

Barry Slipping On U.S. Policy

By JEFF GREENFIELD
Daily Press Correspondent

Watching Sen. Goldwater stagger through the international policy arena is like watching a drunken tightrope walker begin his act without the net. You know he's going to fall and severely injure himself, but his contortions are morbidly fascinating.

The Junior Cowboy from Arizona's latest dive was his resurrection of the old charge that the Kennedy-Johnson administration is—are you ready?—"soft on Communism". There were hopeful signs that this stale epithet left over from the 1952 campaign would be forgotten and left to die a decent death.

Life Magazine, edging closer each week to a Johnson endorsement, suggested that Goldwater recognized that the policies of 1964 Democrats are not those of a dozen years ago. The Fair Campaign Practices Committee warned that "soft on Communism" charges were likely to recur. Now Goldwater has confirmed that prediction and has begun another graceful arc from the highwire of illusion down to the hard floor of reality.

Policy Fair Game

But bluntly, the charge is hogwash. Foreign policies of incumbent administrations are always proper campaign issues, for it reinforces the right of the people in a democracy to help determine the course of their government at home and abroad. The issue, however, seems to be wrapped up repeatedly in the motives of the administration instead of the effects of the policies.

It is, for example, proper to argue that our program in Laos has not succeeded, though this is as unclear as everything about that fantastic Asian dreamland. Is it, however, even tenable to argue that the neutralization agreement, which came after a U.S.-engineered rightist coup had provoked increased Communist gains, and which conformed to the 1954 Indochina agreement, and which was apparently the only alternative to a Pathet Lao triumph or massive American troop movements, was "softness" toward Communism?

Similarly, one may question the effectiveness of the U.S. boycott on Cuba, and debate the merits of stricter enforcement or abandonment. But is our policy toward Cuba—which "went Red" during the Eisenhower administration in 1959, and which is now costing Soviet Russia more than \$1 million a day to sustain, and which has been isolated from every nation in the hemisphere save Mexico—appeasement?

For Some Agreements

There is no question about the commitment of the Democratic administration toward reaching limited understandings and agreements with the Soviet Union to lessen the danger of thermonuclear war. The limited nuclear test-ban treaty, the establishment of mutual consulates, and the halt to overproduction of fissionable material, are all steps in this direction.

But what, pray tell, makes this "appeasement"? Is it appeasement to halt the senseless poisoning of the atmosphere, or to cut back on unneeded, wasteful plutonium and uranium which can only accelerate this mad race toward nuclear holocaust?

For that matter, is this urge to carry on East-West competition without the constant threat of nuclear annihilation any different from that expressed by Eisenhower and Nixon? Was the Open Skies proposal, to let Soviet planes fly over American cities, "appeasement" or "a sell-out"? Was Khrushchev's visit here a defeat for the free world? Is any deviation from the incredibly inaccurate and naive vision of

"Why Not Victory?" some form of implicit treason?

Kennedy Steps to Agreement

The answer to these questions should be obvious. America owes it to its people and to the world to seek agreements with a potential nuclear enemy which will dim the possibility of world suicide without risking security. The minor steps forward so far are of a limited, cautious, probing variety—those first steps on a 1,000-mile journey of which President Kennedy spoke.

Sen. Goldwater may and should demonstrate where he believes our policy has gone wrong and what specific steps he would take to improve it. (Calling for "Victory" doesn't really tell us much.) But the charge that Kennedy and Johnson have been "soft" on Communism is about as truthful and as honest as the charge that the late President risked nuclear war to gain a few seats in the House and Senate in 1962.

A President must be able to walk that delicate tightrope of foreign policy; a candidate may take a few more risks on it than an incumbent. But a candidate who wants to be president ought to show that he can handle himself in the rarified atmosphere of diplomacy; for if he fails then, he just may take the rest of us with him. Perhaps the Senator ought to get his footing a bit firmer; he looks shaky from here.