

that had been building in the "cause world" since the early sixties. The domestic corollary of the liberal idea of the world as a place in which "nobody is in charge" (to use Norman Podhoretz's apt phrase) became that of a nation in which "nobody is in charge."

But the attempt to turn away from responsibility for active engagement in world affairs has fondered on some hard realities. The Arab oil embargo, the continuing Middle East conflict, the growth of Soviet military power and the acting out of their strategic ambitions, the desperate need for new approaches to problems of resources and trade—these and other factors have combined to produce a significant shift in our national mood. More and more people, even in those strongholds of liberal influence—the university, the church, the media, the Congress—are coming to a recognition that American interests and power are inextricably bound up in the common destiny of a fragile, nascent world community. And the question has once again entered the public debate: What should be our response to the realities of power and conflict in a world dominated by the threat of war? Along with this recognition and in response to the need to answer this question has come a growing concern for the health of our body politic, on which the vitality of our foreign policy depends.

Unfortunately, this shift in our national mood is not following a pattern of growth toward a new and more hopeful understanding of our role in the world. The pattern is more nearly that of a manic-depressive shift of mood, a pendulumlike swing from the bad answer of "do nothing" to an equally disastrous answer: a return to primary reliance on national military power to defend our values and interests and to force changes in the policies and behavior of adversary nations. We may well see in 1980 a political climate that is exactly the obverse of that which fostered the McGovern campaign in 1972—a strong national consensus supporting an active, dominantly military foreign policy to meet very real threats to our security and the world's.

And so it is likely to go.

What we need in our next President is someone who refuses to swing with the pendulum, who recognizes that we must find a better alternative than either of the two choices now being offered us. That Presidential candidate would command

my support and respect who:

...first, puts at the top of the agenda that question of this country's role in the world, not because certain foreign policy issues offer exploitable handles in the campaign, but because he recognizes that this is the central question of our time;

...second, combines in an approach to foreign policy the truths that are at the centers of both sides in the current debate—on the one hand, that we must move beyond a dominantly military foreign policy in order to build a more humane and peaceful world, and, on the other, that we must confront squarely the obstacles posed by the realities of power organized in opposing political camps;

...third, articulates a credible vision of a radically transformed world order—a disarmed world under law possessing instruments of authority and processes of cooperation capable of dealing with global problems of human survival and freedom;

...fourth, recognizes that present patterns of negotiation in the context of primary reliance on national military power will not produce the dynamic needed for progress toward that goal; that a more radical strategy is needed that seeks through nonmilitary initiatives to bring about needed changes in other nations' attitudes and policies and thus make possible the international agreement that now eludes us;

...and finally, persuades us, because of the quality of his character and understanding of what our third century requires of us as a nation, that the pursuit of so large and good a goal is the only way to bring us together again—that the world is crying for the kind of leadership we could provide and that we as a nation are meant for it.

But it is in the nature of our political system that the American people get the kind of President they want and, in a sense, deserve. At this point it is difficult to be optimistic about the prospects for a significant change in the dominant currents of attitude and belief that shape our national mood. For the people who could contribute most to the search for a new, more adequate foreign policy direction—the people who recognize that radical changes are needed in the international system if we are to survive—are too often the ones most responsible for the polarization, sterility, and lack of clarity and intelligence in the public debate. It is they who

embody the reactive political currents that have contributed so much to our present disarray. That they see our condition as cause for celebration rather than dismay is one more measure of the depths of our confusion.

Those, on the other hand, who recognize that the real problem is located, not in this country's values and institutions, but in the realities of a dangerous and conflict-ridden world are the least willing to accept responsibility for defining new purposes and nonmilitary strategies more adequate to progress toward a better world. They are willing to accept the very grave dangers of continued reliance on war and the threat of war, and that willingness will sooner or later spell catastrophe for us all.

Until this situation changes I will have to continue to give this answer: *That person should be the next President who represents the least inadequate of a not very hopeful lot.*

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## China: A Footnote

To the Editors: A note of possible interest to the Chinese earthquake: The official custom of generally isolating foreigners in palatial quarters away from the congested areas where the Chinese everyman lives may have saved many foreign lives. Let's hope fervently that the authorities' fear of revealing true internal conditions will not prevent their seeking foreign aid this time for the Chinese victims.

The earthquake is undoubtedly having a strong psychological impact on the Chinese population at this time of Mao's decline and imminent change of "dynasty." Such natural disaster is traditionally interpreted by Chinese as a sign of Heaven's wrath against a corrupt and despotic regime, particularly if a woman is wielding supreme power. (Mao's wife, Chiang Ch'ing, is only too obvious.) It's a sign that the end is near. Superstitious or not, every Chinese thinks of this automatically.

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