remain on the Security Council while Peking would acquire one seat in the General Assembly. What this boiled down to in parliamentary terms was that Communist China would only vote in the General Assembly and would lack the veto power that accompanies being on the Security Council. Kennedy then explained to Nixon that the backers of this approach contended that "Red China could not do any damage in the U.N. under such circumstances."⁹³

But at this juncture, Nixon was not willing to yield on Communist China, despite, as pointed out above, his having shown a certain degree of flexibility and open-mindedness on the issue throughout the 1950s. "In expressing my strong opposition to this policy [the two-Chinas]," Nixon wrote, "I pointed out that the issue wasn't whether Red China had one vote in the Assembly, or even the veto power. What was really at stake was that admitting Red China to the United Nations would be a mockery of the provision of of the Charter which limits its membership to 'peace-loving nations.' And what was

most disturbing," Nixon continued, "was that it would give respectability to the Communist regime which would immensely increase its power and prestige in Asia, and probably irreparably weaken the non-Communist governments in that area."⁹⁴

Yet, even here Nixon only went so far in his rhetoric. He was realistic enough not to call for the ouster of the Maoist regime in Peking. Writing this book in 1962, he omits the phraseology he usually applied to the China issue: namely, that China needed to act in accordance with international law and the United Nations charter if it were to be readmitted into the so-called "family of nations." Nor did Nixon go into his strong belief that the "friendship" of the Chinese and American "peoples" would one day help overcome the differences between their governments. But then again, the president-elect had only so much time to listen and Nixon's editor at Doubleday probably only provided him with just so much space to cover this post-election conference with Kennedy.

Looking Ahead on China

Despite the nuances of political rhetoric and instances of playing to the galleries of certain constituencies (particularly the Asia Firsters, Old Guard and China Lobby), Nixon had actually been quite consistent in his position on Communist China from the time of the Chinese Revolution through the election of 1960. He opposed recognition of

Peking and that regime's admission into the United Nations. But that opposition was not lacking in a sense of realpolitik nor was it without conditions that Nixon had clearly spelled out from the time of the Korean War. As Nixon retired to private life and began the great comeback from political oblivion to a triumphant run for the White House in 1968, China would take on renewed importance, especially in light of the Vietnam War. By 1967, in a famous article in the prestigious publication, Foreign Affairs, Nixon would call for China to be brought back into the "family of nations," more than a slight hint at beginning a process that would lead to the normalization of U.S. relations with Peking. Yet, this was not inconsistent with his previous stance nor was it the "Great Turnaround" it is often portrayed to be. For the world, especially the Communist world, had changed much more than Nixon. By the election of 1968 and in his first term as president, he was in a position to take advantage of those changes for the United States, and once again, China would be the cornerstone of his Asia policy.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER 5: DICK AND JACK

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- 9) New York Times, 16 May 1960, p. 20; 17 May 1960, p. 25; U.S. News and World Report, 30 May 1960, p. 119.
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- 21) Ibid.
- 22) Robert Pell, "The Foreign Policies of Richard Milhous Nixon," America, 8 October 1960, p. 40. See Gordon H. Chang, Friends and Enemies: The United States, China and the Soviet Union, 1948-1972 (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990), Ch. 5, "China the Main Enemy?," pp. 143-174.
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- 24) Ibid.
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- 26) Richard M. Nixon, Six Crises (New York: Pocket Books, 1962), pp. 315-461, "The Campaign of 1960."
- 27) Ibid.
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- 30) Ibid.
- 31) Ibid.
- 32) Ibid., p. 11.
- 33) Ibid.
- 34) Ibid., p. 10.
- 35) The New Republic, 17 October 1960, p. 4.
- 36) Nixon Pre-Presidential Papers, NARA-LA, Appearances File, Series 207, Box 145, Folder 7, Memorandum from Charlie McWhorter to Nixon concerning political arguments on Quemoy-Matsu issue, 12 October 1960.
- 37) Ibid.
- 38) Ibid.
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41) Nixon Pre-Presidential Papers, NARA-LA, Appearances File, Series 207, Box 147, Folder 17, Transcript of Nixon remarks at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, California, 13 October 1960.

42) Ibid.

43) Ibid.

44) Ibid.

45) Ibid.

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47) Christian A. Herter Papers, Box 13, Phone Calls, Folder 2 (11 September 1960 to 20 January 1961), Telephone Call, 13 October 1960 between Herter and Nixon campaign aide Fred Seaton. DDEL.

48) Ibid.

49) Ibid.

50) New York Times, 14 October 1960, p. 1.

51) Ibid.

52) Ibid., p. 21.

53) Ibid, p. 20.

54) Ibid.

55) Ibid.

56) Ibid.

57) Ibid.

58) Ibid.

59) Ibid.

60) See Chapter 4, "Islands in the Strait" for a full discussion of the role of those National Security Council meetings in those earlier tensions over the Nationalist-held islands. Also, neo-revisionists like Gordon Chang and H.W. Brands, Jr. have tried to portray Eisenhower as trigger-happy and ready, willing and eager to employ nuclear weapons against the Communist Chinese but numerous other historians see Eisenhower's tenure as commander-in-chief as cautious, stabilizing and ultimately effective in, as Ike, himself, termed it in his memoirs, "Waging Peace.")

- 61) New York Times, 14 October 1960, p. 20.
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- 65) Ibid., p. 21.
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- 83) Ibid., p. 8.
- 84) The New Republic, 24 October 1960, p. 3.
- 85) Ibid.
- 86) Richard M. Nixon, RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978), p. 221.

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- 89) Nixon, RN, pp. 221-223.
- 90) New York Times, 6 November 1960, p. 64.
- 91) Theodore H. White, The Making of the President 1960 (New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1961) and Tom Wicker, One of Us: Richard Nixon and the American Dream (New York: Random House, 1991), pp. 248-264.
- 92) Nixon, Six Crises, pp. 442-443.
- 93) Nixon, Six Crises, pp. 441-442.
- 94) Ibid. Also see New York Times, 15 November 1960, p. 1 and p. 28 for transcript of Nixon remarks following his meeting with Kennedy. Nixon made no public mention of his advice to Kennedy concerning U.S. policy towards Communist China.

EPILOGUE: REOPENING THE DOOR

What had changed most in the world from the vantage point of the 1960s was the Sino-Soviet split which abolished the preconceived notion on the American political right that communism was monolithic. Nixon eventually came to see this as an opportunity in geopolitical terms for the United States to reach out to China, not out of idealism or a sense of romance, but pure national interest on our part as much on the Chinese. Nixon's rationale was based as much on establishing a relationship before Communist China became a major nuclear superpower. And this beau geste of the opening to China was to have the beneficial effect from the United States point of view of inducing the Russians to strike a modus vivendi with America through the beginnings of Detente and the first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty. At the time, Nixon played down the so-called "China card" but he knew whether it was played up or not, the old men in the Kremlin would be quaking in their boots at the prospect of a Sino-American rapprochement. Detente between the Soviets and the U.S. was later to crumble during the Carter administration but not even Richard Nixon's most acerbic critics can blame him for the deterioration in U.S.-U.S.S.R. relations under the former governor of Georgia.

Although throughout the 1950s, Nixon had been Communist China's most vitriolic critic, this dissertation has shown that his rhetoric was often laced with conciliatory language and that he never quite shut the door and locked it on the

prospect of future relations. His language was such as to more than mollify the Republican right wing, yet he held open the possibility, often through what he did not say as much as indirect language that his critics never quite caught on to, of future relations with Peking should the Communist regime behave in a manner befitting a great nation and within the boundaries of international law. Yes, there was a bit of condescension in that argument (Be good, and we will accord you the proper respect and recognition) but Nixon never closed the door on the future, nor did he make the unrealistic demand that Mao and his followers be removed from power in Peking. Nixon was, if anything, always the realist yet with a politician's eye on his domestic constituency. Statesmanship is all fine and well but it is impossible to be a statesman in our political culture unless one is first elected, and has a constituency that is willing to stand by the politician-statesman in the midst of good times or a crisis.

Yet, the obvious must be emphasized. Although this study has concentrated on the years when Nixon held the nation's second highest office, the vice president did not make American policy towards China during the Eisenhower administration. Under the American system, no vice president can determine the foreign or domestic stance of any administration. There is little doubt that Nixon would have liked to have made those decisions and, it has been said that members of the Eisenhower administration thought the young man overstepped his bounds on some occasions. Even Nixon's

mentor, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, was sometimes put off by Nixon's eagerness to speak out in areas that did not readily fall under his limited portfolio as vice president. Despite Nixon's great ambitions, his role in the administration foreign policy should not and cannot be overplayed. Nixon often spoke his mind, frequently to the displeasure of Eisenhower, but he did not have any appreciable influence on foreign policy. The 1950s were, as stated previously, a time of "education" and a "gestation" period for Nixon's own thinking regarding China and the rest of Asia.

After Nixon was politically and personally humiliated in 1962 by losing the governorship of California in a landslide to Democrat Pat Brown, the former vice president moved to New York where he became a partner in a prestigious Wall Street law firm. The job gave him ample opportunity to travel and to think through his worldview, campaign for Republican candidates and eventually mount his own successful drive for the presidency in 1968.

Looking back on his China initiative, Nixon told historian and Nixon biographer Herbert S. Parmet in 1984 that he had been influenced in part by a trip he took to Europe in 1965. During this journey, he met separately with French President Charles de Gaulle and West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. Both leaders urged that the United States recognize Communist China and de Gaulle said France had recognized China (in 1962) because it "is so big, so old and very much abused, including by Western colonial power."¹

Nixon then pointed out that although there was historic American sympathy for China, the United States had taken the part of the Nationalists because the government considered Peking part of the Soviet bloc. The Chinese intervention in Korea further exacerbated the American attitude toward Peking, he said. Nixon recalled that on his first trip to non-Communist Asia in 1953, he found a "residual hatred of the Japanese but no longer any fear" of them. That old fear, Nixon observed, was replaced by trepidation over "Red Chinese expansionism" and of Peking "supporting 'wars of liberation' in Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines."²

Recalling the prevalent attitude in the Eisenhower years, Nixon mentioned that there was an assumption of a monolithic Soviet bloc. "We were convinced," he told Parmet, "that the Chinese and Soviets were working together and that the Soviets were the senior power. Then came 1961 and the appearance of articles indicating that a split was occurring." Interestingly enough, Nixon claimed that his European travels in 1965 and conversations with Pakistani leader Ayub Khan and Philippine politician Carlos Romulo showed him that the Chinese were "turning around" and that "a different relationship should be sought."³

Nixon sounded the trumpet for a new approach in the October 1967 Foreign Affairs article. Nixon commented that political fear prevented both Kennedy and Johnson from trying anything different in U.S. relations with Peking. Nixon recognized that hostility toward China "was also built on the

fact that they were major suppliers of North Vietnam" and that Peking's brand of "communism was also a lot more pure than the Soviet version," which translated means far more wedded to revolutionary ideology. But Nixon made clear to Parmet that "the war in Vietnam was not the only reason I undertook the rapprochement with China." Nixon also went out of his way with Parmet to downplay the influence of the China Lobby and he dismissed the notion that the U.S. had a "head in the sand" recalcitrant policy toward Communist China that "was due to the China Lobby." Nearly ten years after the fall of Saigon, Nixon called Ho a "nationalist" (something he would not have dared do in the 1950s when "monolithic communism" was part of his political vocabulary) but he added that Ho would "accept support from whomever he could get," despite centuries of enmity between the Vietnamese and the Chinese. The most striking statement Nixon made in this interview was that "Had there been no Vietnam war, we would have had to seek new relations with China. We had to move in that direction. Nobody in a responsible position could fail to see such a new relationship."⁴

Even before Nixon was in a "responsible position," when he wandered across the vast wilderness outside of public office, he began to sense the need to make an overture toward Peking. Although an ardent "hawk" on the Vietnam war who criticized President Lyndon Johnson for not wholeheartedly pursuing a complete victory, Nixon privately advised Johnson in March 1966 at the White House to make some kind of diplomatic

communication, albeit unspecified, toward Peking. Nixon relates an incredible scene of an informal meeting between the two political rivals. While LBJ lay snugly under the covers of the presidential bed, with Lady Bird by his side, Nixon told the reclining First Couple that "...time is on their [Communist China's] side. Now is the time to confront them on the diplomatic front."⁵ Whether this is the pure truth or just self-serving memory on Nixon's part, it would remain up to the Republican once he was in the nation's driver's seat to make the overture to Peking.

In his memoirs, Nixon also recalled a trip he made to Asia in 1967 as part of his warm up for the 1968 presidential campaign (although he had stated that he was taking a six-month "holiday" from politics during the first half of 1967--a wise choice for him, because it took the heat and glare of publicity off him while he further formulated the positions he would take in the upcoming election.). Nixon visited his old friend Chiang Kai-Shek in Taiwan and noted that the old man still harbored visions of returning to the mainland and the Nationalist Chinese leader again asked for American support for that operation. Chiang argued that such an invasion, assuming its success, would end the Communist Chinese nuclear threat as well as Peking's support for the Vietnamese communists. Nixon charitably wrote that he "wondered whether he [Chiang] might be right" although it is incredible to think for a moment that Nixon really thought Chiang's idea for a return to the mainland held any place in

the world of reality. Nixon added that his "pragmatic analysis told me that he [Chiang] was wrong" although Chiang's "burning desire to return to the mainland was understandable and admirable. But," he added, "it was totally unrealistic in view of the massive power the Communists had developed."⁶ Chiang's political capital was definitely evaporating. Nixon had previously been dispatched by Eisenhower as long ago as 1953 to tell Chiang that it was "no go" as far as American military support for a Nationalist "liberation" of the mainland. But for some, dreams die hard.

Perhaps even more importantly on this trip, Nixon observed that although the Asian leaders he spoke to strongly backed the American position in Vietnam (often their firmest support would be expressed privately to the former vice president), there was a new position emerging concerning how Washington should regard Peking. "Some who had adamantly opposed any change of American policy toward China," he observed, "had come around to the view that some new and direct relationship between the two nations was essential if there was to be any chance at all after the Vietnam war was over to build a lasting peace in Asia in which free nations would have a chance to survive."⁷

Nixon's major statement on China during this period took the form of the article in the October 1967 issue of Foreign Affairs. The piece hardly marked a retreat for Nixon as he opened it by defining the United States's military commitment in Asia and suggested that there was still credibility to the

"domino theory."⁸ He called, as he had so often in the previous twenty years, for the United States to have an Asian policy on a par with the nation's European policy. Nixon called the United States a Pacific power,⁹ echoing that secretary of state of yore, William Seward's remark that the Pacific was an "American lake." Nixon cited Communist China as posing a new danger to Asia in place of the old European colonialism. This, too, was not a new mode of thinking as he had frequently expressed the idea in the 1950s that Communism was the "new imperialism" in Asia.

The key passages called on the United States to deal with the "reality of China." "Any American policy toward Asia must come urgently to grips with the reality of China," Nixon wrote. But Nixon quickly offered a qualification. "This does not mean," he continued, "as many would simplistically have it, rushing to grant recognition to Peking, to admit it to the United Nations and to ply it with offers of trade--all of which would serve to confirm its rulers in their present course."¹⁰

It was because China posed a danger that it had to be reckoned with. "Taking the long view," the former vice president added, "we simply cannot afford to leave China forever outside the family of nations, there to nurture its fantasies, cherish its hates and threaten its neighbors." The important thing was to somehow influence the Chinese to change. Was Nixon taking on the garb of a 19th Century Protestant missionary? Hardly. Any change by the Chinese

would be meant not only to satisfy American interests in the region and internationally but to be held forth as constructive for the Chinese, themselves, in attempting to solve their massive internal problems. "The world cannot be safe until China changes," Nixon said in the article. "Thus our aim, to the extent that we can influence events, should be to induce change." Nixon proposed just the proper formula to do that: "The way to do this," he advised, "is to persuade China that it must change: that it cannot satisfy its imperial ambitions, and that its own national interest requires a turning away from foreign adventuring and a turning inward toward the solution of its own domestic problems."¹¹ This utterance again was really no different from what Nixon had repeatedly said in the political furor in the wake of the MacArthur dismissal in 1951: namely, that Communist China had to be a law-abiding member of the international community, follow the precepts of the U.N. charter and abandon its idea and zeal for international revolution. The Nixon in 1967 calling for a new relationship between Washington and Peking is much closer to the younger Nixon of the early 1950s than most historians have recognized or been willing to admit.

Nixon further stated that the impending emergence in the next three to five years of China as a full-fledged nuclear power coupled with the prospect of the Soviets reaching nuclear parity with America "could create a crisis of the first order." Nixon called for "the strengthening of non-Communist Asia [as] a priority comparable to that which we

gave to the strengthening of Western Europe after World War II." This also was an echo of Nixon's advocacy in the heat of the Korean War for an American Asian policy of equal importance to its European policy. Nixon was, in effect, still calling for a type of containment of China, even as he spoke out for renewed contact with Peking, although he preferred the term "containment without isolation." However, he warned that the United States could not "go it alone in containing China" and that the non-communist nations of Asia would have to begin to pick up much of the burden of their own defense. This was an early statement of what became known in 1969 during the Nixon presidency as the Nixon Doctrine. "The primary restraint on China's Asian ambition should be exercised by the Asian nations in the path of those ambitions, backed by the ultimate power of the United States," he argued. Nixon was also concerned that any "containment" of China with only the United States and European powers would arouse the "suspicion of racism."¹² Nixon, to his credit, was just as aware of the impact of racism, or perceived racism, internationally in 1967 as he had been in 1953 when he first traveled in Asia.

Nixon's hope was that if the Chinese faced firm opposition to their revolutionary designs abroad, Peking could "be persuaded to turn their energies inward rather than outward. And that," he significantly added, "will be the time when the dialogue with mainland China can begin." Nixon desired to pull China "back into the world community...as a great and

progressing nation, not as the epicenter of world revolution." In concluding, Nixon called for a "Pacific community" which he considered just as vital to the United States as the "Atlantic Community."¹³ Nixon was looking to the "Pacific Rim" as vital to the interests of the United States long before it was fashionable. What boggles the mind is how after the publication of this article, any American political observer could have been shocked, or the least bit surprised, by Nixon's opening to China as president. He had done much more than give the world a hint of what his actions as president might be.

It was also hardly a surprise when 1968 rolled around that Nixon became a candidate for the Republican nomination. What might have astounded many of his previous political obituary writers was that he was the front-runner to head the GOP ticket. In 1968, China was even less of a direct campaign issue than it had been in 1960 when Nixon and Kennedy used up so much wind to discuss the fate of those two offshore islands, the names of which were difficult for the American electorate to remember eight years later. Vietnam and domestic turmoil in the anti-war and civil rights movements were the major issues in what had to be Nixon's favorite year. But it is significant that as early as March, just before the New Hampshire primary, Nixon told that most famous of presidential election chroniclers, Theodore White, of his plans for contacting Peking. "...He said that if he were elected President," White later wrote, "the very first thing

he'd do would be to try to get in touch with Red China. There had to be an understanding with Red China. In ten or fifteen years it would be impossible to run the world if Red China weren't part of it."¹⁴ Nixon, no doubt, believed this as he was more or less invoking the line he had taken in Foreign Affairs, although upping the ante by saying directly that Washington should contact Peking. But an historian looking back on this cannot help but marvel at how well Nixon could play to any audience, even veteran political reporter Teddy White. After all, the young Teddy White had made his name as a China correspondent for Time magazine, owned and published by Chiang's most staunch proponent, Henry Luce. White had broken with Luce over the Chinese Civil War, and by 1968, even as White was well on his way to becoming a conservative, he must have been heartened to hear Richard Nixon talk of America extending its hand to China.

Nixon, of course, went on to win the presidency, albeit in a squeaker over Democrat Hubert Humphrey and third party segregationist George Wallace. Yet, Nixon's margin over Humphrey was half a million votes, rather than Kennedy's paltry plurality over him in 1960. Despite garnering only some 43 percent of the popular vote, Nixon did not feel like a minority president, for he reasoned that the 13 percent that had gone to Wallace would have more than likely fallen in his column if the Alabamian had not been in the race. Even more importantly, Nixon had won a solid, unquestionable victory in the Electoral College, and that is the only vote that truly

counts in American presidential elections.

Before assuming the nation's highest office, Nixon pondered what he viewed as the continuity of America's foreign policy from his early days in Congress to the transition period to his own administration in the White House. "As I looked at America's position in the world and examined our relations with other nations," he later wrote in his memoirs, "I could see that the central factor in 1968 on the eve of my presidency was the same as it had been in 1947 when I was the main defender of the free world against the encroachment and aggression of the Communist world."¹⁵

Barely a month after being inaugurated, Nixon was on the road in Europe. Although he had often expressed much concern about America treating its Asian and European policies on equal terms, he felt compelled to reassure the United States's NATO allies early in his administration that he was fully committed to the defense of Western Europe against any possible Soviet attack. Once again, he met with General de Gaulle. Nixon had especially appreciated the respect that the French president had displayed toward him when he visited France as a politician out of power. Nixon felt a special kinship with de Gaulle for both were all too familiar with the frustrations and agony of political exile. The president of the Fifth Republic again advised Nixon to recognize Communist China. Neither the champion of the French right or the American right of center had any illusions about the Chinese but Nixon realized the necessity of establishing some sort of

modus vivendi with China before the world's most populous nation became too powerful.¹⁶

Within days of the inauguration, even before the trip to Europe, Nixon had asked National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger to "give every encouragement to the attitude that the administration was exploring possibilities of rapprochement with the Chinese" although Nixon did not want this to be made public at the time. Nixon's first "great leap forward" toward Peking as president took the form of his February 1970 Foreign Policy Report to Congress. The president commented that "The Chinese are a great and vital people who should not remain isolated from the international community..." Then he suggested that Peking's diplomatic status vis-a-vis the United States should fall somewhere along the lines of America's relations with the Soviet Union. "The principles underlying our relations with Communist China are similar to those governing our policies toward the U.S.S.R.," the Nixon report said. "United States policy is not likely soon to have much impact on China's behavior, let alone its ideological outlook. But it certainly is in our interest, and in the interest of peace and stability in Asia and the world, that we take what steps we can toward improved practical relations with Peking."¹⁷ The Communist leadership saw this as a thaw in the ice and in the following two months, the State Department announced an easing of official restrictions against travel to China and a relaxation of trade regulations.

In the meantime, Nixon had established two "back channels"

for communication with the Communist Chinese leadership, one through the Romanians and the other, and more important of the two, through the Pakistani government. (How ironic that during the first term of the Nixon administration, it was acceptable to look upon Romania's tyrannical ruler Nicolae Ceausescu as some sort of liberal reformer simply because he tried to distance himself from Moscow.) The president simply did not feel at ease going through the standard route of the State Department bureaucracy, even though his old friend William Rogers was secretary of state. But Nixon even kept Rogers in the dark. Make no mistake about it: this diplomatic maneuver was going to be controlled by the Oval Office without any interference from what many of the Nixon people referred to as the "fudge factory" at Foggy Bottom. If anything, Nixon became irritated at his chief strategic partner, Kissinger, who the president rightly believed was all too eager to encourage his own aggrandizement, and for the press and public to think that he, the great Harvard professor, was the "brains" behind the China opening. But Nixon's brain had been absorbed in this tremendously significant issue for twenty years, and he was not going to let anyone else take the credit for what would be a magnificent diplomatic achievement.

A further hint at the American desire for normalization was dropped when Nixon made a reference at a state dinner in October 1970 to the People's Republic of China, the first time an American president had referred to the Peking government by that regime's own choice of name. This particular dinner was

held to honor Ceausescu, whose Romanian channel would soon come through with an encouraging response from Peking that the government there would be willing to accept an American envoy.¹⁸

On February 25, 1971, Nixon released his second Foreign Policy Report as president to Congress. In it, he opened the door a bit wider to Peking, albeit cautiously. Nixon again said that the United States was prepared to see the People's Republic of China play a role in the "family of nations." He alluded to a new moderation in the internal situation in China, the apparent cooling of the Cultural Revolution. "A calmer mood now seems to be developing," the president said. "There could be new opportunities for the People's Republic of China to explore the path of normalization of its relations with its neighbors and with the world, including our own country." Nixon added that Washington was prepared for "serious dialogue" with Peking. No one reading the following lines could mistake that Nixon was preparing a major overture to the Chinese. "In the coming year," he said, "I will carefully examine what further steps we might take to create broader opportunities for contacts between the Chinese and American peoples, and how we might remove needless obstacles to the realization of these opportunities. We hope for," he continued, "but will not be deterred by a lack of reciprocity." Nixon was telling the Communist Chinese leadership that he was, in effect, willing to turn the other cheek. But in conclusion, Nixon warned about being

"realistic" and noted that Peking portrayed the United States in the "devil's role."¹⁹ However, Nixon was not to be deterred and the ensuing diplomatic minuet between the two nations over the setting up of a summit was superbly orchestrated by the maestro in the Oval Office.

The Chinese, or one should more rightly say Chou En-lai apparently with the blessings of the aging Chairman Mao, finally extended an invitation for Nixon to visit Peking. Kissinger had traveled clandestinely to Peking to meet with Chou from July 9-11, 1971 (while the beguiled press was told that the national security advisor was suffering from a stomach virus) where the two had agreed on the Nixon visit. The president announced to a stunned nation in a three-minute telecast on July 15 that he would go to China before the middle of 1972. America and the world would have been far less stunned had they followed Nixon more closely on the subject of what form America's future relationship with China should take.

In October 1971, the People's Republic of China was finally admitted to the United Nations. What jolted the Nixon administration was that at the same time the U.N. accepted Peking, it expelled Taiwan from the international body. In view of the opening to China and the realization that the United States simply no longer could harbor the votes against Peking's admission to the United Nations, the Nixon administration had withdrawn its objection to Peking joining the organization. What is ironic is that the administration

then supported the idea of "two Chinas" in which both Chiang's Taiwan and Mao's Peking would each belong to the United Nations. This was exactly what Nixon had warned Kennedy against in their post-1960 election meeting. But the world had changed and Nixon was perceptive enough to change along with it. Writing about Peking's entry into the U.N., Nixon said "Personally, I have never believed in bowing to the inevitable just because it is inevitable. In this case, however," he continued, "I felt that the national security interests of the United States lay in developing our relations with the P.R.C."²⁰ National security was the consistent key for Nixon on the China question before and after the opening to the giant Communist nation. It was just that those very interests had changed as China was rapidly developing into a potential major nuclear power and the Sino-Soviet split had revealed divisions in the Communist world that could benefit the United States geopolitically.

The most startling newsreel footage from the Nixon years was shot on February 21, 1972, when Nixon arrived in Peking. The president descended the ladder of Air Force One (which had been renamed by Nixon "The Spirit of '76" in honor of the upcoming national bicentennial) and eagerly held out his hand toward Chou En-Lai. It was a deeply moving moment for Nixon was well aware of how then-secretary of state John Foster Dulles had spurned Chou's offer of a handshake at the ill-fated 1954 Geneva Conference. Nixon was going to be a little more gentlemanly than the Princeton educated Mr. Dulles

and Chou greatly appreciated it. "When our hands met," Nixon recalled, "one era ended and another began."²¹

Chou escorted Nixon to an historic hour-long meeting with Mao. Nixon portrays Mao as exhibiting great and rapid wit. Nixon wrote that he explained to the Chinese leader what in his view made it possible for the two countries to build the proverbial bridge to one another, despite their differences. "What brings us together," he wrote, "is a recognition of a new situation in the world and a recognition on our part that what is important is not a nation's internal political philosophy. What is important is its policy toward the rest of the world and us."²² (This was to become a consistent part of Nixon's thinking even into his so-called post-presidential years, for the thought expressed here foreshadows his position in the wake of the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989. He visited China late that year and although he deplored the violence of the government, he firmly believed, and let the Chinese understand that he thought that Tiananmen should not destroy what had been the burgeoning relationship between Peking and Washington.²³)

Nixon had no illusions about the major differences that remained between the two countries but he was confident that the relationship could blossom in spite of those differences. Taiwan remained a major source of contention between the two sides but the controversial, yet diplomatically adroit, "Shanghai Communique" succeeded in downplaying those opposing views by simply stating the separate Chinese and American

positions on the matter rather than trying to resolve the issue. Although both sides agreed that Taiwan was part of China, the U.S. maintained that it was an internal matter for the Chinese to settle themselves. The United States also promised to lessen the American military presence on the island nation as tensions eased in the area, an obvious allusion to Vietnam. America also insisted on a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan question. Nixon, was lambasted by the right-wing at home, who accused him of selling Taiwan and the Generalissimo down the river. But this was a risk that Nixon, the statesman-politician, was willing to take. The future did not lie with Taipei; rather, it resided in Peking. The president basically gave lip service to America's commitment to Taiwan, although it is not insignificant that 20 years later the Republic of China remains a sovereign country. But Nixon was willing to the heat of criticism from the right-wing at home (He must have thought, as he often did in his national political career, where else could it possibly turn in the election?). It was actually good politics because it made Nixon look all the more like the peacemaker, even though the Vietnam war was still being fought (though not at the pace and accompanying high casualties of the late Johnson years and early part of the Nixon administration.) The China opening by Richard Nixon may well be one of the best examples in American history of keen statesmanship translating into good politics while at the same time that "courageous" statesmanship was founded on the bedrock of politics, i.e.,

votes, the manna for anyone who aspires to gain or retain public office.

Marshall Green, assistant secretary of state for far eastern affairs, who accompanied Nixon on the China trip, later made some insightful observations about the rationale for Nixon reopening the door to China. Green, a career State Department official with a genuine grasp of domestic political considerations in American foreign affairs, was well aware of the risks to Nixon in such a move. "Certainly it was out of line with the thinking of many in the Republican party," Green later said of the Nixon diplomatic maneuver. "It also involved a lot of risks--risks that secret preparations might leak to the press, risks that the highly publicized summit meeting might fail, risks of bad reactions in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, or elsewhere. Moreover," Green continued, "he was undertaking this trip at a time when the war in Vietnam was raging and when the U.S. was suffering heavy casualties at the hands of an enemy supported by Peking." Furthermore, Green noted, Nixon's "approach to China could be seen as a bit premature. Why not wait," he asked, "until Mao passed from the scene--which seemed fairly imminent?,"²⁴ and one might add, more logical and politically expedient.

But Green had an apt explanation for the Nixon move. "The very fact," he said, "that the President took all these risks underlines the great importance he attached to a U.S.-China rapprochement...There was a need to move promptly at a time when the Chinese leaders were fearful of a Soviet attack and

when we could not allow the Soviet Union to take Sino-U.S. hostility for granted in its policy calculations."²⁵ Once again, diplomacy rested on national interest and realpolitik.

Green put an interesting spin on the China opening, seeing it as a plus for domestic political consumption. "The President also had sound internal political reasons for his China initiative which was widely popular in the U.S.," the former ambassador to Indonesia explained, "especially in academic, press and other circles critical of our role in the long, bloody, fruitless war in Vietnam." (Of course, prior to the China trip, the academy and the Fourth Estate had hardly been the president's backbone of support.) "For many months," Green concluded, "China took the headlines away from Vietnam. It cast U.S. foreign policy in a positive light during a critical year for the Nixon administration." That "critical year" was 1972, when President Nixon was up for re-election. As Green correctly observed, there was more to the re-election of a Republican president than ensuring the support of the far right, China Lobby faction of the GOP. Nixon knew that better than anyone and while he was naturally concerned with the national security interest, the political interests of Richard Nixon were never off his mind. Green also attributed Nixon's rapprochement with China to Nixon's grand desire to leave his mark on history, which has and always will be a motivator for presidential leadership.²⁶

In essence, in terms of domestic politics and the upcoming presidential election, Nixon was practicing what he had

preached as early as 1951 when looking ahead to the 1952 campaign, he told fellow Republicans that they simply could not win nationally with their own party base alone. Specifically, he urged them to reach out for the Independent and disaffected Democratic vote as the key to victory. Nixon did not say this so directly in 1972 (although he certainly pandered to the "hard hat" vote which had hitherto been solidly Democratic) but his China initiative underlined the theme and helped him to build the solid, and anything but silent, majority he reaped against George McGovern that November. With an historian's hindsight, one might even venture to say that prairie populist, neo-isolationist McGovern, himself, also did his share in helping Nixon gain his landslide victory that year.

The Nixon position on the China "reopening," sans sentimentality, was well recorded by the president's speechwriter Raymond Price when Nixon addressed the Cabinet upon his triumphant return to the White House from the Forbidden Kingdom. The Cabinet was one body of domestic political opinion that backed the president. After greeting the commander-in-chief with an enthusiastic round of applause, the first comment Nixon uttered was a caveat that all should beware of euphoria over the great events that took place on the president's dramatic, telegenic, historic and diplomatically and politically successful trip. The Cabinet, fully assembled, proceeded to be lectured by the hard-headed Nixon, grounded in Realpolitik.

"Some people have a naive assumption that all problems will evaporate when we get to know each other," he told the men who ran the various executive departments of the American government. "This is nonsense," he quickly added with more than a small dose of frankness. "But if we understand one another," the president continued, "we may find some common ground. If you don't talk, you don't find it." For further emphasis on the reality of the immediate future of Sino-American relations, he stated that "The idea that each is affected by knowing each other, by the nice gestures, is baloney. It helps. I don't believe in hot rhetoric when cool rhetoric will work," said the man who had made a rather successful political career, albeit with its ups and downs, on hot rhetoric. But the Nixon who reached out to China had definitely cooled off. "...Let's be under no illusions that we will have instant peace," he warned the Cabinet.²⁷

Nixon told the point men in his administration that it would have been a mistake to "gloss over our differences" with the Chinese. He would have considered that a weakness and pointed out that Chou was a dedicated Communist who spoke firmly for what he believed while in their discussions, Nixon just as strongly advocated the American philosophy. But, Nixon observed, the two leaders never let the "firmness" degenerate into "belligerence."²⁸

Nixon then made some revealing comments about how he interpreted the Shanghai Communiqué. The most significant things, he said, "were not the specifics about Taiwan,

Vietnam, and so forth, though these were what the unsophisticated reports in the press emphasized," Nixon snidely commented about his good friends in the media. More important, the president reported, were "those that concerned the profound new relationship. We both agreed we will not resort to the threat of force or the use of force in international relations and with each other. We agreed that no nation should dominate Asia," which was certainly a not so veiled Sino-American diplomatic warning signal to the Kremlin. Nixon concluded that although there will still be differences, "the question is whether we're going to live with them or die for them."²⁹

Nixon also reminded the members of the Cabinet of the importance of treating the Chinese with dignity.³⁰ They had been slighted for centuries by the Western powers, including the United States. With this line, Nixon was again echoing what he had so eloquently said upon returning from Asia in 1953: the need to treat all Asians as equals to Westerners and not just people who would be satisfied with a "bowl of rice."

The president was just as aware in 1972 as he had been during the 1950s of the importance of power in impressing and deterring the Communists, whether they be in Peking or the Kremlin. "The real question," Nixon told the cabinet, "will be whether in their [the Chinese Communist leadership] minds, in their relationship with the United States, they are dealing with a nation led by people who have the strength, the character, to be a responsible world power." Nixon then made

an extremely shrewd analysis of Chinese ambiguity toward the American military presence in Vietnam. Speaking of Peking's reverence for power, even in its adversary's camp, Nixon said "That's why, despite the fact that they say [to the United States] get out of the Pacific, get out of Vietnam--and they must continue to say it--[the Chinese it seems, had domestic political considerations of their own...] for the United States to fail to meet its responsibilities in the world, even though it would fit with their ideology, would lead inevitably to their figuring that we did not have that strength and that belief [in the American philosophy]."31

When one member of the Cabinet asked the president why the Chinese had decided to meet with him, Nixon quickly and accurately replied "Cold-blooded interest. Not friendship." Nixon discounted that the Chinese chiefly desired trade and aid. Their concerns were far more geopolitical in nature. "They see the Soviet Union, India, Japan," he pointed out, "all of them, each in its own way, encircling them--so they need somebody who is not antagonistic. They know the Soviets have more men on the Chinese frontier than against Western Europe," Nixon added. "With India, they've had a little squabble," he said, referring to the brief 1962 war between India and China. "As for the United States," the president observed, "first, we're a long way off; and second, while they would never state publicly that India, Russia, and Japan have designs on them, they know very well, I think, that we don't."32

The Nixon reopening had in fact, not only alienated the Taiwan regime but had come as a shock to Tokyo. Nixon could not have been surprised by that but simply speaking, he placed a new relationship with China ahead of relations with other Asian countries. Just as with conservatives at home, he realized that Taiwan would still have to turn to the U.S. for trade as would Tokyo, but even in 1972 one might not have so readily seen the economic colossus that Japan would soon become. But geopolitical considerations can often transcend matters of economics and trade.

Raymond Price correctly saw the continuity between the Nixon before and after the opening to China and the establishment of detente with the Soviets. The linkage lay in containment although Price observed that the old policy was being acted out against a backdrop of a new geopolitical world. "The Nixon detente was not a substitute for containment," the speech writer noted. Rather, "It was a means of containment--a means created for the new strategic environment, in which the United States could no longer rely on the massive nuclear superiority it enjoyed a decade earlier."³³

"In this new environment," the longtime Nixon aide pointed out, "policies had necessarily to be more subtle and more complex. Unable to dictate to our adversaries, the United States had to weave a fabric of interdependencies that would supplement traditional deterrence with positive incentives to keep the peace rather than to break the peace."³⁴ Price had

struck right at the heart of the matter. Nixon was no less staunchly anti-Communist than before but he had been awakened to the potential changes in the nuclear "balance of terror." Specifically, he knew that without the resounding edge of American nuclear superiority over the Russians, and with the Chinese rapidly advancing in their own nuclear capabilities, the old Cold War style of containment with confrontation and isolation had to yield to a modus vivendi of negotiation and stability based on a new, intricate and terribly delicate tripartite balance between the United States, the Soviets and the Chinese. Nixon was still battling communism, serving as advocate for the American political and economic ethos, but he had to resort to new tactics for a new age. The president's urgent and persistent call for a "generation of peace" was not mere campaign rhetoric. It was a genuine vision of the future built on realpolitik, not as Nixon would say, based on "woolly-headed idealism." Nixon may have had vision, yet he was no mere dreamer and he undoubtedly prided himself on having a worldview firmly embedded in reality rather than resting upon hopes of a nonexistent angelic human nature.

Nixon, himself, fell far short of the sphere of angels. His ultimate political demise was brought on by "Watergate," now another indelible chapter in American political folklore. In August, 1974, after nearly two years of being mired in one of what many consider the most ignominious political scandal in the nation's history, Nixon became the first American president to resign from office. He left the stage in dire

and humiliating disgrace, although once again, he refused to bow out of his much beloved public "arena." He has relentlessly gone on for nearly twenty years crafting his side of the events he participated in as well as his discussing his position on current international affairs through his vast (and often repetitive) writing and public speaking.

Nixon's fall was far more pathetic than tragic. William Safire has likened Nixon to a multi-layered cake. Unfortunately for Nixon, and the nation, the man who had struggled against the odds to make one of the most remarkable comebacks in American political history, fell victim to the darker side of his nature. There certainly was Nixon the statesman who could thrash out the most intricate diplomatic details with Chou En-lai. But there was also the insecure Nixon, who remembered every slight, real or imagined, from every political enemy, real or imagined, and who all too eagerly relished the opportunity for revenge, no matter the ethics or legality of the war he waged against his opponents.

Would the course of American diplomacy have been different had Nixon "lived" politically? This gets us into the great abyss of "ifs," a potentially treacherous trap for any historian. One might theorize that Detente with the Russians would have survived longer had Nixon not fallen in disgrace, leading in no small way to the election of Jimmy Carter, far less schooled in the way of the world than the man from Whittier. But Nixon's opening to China well survived his own political death and ironically, it was the Georgian who

formally established relations with Peking in 1979. However, Nixon must get the credit for the "great leap forward."

Although Tom Wicker spent a great deal of space in his recent biography of the ex-president trying to deflate the notion of Nixon's expertise in foreign affairs while praising his administration's domestic achievements, Nixon certainly will be remembered for some of his foreign policy accomplishments. Wicker's twist to the variation on the theme of Nixon still cannot erase Nixon's record of achievement in the foreign policy arena.³⁵ And it goes without saying that the most notable, the most historic, was "reopening the door" to China.

But just as historians are never finished analyzing and theorizing about the past, it seems that Richard Nixon, as long as he is able to draw a breath, will never be finished trying to secure his own place in history. The master of the political comeback has managed through a patient, deliberate process to come back yet again into grace for one more encore as an "elder statesman." Even many who all those years ago despised Richard Nixon are eager to hear his opinions on international developments, particularly those concerning China, the great land mass that was once known as the Soviet Union (now the Commonwealth of Independent States) and the fall of communism in Eastern Europe.

In 1976, Nixon was on the road again to Peking where he met for a second time with an ailing and failing Mao Tse-Tung. Mao commiserated with Nixon over Watergate and could not

comprehend what the big hubbub was all about. But then again, whenever Mao had faced internal opposition, he did not have to worry about a Congress and possible impeachment. He simply and quite literally destroyed his opposition.

Throughout what has now come to be termed his post-presidential years, Nixon has again been remarkably consistent on Sino-U.S. relations. It is, in a sense, after all, his baby, and his place in history is inextricably locked up in how effective and productive those relations are. Is it any wonder then, as was pointed out earlier, that Nixon insisted that the United States maintain contact with the Chinese Communist leadership in the aftermath of the tragedy at Tiananmen Square in 1989? Just as in the noted Foreign Affairs article of 1967 when Nixon argued for influencing China to reform, he not surprisingly pleaded his post-Tiananmen case based on the impossibility of exercising any such influence if the United States cut its contacts with Peking. This is not to suggest that Nixon meekly accepted the Communists's brutal atrocities against the Chinese students. In fact, he vociferously protested to the Chinese leadership during his October 1989 visit to Peking. But Nixon, the realist, knew it would be a mistake to isolate China completely and that such an approach would only serve to undermine the economic reforms that Deng Xiaoping had put into play, even though an ample number of hard-liners remained who would have preferred a return to pure Maoism.³⁶

However, there is an irony to the post-presidential

Nixon. As ardently as he had insisted on isolating Communist China in the 1950s, he was just as insistent a proponent in the late 1980s and early 1990s for America not to isolate China, although he advocated that we make clear our disgust and displeasure with its behaviour. But Nixon, the pragmatist, saw no purpose in the United States breaking off its relations with the world's most populous nation as the 1990s began.

Was this a more mellow, kinder and gentler Richard Nixon? No, for that would be an oversimplification, just as historians and journalists who have labeled Nixon's China opening a "great turnaround" have missed the nuances and consistencies of his approach to the issue. Part of Nixon's diplomatic maneuver toward China can be attributed to his "foreign affairs" education which went back to his service on the Herter Committee in Europe and his 1953 Grand Tour of Asia as vice president. That education, both in and out of office, led Nixon to accurately surmise in the mid- to late-1960s that the world, in geopolitical and strategic terms, had indeed changed and this required the United States to reach out to China. Lurking in the background of Nixon the statesman was Nixon the politician, ever mindful of the need to maintain domestic political support. In his reopening of the China door, he managed to perform brilliantly and achieve both ends, something that occurs all too infrequently in American politics. The Watergate scandal will always hover over Nixon. Yet, tarnished as he is by his downfall, his China

initiative remains one of the great accomplishments of post-World War II American diplomacy. As he will be remembered for Watergate, he will also be remembered for what he ultimately did in leading the way to a new era in the history of relations between China and the United States.

ENDNOTES

EPILOGUE--REOPENING THE DOOR

- 1) Interview with Richard Nixon by Herbert S. Parmet, New York City, 5 June 1984, pp. 21-22 of transcript.
- 2) Ibid., p. 22
- 3) Ibid., p. 23.
- 4) Ibid., p. 24.
- 5) Richard Nixon, RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978), pp. 272-273.
- 6) Ibid., p. 282.
- 7) Ibid., p. 283.
- 8) Richard M. Nixon, "Asia After Vietnam," Foreign Affairs 46 (October 1967): 111.
- 9) Ibid., p. 112.
- 10) Ibid., p. 121.
- 11) Ibid.
- 12) Ibid., pp. 122-123.
- 13) Ibid., pp. 124-125.
- 14) Theodore H. White, The Making of the President 1968 (New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1969), p. 148.
- 15) Nixon, RN, p. 343.
- 16) Ibid., pp. 373-374.
- 17) Ibid., p. 545.
- 18) Ibid., pp. 546-547.
- 19) Richard Nixon, United States Foreign Policy for the 1970s: Building for Peace. A Report by President Richard Nixon to the Congress. 25 February 1971 (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 86-87.
- 20) Nixon, RN, p. 556.
- 21) Ibid., p. 559.
- 22) Ibid., p. 562.

23) Richard Nixon, In the Arena: A Memoir of Victory, Defeat and Renewal (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), pp. 60-66.

24) Marshall Green, "Evolution of U.S-China Policy 1956-1973: Memoirs of an Insider," p. 48. Association for Diplomatic Studies, Foreign Affairs Oral History Program, Lauinger Library, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. Undated.

25) Ibid.

26) Ibid.

27) Raymond Price, With Nixon, (New York: The Viking Press, 1977), pp. 4-5.

28) Ibid., p. 6.

29) Ibid.

30) Ibid., p. 7.

31) Ibid., p. 9.

32) Ibid., pp. 9-10.

33) Ibid., p. 374.

34) Ibid.

35) Tom Wicker, One of Us: Richard Nixon and His America (New York: Random House, 1991).

36) Nixon, In the Arena, pp. 60-66.

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