

Richard Nixon's Long March

EN ROUTE. Everywhere we turn, we come upon the logo of this voyage. "The Visit of President Richard M. Nixon to the People's Republic of China." It is thus emblazoned on our baggage tags, stationery, rucksacks. At first it puts you off. But if you sit down and doodle, asking yourself: what is a self-effacing way to say it, answers leap not instantly to mind. It is, after all, a visit. The U.S. principal is, after all, the President of the United States. And there is no getting around it that his name is Richard M. Nixon, or that his destination is—CAUTION. It may appear stilted that every time one alludes to the area in question, one speaks of it as the "People's Republic of China." Actually, it is not only proper but reassuring that we continue to do so. You see, we recognize a government which is called "The Republic of China," and that government sits in Taiwan. Strictly speaking it is bad form to visit a territory of a government you recognize, which territory is in mutinous contention with the recognized government. Thus one would not, a few years ago, have dispatched the Queen of England to Biafra. And if one had done so, one would have avoided designating it as a visit to Nigeria. Accordingly, the constant references to PRC were, one supposed, diplomatic appeasers, for the benefit of Chiang Kai-shek. About the last he would get.

Even so there is the narcissistic overtone, which mocks republican tradition, reminding us of the distance we have traveled since Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine, the exemplar and the ideologue of republican anti-pomp. There is Bonapartism in the air in these parts—Lyndon Johnson would not have ventured to a Bar-B-Q without the Presidential seal engraved on his blue jeans, and there is the beginning, in Nixon's court, of Transylvanian chrome. After all, it would have sufficed, for purposes of communication, to refer to the "Presidential Visit to

the People's Republic of China," leaving it to our grandchildren to reach for the almanac to remind themselves who was President of the United States at the Peking Summit, and to their grandfathers to hope that the almanac in question will be written in English, rather than Chinese.

The omens were not good. For instance, we were required to land at Shanghai before going on to Peking. Why? Shanghai is four hours from Guam, less than two hours from Peking. The ostensible reason for landing there was to pick up a Chinese "navigator." Nobody on the U.S. team thought to object that our regular navigators could home in on Peking all by themselves, and if absolutely necessary, could have got a little help from the Strategic Air Command. No, the gentlemen Chinese had something symbolic in mind, which they did not, typically, divulge. The history-minded recalled that the emperors of yore required that visiting nabobs pause well outside the confines of the capital to sue for permission to go further.

AND THEN, it was somewhere along the line suggested that the Presidential party plop down in a Boeing 747, which would have made unnecessary, for instance, the use of two 707s for the press. A frozen no. As it is, we were permitted only to put down in the sleek American jet, after which we were made to travel (to Hangchow and Shanghai) in one of theirs (made in Russia). Another bad omen: we were allowed to carry off the aircraft only a single suitcase. Why? You figure it out. I can understand being told to bring only a single suitcase to the Normandy landing. Hardly to the capital of a nation of 800 million people, a very small percentage of whom would be distracted by the necessity of carrying a few dozen extra bags. Hardly the way

to get off to a good start with Walter Cronkite, I mused.

Aboard the plane, on the endless trip, we read, mostly. Theodore White, the gifted old China hand, renowned now for his series on the making of American Presidents, was ecstatic at the prospect of revisiting old haunts, and of justifying his early optimism about the vector of Chinese Communism. We tease each other. He looks up from his pile of clips from time to time, offering me anti-Red Chinese tidbits in return for anything favorable I can supply him from my own pile. At one point he beamed. "I have a clip here that says the Red Chinese have killed 34 million people since they took over. What will you offer me for that?" I rummage about and offer him the clip that says the Red Chinese have reduced illiteracy from 80 per cent to 20 per cent, but he scoffs, like a pawnshop broker. "Hell, I have that one." I scrounge some more for pro-Chinese Communist data and finally tell him, disconsolate, that I can't find one more item to barter for his; and he smiles contentedly at his tactical victory. But has he lost the war?

Peking. The press speculated feverishly over the astonishingly spare reception given to President Nixon at the airport. He himself had only a few minutes' notice that he would come out of Air Force One onto an all but desolate scene. He went through the gaunt ritual with the kind of smile you wear when you congratulate the man who beat you in the election. They stood there at attention during the playing of the two national anthems, Mr. and Mrs. Nixon, Chou En-lai, Rogers, Kissinger, the lot of them, like wax figures in Mme. Tussaud's museum, and one felt the jolt of surprise that, the music over, they should have come to life, to march on bravely, in the silence—no music, no applause, no bustle, no crowd-roar—to review the honor guard, dutifully there to do its listless bit. The motor-

cade swung on determinedly, fifty minutes into the heart of Peking. The only crowds were towards the end of the journey, in the thick of the central city. And they weren't Chinese ogling to see the President of the United States, but Chinese en route, at lunch time, from one side of the avenue to the other, stopped by police until the procession went by. That would appear to have been the single concession of the governors of the People's Republic of China: they did not make President Nixon stop for the red lights.

WE JOKED about it, at the press table. One correspondent, reflecting on the tumultuous public reception recently given to Haile Selassie, reminded us that, after all, the Ethiopian government is older than the American Government—*absit invidia*. A second wondered whether the Western press hadn't underestimated the success of the Cultural Revolution. "Maybe the Chinese we saw are all there are left?" But through it, Chou's shaft had penetrated. There was Wounded Pride in the air. Everyone knows that in a totalitarian country the size of the crowd tends to be a decision of the masters. But Nixon had seen crowds reach up, piercing the screen of official impassivity, to touch his hand. It was so in Poland in 1959, when he was Vice President and hundreds of thousands of Poles, defying the official chill, cheered and cheered and cheered. Nothing like that would happen to Nixon, not even after the bene-

diction later in the afternoon from Mao Tse-tung. He never, anywhere, caused a public ripple.

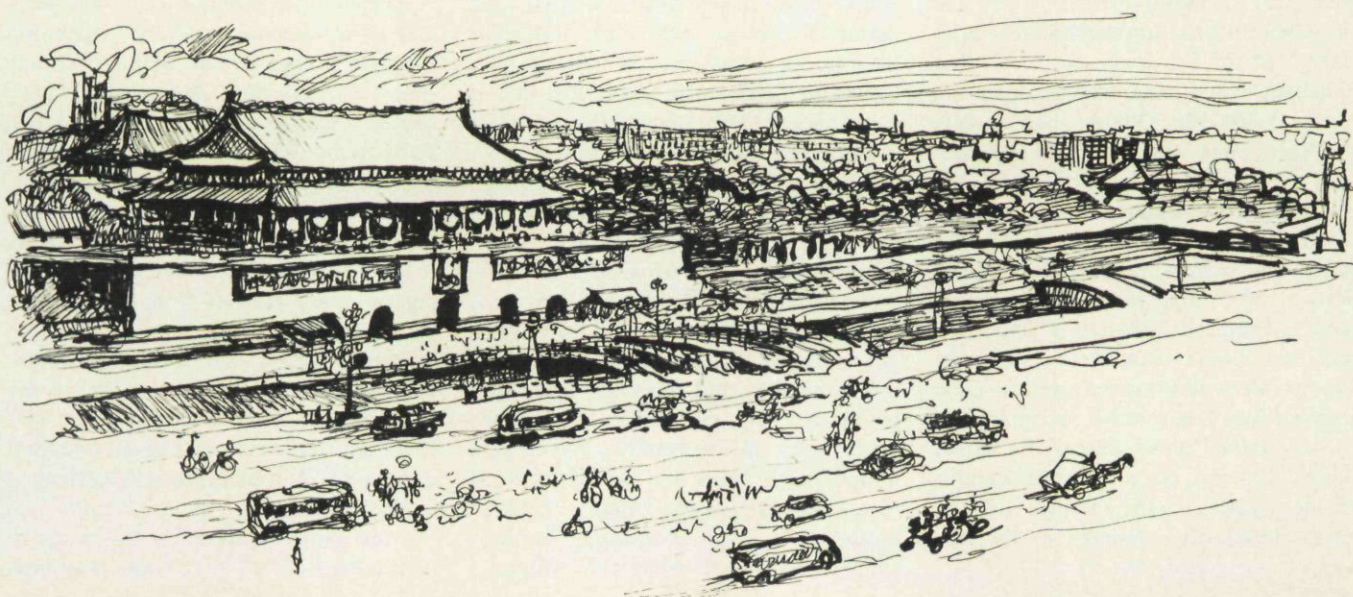
It wasn't so much that the people were hostile to him, though they had every right to be after a generation's saturation bombing, as that they were indifferent to him, somehow tuned out; leaving these matters, as they had been taught to do, to their masters, who could be trusted to advise them when it served the purposes of the People's Republic to cheer lustily, as they had done for the Lion of Judah. We were, after all, among people who have not yet been informed that an American astronaut walked on the moon in 1970.

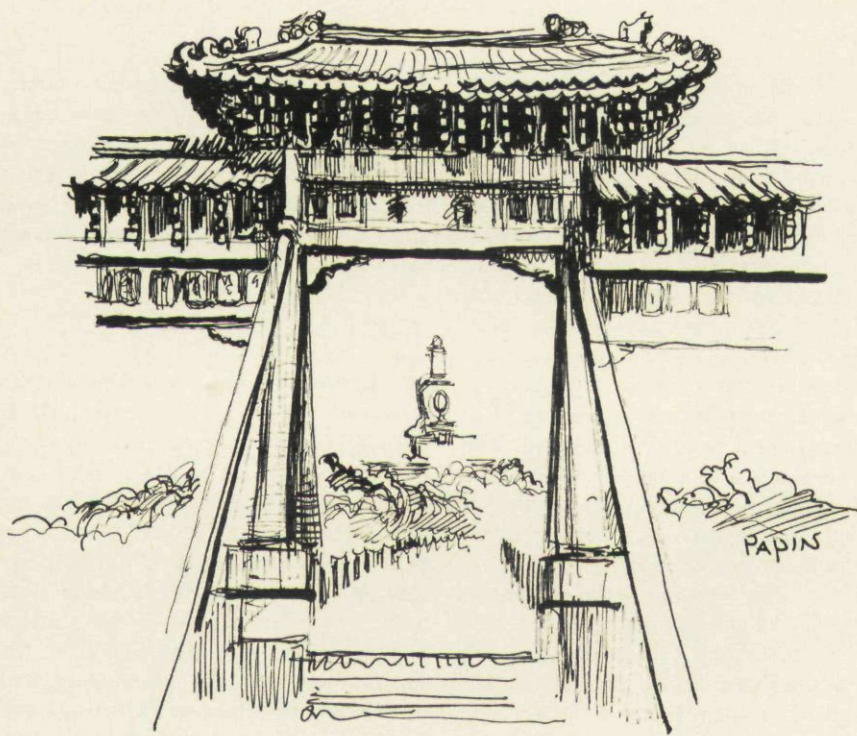
Then Mao Tse-tung gave Nixon an audience, and although the people weren't thereupon turned on, the official atmosphere flushed out. That night I espied Personal Diplomacy. Everyone could see Richard Nixon in the large banquet hall, seated alongside Chou at a round table of a dozen or so dignitaries, but I saw him best, not alone from the advantage of being seated only twenty yards away (the correspondents were strung out alphabetically). I watched him through binoculars, after his remarks, raising his glass to toast Chou En-lai and the three or four Chinese officials seated at his table. Then—to the astonishment of everyone and the consternation of the Secret Service—he strode purposefully one by one to the three surrounding tables and greeted Chinese official after Chinese official, his face red with the sweat of quite genuine idealism, bowing, smiling radiantly, touching each individual

glass. He looked altogether noble, flushed with the righteousness of great purpose, and the two dozen Chinese—old generals, commissars, politicians—were quite visibly startled, first at being approached at all, then at being wooed so ardently.

KINDLY make no mistake about the moral courage all this required. It is unreasonable to suppose that anywhere in history have a few dozen men congregated who have been responsible for greater human mayhem than the hosts at this gathering and their spiritual colleagues, instruments all of Mao Tse-tung. The effect was as if Sir Hartley Shawcross had suddenly risen from the prosecutor's stand at Nuremberg and descended to embrace Goering and Goebbels and Doenitz and Hess, begging them to join with him in the making of a better world. Never mind the difference, that the latter were convicted butchers, aggressors, and genocide-makers, and the former, by the narrowest quirk of the Cultural Revolution, are not: all that that difference reminds us of is that history is indeed the polemics of the victor.

We were, after all, in Peking. And among the pamphlets distributed to the American press in the hotel corridors' literature racks was a speech by Mao Tse-tung less than two years old. "While massacring the people in other countries," goes this particular thought of Chairman Mao, "U.S. imperialism is slaughtering the white and black people





in its own country. Nixon's fascist atrocities have kindled the raging flames of the revolutionary mass movement in the United States. The Chinese people firmly support the revolutionary struggle of the American people. I am convinced that the American people who are fighting valiantly will ultimately win victory and that the fascist rule in the United States will inevitably be defeated." Moreover, in contemporary Peking, you cannot pass by a monument without staring into the face of Josef Stalin. That was the backdrop of Nixon's performance.

On top of that, there was the morning's performance at the airport. If charity covers the Big Lie, here was charity's test. Mr. Nixon began his speech by thanking Premier Chou for his government's "incomparable hospitality." At the hands of an ironist, that statement would have brought down the house. With Mr. Nixon, one merely scratched one's head; nervously. He went on to pull out every stop.

—He quoted Mao.

—He said that he wished the United States and China might undertake a "long march" together, which fawning historical reference was as if Chou had said that China wanted to find itself side by side with America the very next time we face the rockets' red glare.

—He talked about things like equal dignity for the people of the nations of the world, to the premier of the largest totalitarian country in the history of the world.

—And then . . . and then, he toasted Chairman Mao, Chou En-lai, and the whole lot of them. I would not have been surprised, that night, if he had lunched into a toast of Alger Hiss.

Premier Chou was more cautious. He had begun the day with a snub, he would end it with condescension. Behind him in the huge hall the flags of the two countries hung grandly—the usual business, at state banquets. Except that the U.S. flag was just a little smaller than the Red Chinese flag. Proletarian subtlety. Then, not a word from Chou in acceptance, if that is the word for it, of Richard Nixon. He didn't even say that Nixon is an *amiable* running dog. The stress, always, was People to People, it being Communism's theoretical insistence that the American people are okay, but their leaders are awful, and something of a lacuna in Communist theory just how it came about that Okay People elect fascist, warmongering leaders.

There was not a word, in Chou's speech, which would have earned him a demerit in Communist theology class. Came the toast: "I propose a toast"—to President and Mrs. Nixon? No. ". . . to the health of President and Mrs. Nixon." The difference between toasting someone, and toasting someone's health is, well, noticeable. (Two banquets later, at Hangchow, Nixon slid unobtrusively into the more cautious formulation.) And, finally, Chou toasted "to the friendship between Chinese [sic] and American peoples,"

which sentiment flirted not at all with heresy, friendship among all peoples being a postulate of Marxist dogma. The implications were not—are not—immediately apparent. But watching the face of Chou through the binoculars, one could not help but reflect that the fissured smile of the airport had broadened, as it might have done on the face of his hero Stalin, when the boys got together to toast peace, dignity, and self-determination for all peoples, back at Yalta.

EVERY DAY, the correspondents were given a choice of a half-dozen Chinese Communist achievements to witness, and it soon occurred even to the best-disposed among us that our affable hosts had lost sight of the critical perspective. It has after all been a very long time—fifteen? twenty years?—since reporters in any force have been permitted to visit China. Totalitarian societies are very good at hiding things like concentration camps, Liu Shao-ch'is, and material misery. Why are they so poor at hiding ideological infantilism? Perhaps because it is like hiding grass. But I mean, there was the President of the United States and his moderately cosmopolitan staff, plus all of us, seated in the ballet hall, a new building which, incidentally, makes the Lexington Avenue subway look like Disneyland. Would we view a Chinese classic? A modern classic?

It was a thing called "The Red Detachment of Women," which is China's *Gone with the Wind* or, better, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The synopsis was printed and given to each of us, and from it I quote exactly.

The heroine, Ching-hua, is the property of a "despotic landlord" who (Act I) gives orders to one of his "running dogs" to sell her. She is mercilessly beaten, escapes, and is retrieved by two Red Army men who feel "profound proletarian feelings" towards her. They embrace her (Act II) into a Red Detachment of Women where she is warmly received by "the soldiers and villagers whose class feelings for her are as deep as sea." During a liberation maneuver against her former slavemaster she goofs (Act III) out of an excess of zeal, and is warned (Act IV) that "only by emancipating all mankind can the proletariat achieve its own final emancipation."

I feel quite sure that, at this point in the ballet, Richard Nixon was prompted

to poke Pat under the seat, but between him and her was seated Madame Mao Tse-tung, who is the iron patroness of this kind of thing—it was her resentment of an opera insufficiently servile to Maoism that touched off the Cultural Revolution in 1965; and anyway, one might as well have frolicked across the body of Anna Pauker, as across Chiang Ching. In Act V, our heroine's principal Red protector is overwhelmed by the Kuomintang, but when he recovers consciousness, "he stands rock-firm and faces the pack of bandit troops in righteous indignation." Only (Act VI) to die "a heroic death with the fearless heroic spirit of a Communist" but not, you will be glad to learn, until after he has managed (at not inconsiderable operatic length) to "denounce the diehard reactionaries." At which point the Red Army moves in, and "the broad revolutionary masses flock to join the Red Army amidst resounding battle songs." The last sentence in the synopsis is a modest thought for today: "Forward, forward, under the banner of Mao Tse-tung, forward to victory!"

THE MUSE ringing in our ears, the next morning we visited Peking University, probably the most shattering single experience of the journey because one had the sense of participating in a show trial. Our host was the active head of the university, who got his advanced degree in physics from the University of Chicago in 1926, which solved the language problem, right? Wrong. The poor derelict, whose English had been previously ascertained to have been as good as Eric Sevareid's, spoke through an interpreter. Because the room was full of Red Guard thugs, and it was obvious that they desired to hear his answers so that, if necessary, they could later on correct him for ideological irregularities.

Cautiously, during the question period, we probed the circumstances of his and his university's humiliation, without of course exactly letting on. We knew that he knew that we knew that he was reduced to puppetry, but better a puppet alive, than to stand rock-firm and face the pack of bandit troops. Someone asked him what had been the errors of Peking University before the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution caught up with them, and he replied that the errors, partly his own responsi-

bility, had been to imitate Russian universities by forgetting the imperative of proletarian politics and lending itself instead to the cultivation of an academic elite. Translated, that means Peking U sought excellence. How had he learned the exact nature of his delinquencies? A "Mao Thought Propaganda Team" came to the university in the fall of 1968 and stayed on a whole year. After they left, the governing of the university was turned over to a "revolutionary council," of which this wretched man had become the spokesman, surrounded by brachycephalic peasants who, knowing only how to praise the thoughts of Chairman Mao, need know aught else, in order to correct the venerable professor.

We puzzle that our hosts should have proudly invited us to view contemporary Chinese Communist academic life. One recalls Evelyn Waugh's Azania, where the young black prince, incompletely educated in Western habits, gave a state banquet to two very British ladies come to inspect the local situation in behalf of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. In his toast, the prince solemnly averred that, in Azania, they worked industriously to devise means of being cruel to animals, that they had not yet achieved English standards, but that they were every day making progress.

There came the long lull, when the sight-seeing became routine, the banquets had piled upon each other, twelve courses every time, toasts and more toasts, and the speculation became razzed on just what Nixon and Chou would finally come up with—something grainier, we hoped, than the soapsuds we had been fingering for days now. I remember the cartoon in *Punch* after the summit conference in Washington between Sir Anthony Eden and President Eisenhower. The artist depicted Eden in long tweed skirt and shawl sitting contentedly on a bench in front of the White House, Eisenhower in knickers and sportcoat; holding hands. The caption summarized the Joint Communiqué: "'Darling?' 'What, darling?' 'Nothing, darling. Just darling, darling.'"

Time, meanwhile, a little time, to pause over some of the mannerisms of the principals. Chou's own, distinctive traits, we are unfamiliar with, but one notices that his government is given to approaching all problems numerically. When, for instance, it was observed

years ago that the revolution continued to tolerate those unclean elements, Chairman Mao promulgated the Four Purifications Movement, among whose accomplishments was the repeal of the premature Three Freedoms and One Guarantee. The Maoists were historically scarred by the Fifth Extermination Campaign Chiang Kai-shek had mounted against them in the Thirties, which of course they survived by citing the proverb, "One spark can consume a hundred miles of prairies." The Five Principles first enunciated by Chou at the Bandung Conference way back in 1955 were reaffirmed at the banquet given for Mr. Nixon, notwithstanding that the Cultural Revolution has eliminated the Four Olds (old ideas, old culture, old customs, old habits), some time after withdrawing from the Hundred Flowers, whose blooming was a mistake, as recognized at the Eight Great Rallies of the Cultural Revolution, which was precipitated by Madame Liu's misdirected modification of the Ten Conditions on Agriculture in her (totally inadequate) Later Ten Conditions on Agriculture.

MR. NIXON would not likely, at proclamation-time, herald the Seventh Day Principles of Nixon-Mao, but we knew that he would certainly call the agreement the most momentous document since the Ten Commandments. We were right.

Mr. Nixon had just come from visiting the Great Wall. Undeniably, the Great Wall is the greatest wall in the history of the world. Absolutely no doubt about it. But look what the Great Wall did to Mr. Nixon. "[The Great Wall] is a certain symbol of what China in the past has been and of what China in the future can become. People who could build a wall like this certainly have a great past to be proud of and a people who have this kind of a past must also have a great future." Mr. Nixon floats through that kind of thing without ever having to face the difficulties of it, as he would unquestionably have to do if he were a member of the House of Commons. The trouble with the statement is a) the China that built the Great Wall, not many generations after Socrates drank the hemlock, is only dimly related to Mao's China, if you discount the fact that the Emperor Chin and the incumbent both dispose of

slaves; b) the whole emphasis of Mao's China is to forget, not remember, China's past; and c) anyway, people who have a great past *don't* necessarily have a great future, e.g., Portugal. The statement was therefore inaccurate, maladroit, and anti-historical: But who cared?

And then the ballet of the night before, said Mr. Nixon, was "very dramatic—excellent theater [C+ would have been a generous rating], and excellent dancing [B] and music [C—] and really superb acting [B—]. I have seen ballets all over the world, including the Soviet Union and the United States. This is certainly the equal of any ballet I have seen." Bullsticks. It is not the equal of any ballet Mr. Nixon has seen. Oh dear. One has the feeling that if Mr. Nixon, in his second term, having decided to patch up our difficulties with the Devil, travels down to conduct a summit conference, he will tell Charon that he has used ferries all over the world, but that Charon's is absolutely the equal of any he has ever ridden on.

The moment came. If we assume that Henry Kissinger exacted from Chou En-lai the promise that he would not take the occasion of President Nixon's visit to China to dilate on the depravities of the United States and its foreign policy, then you would not have been surprised, sitting in the packed mini-auditorium that served us in Shanghai as the press room in which the joint communiqué was distributed to the ravenous press, that the Chinese section of the communiqué employed civil language. It is not known how much this ordeal of self-restraint cost our hosts, whose public rhetoric has for so many years now been tuned to the running-dog mode. It is as if, suddenly, you asked Arthur Rubinstein please to play his recital on an atonal scale.

STILL they managed it. And, at the other end of the communiqué, Richard Nixon, having surrendered on the principal point, nestled into the clichés in which all statesmen can relax. In particular Western statesmen, because our types, when we talk about democracy, national sovereignty, and individual freedom, however we allow for significant differences in the practice, have in mind something not altogether different from democracy, justice, and individual freedom. While the other side,

recognizing the uses of these distinctively Western ideals, uses the language a bit ill-fittingly, but so doggedly now that the intellectual slouch is no more remarkable than the bagginess of the trousers of Mao-man.

The eyes raced over the communiqué—Presidential Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler would seconds hence enter the room to answer questions (we did not know that it would be Kissinger who would answer them), and it was required that we become instantly familiar with the rather verbose statement, the end-point of the endless week: this was our summit, and we could not dawdle. The gentleman on my right,



august representative of the *New York Times*, quickly got the point. "Score one for them, zero for us," he whispered. Except that *New York Times* dispatches do not do that kind of thing, he played, later in the press room, with the lead: "President Nixon departed from China today, leaving Taiwan behind."

Henry Kissinger, who more closely than any man in living memory superintends Presidential foreign policy, was visibly nervous, his wisecracks (he is genuinely witty) edgy and forced. When the inevitable question about Taiwan came up he was as ready for it as the bride to answer: "I do." It is very difficult, he said, to talk about—he couldn't call it a "country," since it was precisely this point that our hosts were contending. To call it an "area," on the other hand, would have been a little unfeeling. So he referred to it, throughout, as an "issue," which, indisputably, it is. He said that because of the particular sensitivity of the Issue, he would say

what he had to say one time only; that he would not return again to the Issue, no matter how elliptically or ingeniously other questioners in the room might approach the subject. The fact of the matter, he said, is that the President's annual World Report, issued only a month ago, reiterated the United States Government's determination to stand by the mutual defense treaty with Taiwan. "Nothing has changed on that position."

Of course, everything had changed, and everyone in the room knew it, including Kissinger, although it is true that his understanding of public communications is anomalously underdeveloped. Mr. Nixon had caved in: he would mention, in the communiqué, Vietnam and Korea, but there would be no mention of U.S. fidelity to Taiwan. *Inclusio unius, exclusio alterius*. The rest was summit boilerplate:—professions of faith in peace and national sovereignty, anti super-power talk, and of course the talk about future talk.

"This was the week that changed the world," Nixon would say giddily a few hours later at the final banquet. For once, there was no hyperbole. Mr. Nixon has adjusted American and Asian politics. The countdown for Taiwan independence has begun.

Of course, Taiwan will be there as long as the United States Government maintains the treaty. But before it is formally rescinded, it is likely to be reduced to mere metaphor, the vector of American foreign policy in Asia having been clearly charted. Our recognition and support for an independent Taiwan are, the Chinese part of the communiqué states, the "crucial question obstructing the normalization of relations between China and the United States." American know-how is famous for eliminating obstructions. The Democratic Party Presidential candidates will, one by one (with a conspicuous exception) call for reconsidering the mutual defense treaty.

Four years ago Henry Kissinger, before joining the staff of President-elect Nixon, evaluated Defense Secretary Clark Clifford's attack on President Thieu on the matter of the shape of the negotiating table at Paris. He said to a friend, "If the United States slips the rug from under the Thieu government, the word will go out among the nations of the world that it is perhaps risky to be an enemy of the United States. But to be its friend is fatal." □

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