

AIRGRAM

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OCT 30 3 57 PM '70

FROM : Department of State

DATE:

SUBJECT : American Opinion on U.S. Foreign Policy

REF : Attention: ALL PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND SENIOR ADVISERS

The attached summary of current American opinion on several major topics is being provided for the information of personnel at the posts.

IRWIN II, ACTING

Enclosure:

American Opinion Trends--November 1970

P - 50
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Contents and Classification Approved by: P - Michael Collins

Clearances:

November, 1970

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2. U. S. TRADE POLICY p. 2

Most American newspapers continue to back the liberal U.S. trade policy of the past 36 years and support Pres. Nixon's threat to veto a Christmas-tree tariff bill.
3. PRESIDENT'S AID MESSAGE p. 3

Most editors commenting on the September 17 message call for sympathetic consideration of the President's proposals--especially that for greater use of international aid agencies.
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The hijacking of airplanes by Palestinian guerrillas prompted strong editorial support for Pres. Nixon's goal of international agreements on air piracy, although some are pessimistic about obtaining cooperation.
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Attitudes toward UN; Red China & UN; Relations with Russia.

N. B.- Editorial opinion from representative newspapers usually is in harmony with public opinion polling results (in 4 out of 5 cases). When these two indexes of opinion differ, the editorials more often foreshadow the outcome of the political process.

1. INDOCHINA POLICY

The prompt and widespread approval accorded President Nixon's TV peace appeal of October 7 has been maintained. Editors typically upheld the President's "five points" for an Indochina settlement, some giving particular stress to the standstill cease-fire proposal which some editors and Congressmen had been urging Mr. Nixon to offer.

"An impressively broad section of American opinion," said the Wall St. Journal, "has united behind the President's cease-fire proposals"; and several editors remarked upon the support given by many "dovish" Congressmen.

Editorial approval was registered by 33 out of 35 newspapers noted, including a number which had previously been critical of the U.S. position on Indochina peace (e.g. Chicago Sun-Times, Arkansas Gazette, Minneapolis Star). Of the two newspapers withholding support, the Boston Globe conceded this was the President's "best (effort) to date" to win the peace; the other--the Washington Post--complained about the "ambiguity" of the President's statement.

Several editors declared that the U.S. proposals are so "fair" that, in the words of the New York Times, they "will reveal whether the Communists really want to achieve a compromise" (similarly, Wash. Star, Hearst papers).

According to the Scripps-Howard papers, "Pres. Nixon has gone as far as he prudently can in seeking to end the Vietnam war." Only one or two of the 35 newspapers felt the U.S. should take further steps. "Nixon will have to quit wet nursing Thieu et al, if he expects anything to come of his peace initiative," said the Wheeling Intelligencer (somewhat similarly, St. Louis Post-Dispatch).

But most papers agreed with the Philadelphia Bulletin that we "cannot overthrow an allied government's leadership on demand of the enemy."

Editors were not surprised or dismayed over Hanoi's initially negative response. "Regardless of whether Hanoi agrees to a peace settlement," said the Kansas City Star, "the most burning of (U.S.) political issues is cooling off."

According to the previously critical Philadelphia Inquirer, "the fact is that Pres. Nixon's program for winding down the war and ending American involvement is working."

2. U.S. TRADE POLICY

By an overwhelming majority, newspapers across the country have come out in favor of continuing the liberal trade policy of the past 36 years. Commenting during recent weeks as the Ways and Means Committee was developing its bill (and a counterpart in the Senate Finance Committee), editors typically asked: Why reverse the policy that has served us so well for so long, and risk starting a global trade war?

This view has been expressed by 34 out of 38 representative newspapers noted, with the editors also applauding Pres. Nixon's threat to veto a Christmas-tree tariff bill.

Even the minority favoring some protection express agreement with the principle of "lowering international trade barriers." But "it is a fact," the Hearst editorial continued, "that the U.S. has done far more than its share." This editorial saw Congress "moving toward a regrettable but probably necessary corrective."

Other papers feeling that some protection is warranted are: Cleveland Plain Dealer, Wheeling Intelligencer, and Salt Lake City Tribune.

The great majority of commenting papers, however, favored "reciprocity, rather than protectionism" (Phila. Inquirer). Many agreed that "import quotas are a device to make American consumers pay through the nose to support industries that cannot compete" (Des Moines Register).

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The Wall Street Journal rejected the Committees' restrictive approach to the problem, saying: "The way to get other nations to move toward freer trade is to lead the way, as the U.S. resolutely had been doing for nearly four decades."

Strong criticism of Japan has come from many newspapers-- 19 out of the 38--for its restrictions on the entry of U.S products, some editors saying that Japan "will have mainly herself to blame if the American restrictive bill is enacted" (Phila. Inquirer).

Only the small minority of newspapers already noted as favoring some protection believe that the adoption of U.S. quotas is an appropriate response to the Japanese actions.

Announcement (on Oct. 23) that Japanese textile manufacturers have agreed to re-open talks with the U.S. on voluntary restrictions has left editors uncertain whether Congress might nevertheless proceed with a "protectionist" measure when it reconvenes after the election (e.g. Wash. Post).

3. PRESIDENT'S AID MESSAGE

Pres. Nixon's message to Congress (Sept. 15) containing his proposals on "Foreign Assistance for the Seventies" has prompted considerable editorial comment across the country. Most of the editorials noted (17 out of 21) have called for sympathetic consideration of the President's proposals.

"It is time," said the Richmond Times-Dispatch, "for substantial reforms to be made that will ensure continuance of a constructive American role in world affairs."

The editorial in the Hearst newspapers observed that Congressmen now have a "comprehensive and constructive package to study," adding that under the Nixon proposals "we would be fulfilling our commitment to the international community--a commitment which is vital to our own national interests."

Among those less favorable to the President's message, the Miami Herald commented that "three decades of shoveling \$100 billion into ungrateful foreign hands have made 'foreign aid' a bitter phrase to most Americans."

The St. Louis Globe-Democrat conceded that it "would be a mistake summarily to chop off all foreign aid," but added that "it is time to slim down much of this expenditure." A number of newspapers predicted great difficulty in winning Congressional acceptance of the President's proposals for a new aid program.

At the same time, most commenting papers are strongly favorable to the President's proposal to shift as much development aid as possible to international agencies, such as the World Bank. "This is really the key," said the New York Journal of Commerce, "to any purposeful revision of the prevailing system."

The Hearst newspapers, viewing the proposals as a whole, concluded that, "as part and parcel of the so-called 'Nixon doctrine,' this new approach to foreign assistance should allay the fears of many Americans who feel we are too directly involved with foreign problems."

The Administration's aim of getting other industrial nations to join in "untying" their aid is approved by several papers which disapprove the practice of requiring recipient nations to make their purchases in the lending countries (e.g. Scripps-Howard papers, Boston Herald Traveler, Louisville Courier-Journal).

Nine of the 21 newspapers voiced specific approval of Pres. Nixon's statement that "the downward trend of U.S. contributions to the development process should be reversed" (e.g. Denver Post, N.Y. Post, San Francisco Chronicle, Providence Journal).

To the New York Times, the "most disappointing aspect" of the President's message was its failure to endorse the 1% goal proposed by Lester Pearson's committee. Similar comments came from the Washington Post and

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Philadelphia Inquirer and other papers, prior to Sen. Javits' statement at the United Nations voicing the Administration's approval of this goal.

4. PREVENTION OF SKYJACKING

The September hijackings of airplanes by Palestinian guerrillas produced a flood of American editorials expressing deep outrage at the barbarity of the hijackers and their prolonged detention of innocent hostages.

The editors favored a united stand by all nations for the release of all hostages (whether Israeli or other); and they backed Pres. Nixon's program for international agreements to deal with air piracy.

Indeed, 38 out of the 44 commenting papers declared that the ultimate and most complete preventative lies only in strong international agreements, although unilateral measures were favored also. A number urged adoption by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) of the U.S. program calling for agreements to: 1, extradite or punish the hijackers; and 2, impose an effective boycott against countries which are "havens" for hijackers.

Several editors, however, noted that hijacking has been a serious problem for a number of years "without adequate attention from any government" (e.g. Scripps-Howard papers). Some expressed regret that, "despite the President's pleas, many nations seem to lack a sense of urgency," and that solution to the problem seems "beyond the reach of international law and public opinion" (Los Angeles Times).

The first goal of international agreement, editors agreed, should be to overcome the unwillingness of certain states to punish or extradite hijackers within their borders.

Some sort of economic retaliation against such nations was advocated by over half of the commenting papers (e.g. Wash. Post, Christian Science Monitor, Hearst papers).

The ICAO Council's boycott resolution of October 1 was criticized by the New York Times as "a heavily watered-down version of the American plan which now provides merely for consultation in case of hijacking."

Meanwhile, a substantial minority of papers felt that in the absence of international action, steps should be taken by the United States and/or by the airline and pilot associations (e.g. Milwaukee Journal, Boston Globe, Oakland Tribune).

Most papers commenting on the installation of armed guards on airplanes approved (23 out of 25) this action despite its real risks; and there has been a general welcome for stronger pre-flight security measures.

5. SOME RECENT POLLS

United Nations A Gallup Poll shows popular American support for a policy favorable to the UN, despite a decrease in estimates of the organization's performance (Oct. 22 release).

In the recent poll, 44% of the respondents said that the UN "is doing a good job in trying to solve the problems it has to face," whereas as many as 40% called it "a poor job." Nine years ago a total of 80% told the Gallup Poll the UN was doing either a "good" or "fair" job.

In 1970, 75% of the national sample call it "very important" that the U.S. "try to make the United Nations a success," and an additional 12% call it "fairly important." These 1970 findings on "importance" are fairly close to some earlier results, but as many as 88% chose the "very important" alternative in late 1959.

Red China & UN "The number of Americans who favor admitting Communist China to the United Nations," said the Gallup Poll release for October 18, "has reached the highest point recorded (35%) although the proportion falls short of a plurality." Opponents of admission numbered 49%; and 16% gave no opinion.

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Four years ago, the Gallup Poll reported the views on this question of both the general public and of a sample drawn at random from Who's Who in America. At that time, only 25% of the public favored Peking's admission, but as many as 64% of the "leaders" were in favor.

Relations with Russia Americans favor a Kosygin-Nixon summit meeting (80% to 8%); and substantial majorities also favor U.S.-Soviet agreement in several specific fields, according to a Harris Survey appearing on Oct. 19.

"Would you favor or oppose agreement between the U.S. and Russia on the following?"

	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>
Exchanging scholars & cultural groups	79%	8%	13%
Joint action to keep Communist China from starting wars	77	10	13
Expanding trade between the 2 nations	75	14	11
Taking joint action if another nation threatens to use nuclear weapons	74	12	14
Joint exploration of oceans	70	15	15
Limiting anti-missile systems	69	16	15
Exploring outer space	62	27	11

This Harris Survey contained no question on the extent to which Americans would expect Russian fulfillment of such agreements.

10/29/70