Fighting Back Against the Cold War:
The American Committee on East-West Accord
and the Retreat from Détente

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This thesis titled
Fighting Back Against the Cold War: The American Committee on East-West Accord and
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ABSTRACT

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Fighting Back Against the Cold War: The American Committee on East-West Accord and the Retreat From Détente

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This work traces the history of the American Committee on East-West Accord and its efforts to promote policies of reduced tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union in the 1970s and 1980s. This organization of elite Americans attempted to demonstrate that there was support for policies of U.S.-Soviet accommodation and sought to discredit its opponents, especially the Committee on the Present Danger. This work argues that the Committee, although largely failing to achieve its goals, illustrates the wide-reaching nature of the debate on U.S.-Soviet relations during this period, and also demonstrates the enduring elements of the U.S.-Soviet détente of the early 1970s.

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To Hannah, for being Patient

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CHAPTER ONE- INTRODUCTION: THE AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON EAST- WEST ACCORD AND THE ERA OF DÉTENTE

During the 1970s American presidents were compelled by diplomatic realities and public sentiment to refer to the Cold War as a pejorative and in the past tense. Richard Nixon contrasted previous “decades of hostile confrontation” with a “new structure of peace” in 1972. Gerald Ford defended his own Soviet policies by reminding Americans that the alternative to negotiation was to “go back to the Cold War.” Jimmy Carter denounced the “intellectual and moral poverty” of the Cold War early in his administration and warned against its creeping reemergence during the crises of 1979 and 1980.¹ Whether or not political leaders truly believed their own rhetoric, clearly U.S.-Soviet relations had entered a new phase. Policies of U.S.-Soviet cooperation and negotiation in the 1970s were most easily and favorably characterized by placing them in relief against the Cold War from the late 1940s to the 1960s, which for the United States had produced the traumas of McCarthyism, the Cuban missile crisis, and Vietnam. The historical and popular consensus now recognizes that the true conclusion of the Cold War was more than a decade away, with intervening years of escalated U.S.-Soviet tension. Still, leaders and observers during the 1970s can be forgiven for believing that this new era was more than just a fleeting lull in the Cold War.

¹ Richard Nixon: "Address to a Joint Session of the Congress on Return From Austria, the Soviet Union, Iran, and Poland," June 1, 1972. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3450>. Gerald R. Ford: "Interview for an NBC News Program on American Foreign Policy,," January 3, 1976. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=6132>. Jimmy Carter: "UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME - Address at Commencement Exercises at the University," May 22, 1977. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=7552>.

This new era in U.S.-Soviet relations became known as *détente*. It entailed structures of constructive engagement, most notably in the arena of arms control, but also in economic cooperation and trade, joint scientific and environmental endeavors, and multilateral negotiations on a host of international disputes. Richard Nixon described *détente* as an avenue towards peace, appealing to Americans' desire for an end to the Vietnam War and serving to undercut his liberal opponents. However, the diplomatic structures created by *détente* had their own momentum, internationally and in the United States, and the Watergate scandal, among its other implications, stripped Nixon of the necessary political viability to define *détente*. By 1974 the Nixon presidency and the U.S. combat role in Vietnam had ended. The new structures of U.S.-Soviet engagement remained, but the original domestic context of *détente* in the United States was gone. A debate soon emerged over the meaning and merits of *détente* in post-Watergate and post-Vietnam America.

In 1974 a group of diplomatic and arms specialists, scientists and intellectuals, business leaders, and concerned American citizens organized the American Committee on East-West Accord (ACEWA) with the goal of ensuring that the Cold War remained, from their vantage point, in the past tense. ACEWA offered public support for continuing U.S.-Soviet negotiation and interaction, especially arms control and trade. It also presented an intellectual justification for *détente* in the face of a vocal opposition that emerged during the mid-1970s. ACEWA courted members of Congress to support *détente* during a period of increased Congressional influence over foreign policy. They sought to influence elite opinion on military and diplomatic issues with prominent members of the diplomatic,

scientific, military, scholastic, business and economic communities. To a lesser degree, ACEWA also tried to influence public opinion on détente through media campaigns, and especially through a short television documentary produced in 1979, and by encouraging their members to publish op-ed essays favorable towards détente. ACEWA was the most prominent and active organization in favor of U.S.-Soviet détente.

ACEWA's initiatives followed two tracks, which were closely intertwined. As ACEWA argued and lobbied in favor of U.S.-Soviet trade and arms control they also attempted to create a favorable intellectual and political environment for such policies to take hold. ACEWA saw the diminishing political support for détente in the United States as the principal threat to U.S.-Soviet cooperation and a possible harbinger of nuclear catastrophe. They promoted policies of cooperation while also encouraging the dialogue of cooperation. While they promoted the components of détente, they also tried to create a politically viable atmosphere for those ideas and policies by interpreting Soviet behavior in a non-ideological context and by de-emphasizing the military component of U.S.-U.S.S.R. relations.

ACEWA argued that continuously expanding diplomatic engagement with the Soviet Union would strip the U.S.-Soviet relationship of the most combative and dangerous aspects that had defined it during the 1950s and 1960s. ACEWA did not view détente as a path towards the end of U.S.-Soviet rivalry. It was instead a process by which that rivalry would someday no longer carry the threat of mutual nuclear annihilation and neither nation would be compelled to embroil itself in overseas conflicts or military interventions.

ACEWA saw the biggest threat to détente (and by correlation the biggest threat to peace) coming from within the United States. Beginning in 1976 members of ACEWA had a running debate in print and on the airwaves with the predominantly neoconservative members of the Committee on the Present Danger (CPD), whose mission was to warn Americans of the allegedly increasing danger of Soviet expansionism and Soviet strategic strength. CPD argued that détente was a vehicle for Soviet expansion and a Soviet arms buildup. Furthermore, they asserted that the aura of détente had made Americans blind to Soviet designs for global domination and offered vigorous solutions for the host of problems that confronted American diplomacy in the 1970s. They called for a renewed American commitment to victory in the U.S.-Soviet arms race and a renewed commitment to the strategy of containment that had been the hallmark of American foreign policy in the 1950s and 1960s. Furthermore, CPD implied that détente was a component of a general but pervasive sense of American decline during the 1970s. CPD was led by long-time Cold Warrior and military specialist Paul Nitze, Russian scholar Richard Pipes, writer and public intellectual Norman Podhoretz, and former Assistant Secretary of State Eugene Rostow. CPD's most prominent member, however, was Ronald Reagan, who would carry many of the views (and members) of CPD to Washington in 1981.

ACEWA proved to be an inflexible organization, both in terms of its philosophy and its tactics. It never strayed from its founding principles, that détente was principally threatened by hawkish political forces in the United States and that this threat could be neutralized by a broad-based, apolitical, elite consensus. These principles were based on

the outlook from early 1974, when the Nixon Administration was crumbling as a result of Watergate, threatening the viability of one of Nixon's signature diplomatic accomplishments. ACEWA was unable or unwilling to conform to the changing diplomatic and political realities it encountered. It never effectively adapted its message or its strategy to appeal to the American people or to operate within the growing political divide on U.S.-Soviet relations. In particular, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 demonstrated that the Soviet Union could threaten U.S.-Soviet peace even more than American hawks. In spite of evidence of new opportunities and new developments in U.S.-Soviet relations, ACEWA remained tethered to its original mission.

Despite their failures, the history of ACEWA reveals some interesting insights into the détente era. The debate between ACEWA and CPD highlights the choices that were available for American policy during the Carter Administration. In part because of its intractable adherence to its own vision of détente, ACEWA remained in Washington despite the end of détente after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. As the Cold War iced over again during the early 1980s, ACEWA attracted prominent individuals who were dissatisfied with the state of U.S.-Soviet relations. ACEWA's longevity in spite of the seeming failure of its cause demonstrates the lasting normative power of détente. Détente had raised expectations that U.S.-Soviet negotiations could transform the Cold War and ACEWA was a prominent vehicle for those expectations.

ACEWA's rival organization, the Committee on the Present Danger has received extensive attention by historians; indeed treatments of CPD are requisite for discussions

of 1970s American foreign policy.² CPD attracted increased scholarly and journalistic attention, much of it critical, after 2001 and the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 with particular attention being paid to the neoconservative members of the George W. Bush Administration, several of whom were former CPD members.³ These histories focus largely on the intellectual foundations of CPD and their political opposition to post-Vietnam American foreign policy during the Ford and Carter Administrations. This work seeks to demonstrate that much of the scholarship on the Committee on the Present Danger largely ignores or elides the fact that CPD was also engaged in an intra-elite struggle with the American Committee on East-West Accord. The subject of this struggle was détente: what did it mean and where was it leading the United States. Policy was important to both organizations, but the disposition and will of the intellectual, policy, and political community was both organizations' principal target. CPD was clearly more successful in this struggle, joining in a coalition with traditional conservatives and the New Right behind Reagan's assertive anti-communism, while moderates and liberals remained fragmented in the years after Vietnam. ACEWA has an important place in this struggle among elites, one that has since been neglected.

Both the boosters and the critics of détente complained during the 1970s that détente was a misunderstood policy. They also claimed that détente had been oversold by the Nixon Administration, a conclusion seconded by historians. ACEWA believed that

² Andrew J. Bacevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans are Seduced by War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). Campbell Craig and Frederik Logevall, *America's Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009). Laura Kalman, *Right-Star Rising: A New Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010). Sean Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008). Julian Zelizer, *Arsenal of Democracy: The Politics of National Security from World War II to the War on Terrorism* (New York: Basic Books, 2009).

³ Jacob Heilbrun, *They Knew They Were Right: The Rise of the Neocons* (New York: Doubleday, 2008). J. Peter Scoblic, *U.S. vs. Them* (New York: Viking, 2008).

Nixon had built unrealistic expectations that détente would bring an end to all U.S.-Soviet differences and that there would now be a wholesale change in Soviet behavior. I will argue that after 1974 détente was not misunderstood as much as its understanding was *contested*. The American Committee on East-West Accord and the Committee on the Present Danger were two groups who offered Americans competing ways of understanding détente and two radically different courses for American policy towards the Soviet Union.

Détente took place during a period of widely perceived crisis in American foreign and domestic policy. During and after the Vietnam War American hegemony was threatened internationally and disparaged domestically by the political Left and protests over Vietnam. The re-emergence of the Asian and European economies devastated by the Second World War gave the United States less economic leverage than it had once enjoyed. American energy supplies were threatened by oil embargoes and crises in the Middle East. By the early 1970s the Soviet Union had reached virtual strategic nuclear parity with the United States. Nixon's détente was in part a response to these indications of the relative decline of American power. The comparative domestic harmony of the 1950s and early 1960s had given way to campus and urban conflagrations in the late 1960s and the emergence of the culture wars in the 1970s. Post-World War II economic prosperity had given way to inflation and energy shortages. Watergate produced a profound and enduring crisis of confidence in American political leadership. America's collective self-confidence had arguably reached its post-World War II nadir, as evinced by Jimmy Carter's so-called "malaise" speech.

Appropriately or not, détente became closely associated with this period of American crisis and decline. Historians have noted the relationship between this association and Americans' dissatisfaction with détente.⁴ H.W. Brands has eloquently described the slide back towards Cold War attitudes as a “desire for landmarks in a confusing international landscape” and a return to “solid ground.”⁵ But Americans were not simply drawn naturally toward a renewed antipathy towards the Soviet Union; they were deliberately guided there. The Committee on the Present Danger helped lend intellectual justification for the association between détente and American decline, and CPD and Ronald Reagan exploited this association in order to denigrate détente in the minds of the American public. Members of CPD argued that détente was a central component of a “culture” of surrender, weakness and appeasement of American enemies, Soviet and others. This was a charge which neither ACEWA nor any other proponent of détente could effectively answer.

After defeat in Vietnam, Americans were more concerned with strength than peace, whereas during the later years of the Vietnam War peace had been Americans' foremost concern.⁶ Ronald Reagan and CPD advocated policies that appealed to the desire for a renewal of American strength – military spending and new weapons systems, a renewed effort to surpass the Soviet Union in strategic weaponry, and unwavering support for the United States' anti-communist allies. Reagan and CPD also evoked the

⁴ Particularly Lloyd Gardner, *A Covenant with Power: America and World Order from Wilson to Reagan*. (London: MacMillan, 1984), 214-222, and Thomas McCormick, *America's Half-Century* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1989), 195-203.

⁵ H.W. Brands *American Dreams: The United States Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Press, 2010), 212 and *The Devil We Knew* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 163.

⁶ William Schneider, “Conservatism, Not Interventionism: Trends in Foreign Policy Opinion, 1974-1982,” in Kenneth A. Oye, Robert J. Lieber, and Donald Rothchild, eds, *Eagle Defiant: United States Foreign Policy in the 1980s* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1983), 60.

memories of John Kennedy's administration, a time when the preeminence of American strength could not be questioned, and the final years in which Americans were united behind a foreign policy of opposing and containing the Soviet Union. That was a time when the United States could still claim an unblemished record in warfare. ACEWA's rejoinders that the Kennedy era had nearly produced nuclear disaster during the Cuban missile crisis and that blind adherence to containment had produced Vietnam had little appeal to Americans who were facing their own contemporary array of crises both foreign and domestic.

The period of U.S.-Soviet détente also coincided with major political realignments in the United States, and the fate détente was inexorably tied to these changes. ACEWA branded itself as apolitical and non-partisan, but by the 1980s, if not earlier, attitudes towards U.S.-Soviet relations had become sharply divided along partisan lines. Nixon's détente had frustrated the conservative anti-Communist wing of the Republican Party and also hawkish Democrats, most notably Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson of Washington. Additionally, the Watergate scandal had severely tainted the accomplishments of the Nixon Administration, including détente. The liberal Democratic candidacy of George McGovern in 1972 left many conservative leaning Democrats with the impression that their party had embraced the radicalism and diplomatic isolationism of the 1960s. Over the 1970s these so-called neoconservatives would drift ideologically closer towards the conservative wing of the Republican Party, which was increasingly personified by former California governor Ronald Reagan. Meanwhile, the Republican primaries of 1976, which pitted Reagan against President Gerald Ford, demonstrated that

détente was a non-starter within the Republican camp and that the GOP as a whole was shifting to the right. Jimmy Carter's election that year meant that a somewhat re-imagined form of détente would persist, but the constituency for such policies had dramatically shrunk since 1972.

As demonstrated by historians Laura Kalman and Sean Wilentz, the foreign and military policy positions of the Committee on the Present Danger were entwined with the wider agenda of the organizations and constituencies that would comprise the Reagan coalition of 1980.⁷ CPD, largely driven by a neoconservative agenda, was closely linked, both personally and intellectually, to the other elements that contributed to Reagan's election – which implanted in Washington the very attitudes and personalities that ACEWA fought back against. Foreign policy was a uniting factor among some of these groups and individuals that would have seemed disparate a decade before. So while neoconservatives might not all join in Phyllis Schlafly's warnings about the Equal Right Amendment, they were in agreement that the Soviet Union posed a continuing existential threat to the United States. And while the religious-minded Moral Majority and the neoconservatives were in many ways strange bedfellows, they both believed that the United States had a mission to confront evil not with the diplomat's pen, but with the sword.⁸ The CPD's message fed a larger narrative of the late 1970s, one that rang true to many Americans; they were part of a larger conservative movement. While many Americans supported elements of ACEWA's agenda – SALT II, increased trade with the Soviets – their arguments were complex, they seemed to sanction American decline, they

⁷ Kalman, *Right Star Rising*. Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*.

⁸ Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 89-95.

were stained by the legacy of Nixon, and ran counter to Americans' Cold War traditions. While CPD was an active component of this realignment, ACEWA, with a relative passivity, witnessed a dramatic decrease in the political capital of its own ideas. ACEWA proved to be incapable of operating in the changing political environment, while CPD thrived.

The prospects for continued détente collapsed when the United States failed to ratify the SALT II treaty and the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan late in 1979. The election of Ronald Reagan solidified the "new" or "second" Cold War. A resumed arms race eclipsed (but did not destroy) the structures of cooperation created by détente, and the rhetoric of confrontation replaced the rhetoric of cooperation. While Americans may have supported Reagan's proclamations of renewed prosperity and American strength and pride, they remained wary of the renewed Cold War that Reagan's election seemed to portend. In the spring of 1980 Americans believed Carter would perform better than Reagan in preserving peace with the Soviet Union, and a year later with Reagan in the White House nearly half of Americans believed that nuclear war was likely within the next ten years.⁹ One response to these trepidations was the Nuclear Freeze Movement, a wave of grassroots initiatives and popular protests whose goal was a bilateral halt to the nuclear arms race.

Superficially, the agendas of the American Committee on East-West Accord and the Nuclear Freeze Movement seemed to coincide. ACEWA backed George Kennan's

⁹ Gallup poll, "Candidate Best for Keeping Peace and for Dealing with Russia," April 26-27, 1980, in *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1980* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1981), 103-104. Gallup poll, "Nuclear War," April 19-22, 1981, in *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1981* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1982), 163-165.

1981 proposal that called for a fifty-percent reduction in the nuclear armaments of the United States and the Soviet Union. While prominent members of ACEWA publicly endorsed the Freeze, the Committee declined to throw their collective support behind the movement. The conclusions of Freeze scholar J. Michael Hogan further this seeming contradiction. Hogan argues that the Freeze relied on slogans and “fear and doom” to affect mass sympathy for their movement.¹⁰ The same criticisms are largely true of ACEWA, which trumpeted détente as “common sense;” they produced a film entitled *Survival or Suicide* which vividly warned of the dangers of nuclear war, presaging popular depictions of the prospect of nuclear holocaust in the early 1980s; at one point ACEWA contemplated a *New York Times* advertisement headlined “How to Start a Nuclear War;” and privately ACEWA leaders referred to their opponents as “the doomsday lobby.”

Hogan’s explanations of the Freeze’s shortcomings also offer insight into one of ACEWA’s significant failures: inability to overcome Americans’ historic mistrust of the Soviet Union and an inability to engage the Carter and Reagan Administrations politically.¹¹ While ACEWA and others argued that the Soviet leadership and the Soviet agenda had undergone great changes since the bad days of Stalin, these statements rang hollow as Americans were confronted with communist activity in Africa, Afghanistan and Central America and bombarded with the media’s coverage of the complaints of Soviet dissidents Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Andrei Sakharov and others. While many members of ACEWA opposed Reagan’s foreign policies, the co-chairmanship of staunch Republican

¹⁰ J. Michael Hogan, *The Nuclear Freeze: Rhetoric and Foreign Policy in the Telepolitical Age*. (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994), 32.

¹¹Ibid., 190-192.

Don Kendall and the membership of other Republican-leaning members of the business community prevented the Committee from vigorously opposing Reagan's election in 1980 and 1984. Though at times they made overtures towards popular opinion, ACEWA remained an organization of elites who insulated themselves from mass movements such as the Freeze and largely confined their message to the business and policy communities. A comparison of ACEWA and the Freeze offers great insight into the Committee's failure to halt the onset of the Second Cold War.

Historian Jeremi Suri posits that the international phenomenon of *détente* "preserved stability at the cost of progressive change," causing citizens to look beyond traditional power structures to realize the countercultural visions born during the 1960s. This proposition may offer additional insight into ACEWA's failure to build a consensus around *détente*. Between 1972 and 1980 there was a convergence of Cold War liberals (neoconservatives), traditional conservatives, and the New Right, who had differing ambitions and priorities but were united by a shared stalwart Cold War mindset and a general opposition to *détente*. Meanwhile, advocates of nuclear reduction and pacifism became disenchanted with the SALT process, which had failed to stop the arms race. This disenchantment eventually erupted in the Nuclear Freeze, which represented a "bottom-up" approach to arms reduction and eschewed the academic jargon of nuclear arsenals and the secretive, elitist deal-making of the Nixons, Kissingers, Carters, and Brezhnevs. The Freeze represented the set of people who were driven to look for non-state solutions as a result of Nixon's *détente*. ACEWA's uneasy stance towards the Freeze appears to have been a very poor calculation when viewed from this perspective. While it would

have been awkward and difficult for ACEWA to assume a leadership role within or alongside the Freeze, it would have had much more to gain from the popular momentum generated by the Freeze and little to lose considering their inability to sway Reagan Administration policy.

Suri asserts, “The distinction between foreign and domestic politics is artificial.”¹² This statement is particularly true of the politics of U.S.-Soviet détente in the United States. Suri argues that Richard Nixon and other world leaders engaged in international cooperation in order to provide mutual legitimization of leaders whose authority was being challenged domestically. Détente was something of a political masterstroke for Nixon in 1972, allowing him to undercut George McGovern’s liberal criticisms of the Cold War and the war in Vietnam. Suri argues that détente was a fundamentally conservative endeavor to preserve stability in the face of global revolution.¹³ While Suri is correct in arguing that “détente normalized the Cold War instead of replacing it with something better,” his thesis (at least when it is applied strictly to the United States) is only relevant to the Nixon Administration.

Nixon launched détente to serve the political needs of his own administration, both domestically and internationally. But détente created new structures of U.S.-Soviet engagement and Nixon, scandalized and driven from office, lost the ability to control these structures as well as the meaning of détente. Among these new and lasting structures of engagement were greatly increased U.S.-Soviet trade, the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) talks, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe

¹² Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolutions and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 213.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 260-262.

(CSCE), and the Mutual Bilateral Force Reduction talks. After Nixon lost control of these structures, other actors utilized them to reform the U.S.-Soviet relationship. Beginning in 1972 Senator Jackson attempted to use the prospect of increased U.S.-Soviet trade to extract concessions from the Soviet Union on Jewish immigration. The CSCE provided affirmation of the European power structure but also contained human rights provisions that would eventually undermine the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe.¹⁴ In 1977 Jimmy Carter tried to use the SALT talks to go beyond arms limitation to arms reduction. These were all initiatives that took place under the umbrella of détente, but they were reformist, not conservative.

While ACEWA was certainly not a radical or revolutionary organization and its members did see the value of détente for promoting political and military stability, some also saw in détente the possibility for a progressive approach to U.S.-U.S.S.R. relations. ACEWA advanced the proposition that détente could, at the very least, “de-fang” the Cold War of its ideological and military (especially nuclear) components, not just in the short term, but also for the foreseeable future. ACEWA advocated for a continuous expansion of U.S.-Soviet trade, claiming that deeper economic ties would further deter conflict. They pushed for a fifty-percent reduction of the U.S.-Soviet strategic arsenals, and a treaty which would forbid the United States or Soviet Union from foreign military intervention, either directly or by proxy. ACEWA’s existence and initiatives, as well as the CSCE and the aforementioned initiatives of Jackson and Carter, demonstrate the

¹⁴ Michael Cotey Morgan “The United States and the Making of the Helsinki Final Act” in *Nixon in the World: American Foreign Relations: 1969-1977*, eds. Fredrik Logevall and Andrew Preston (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 177-179.

limitations of Suri's argument. Still, his argument remains useful for understanding the debates on détente in the United States.

The history of the American Committee on East-West Accord suggests that, counter to Jeremi Suri's argument, détente ultimately contributed to the progressive change in U.S.-Soviet relations achieved by Gorbachev and Reagan, in norms if not in policy. ACEWA was imbued with the promise of détente and continued to be the standard bearer for far-reaching U.S.-Soviet negotiations even after the concept became controversial and unpopular. Détente raised expectations (somewhat unrealistically in the short term) that such negotiations could reduce the chances that the Cold War would produce hot wars. These expectations were another feature of détente that outlasted Nixon. ACEWA was imbued with these expectations that the Cold War would end without an obvious victor – and served as a beacon for like-minded elites. Its existence demonstrated that some large portion of elite Americans and the policy community would support further U.S.-Soviet negotiations. In the final years of the Cold War, the negotiations conducted by the Reagan and Bush administrations were not radical policy departures and were not widely seen as Cold War apostasy. Although détente failed in many ways, it produced largely unintended consequences that paved the way for the momentous events of the late 1980s.

In the wake of America's failure in Vietnam and in the midst of a new, seemingly troubled relationship with the Soviet Union and the larger communist world, the American-Committee on East-West Accord and the Committee on the Present Danger each presented conflicting propositions for American foreign policy and offered divergent

prescriptions for how Americans should view U.S.-Soviet relations. A reading of the prominent members of both organizations throughout their history is instructive: many were once in diplomatic and military positions in the Kennedy Administration.¹⁵ These men who had once, at least nominally, supported a common vision for American foreign and military policy now offered visions that were nearly mirror opposites. That consensus, which had once imbued American attitudes towards the Cold War, had fractured. The liberal-led foreign and domestic policies of the 1960s had resulted in American defeat and decline abroad and radical discord and violence on the home front. Détente, as Suri writes, “preserved stability at the cost of progressive change,” and the would-be revolutionary leftists dropped out of participation in the state system.¹⁶ On the back end of Suri’s détente (and Watergate) two groups fought to control the dialogue on U.S.-Soviet relations; a dialogue that once was very narrow was now a chasm of debate. In the 1970s old verities of America’s role in the world and its relationship with the Soviet Union would either be reaffirmed or discarded. It was the Committee on the Present Danger and the American Committee on East-West Accord that most distinctly framed that set of choices. In this sense this work on the American Committee on East-West Accord seeks to explain how Jeremi Suri’s détente evolved in the United States after Richard Nixon, its practitioner, was no longer in power to shape it.

The following chapter will provide a narrative history of ACEWA from its founding in 1974 in response to the Jackson-Vanik amendment to the election of 1980. It

¹⁵ In ACEWA: George Kennan, J. K. Galbraith, George Ball, Robert McNamara, William Attwood, McGeorge Bundy, Sargent Shriver, and Averell Harriman. In CPD: Eugene Rostow, Dean Rusk, C. Douglas Dillon, Maxwell Taylor, and Paul Nitze.

¹⁶ Suri, *Power and Protest*, 260-262.

will discuss ACEWA's efforts to promote their organization and their mission as well as their attempts to influence Carter Administration policy; and compare Carter's Soviet policy to ACEWA's own position. This chapter will also analyze ACEWA's conception of détente and its importance for the future of U.S.-Soviet relations. I will argue that ACEWA demonstrates the enduring normative legacy and the flexibility of the concept of détente while ACEWA itself demonstrated inflexibility and short-sightedness while promoting détente.

The third chapter will contrast the philosophies and tactics of the American Committee on East-West Accord and the Committee on the Present Danger. I will discuss the political and intellectual origins of CPD and their activities during the Carter Administration and how all of these differed from ACEWA. This chapter will compare the efforts of these two organizations to exercise influence in the U.S. Senate on the all-important SALT II Treaty. I will offer an appraisal of why CPD saw greater success in promoting its message and speaking to the immediate concerns of the American people.

The fourth and final chapter will discuss ACEWA's activities and initiatives during the 1980s. This chapter will deal with ACEWA's lukewarm relationship with the Nuclear Freeze movement, which refocused Americans attention on the nuclear arms race. I will discuss the internal difficulties that ACEWA faced in addressing renewed U.S.-Soviet tensions and in dealing with the Reagan Administration. This chapter will also address ACEWA's changing role in the face of new U.S.-Soviet negotiations and internal changes within the Committee. This chapter will be followed by a conclusion which will

address the importance of ACEWA and détente for the end of the Cold War and its lasting legacy in American foreign policy.

CHAPTER TWO: “AN UNUSUAL ALLIANCE.”

“If we don’t solve the problem of U.S.-Soviet Relations, there won’t be others to solve.”

- American Committee on East-West Accord advertisement

The organization that would become the American Committee on East-West Accord began to coalesce in the politically turbulent summer of 1974. Over the next decade it would grow to include hundreds of members and address an array of issues related to U.S.-Soviet relations. In the early years of its existence, however, it was diminutive in scope and membership. It began as the personal project of one man, Fred Warner Neal, who formed the Committee to organize resistance to the Jackson-Vanik amendment, a piece of legislation that threatened the essential economic elements of U.S.-Soviet détente.

The organization that Neal founded consisted of members of the diplomatic, military, business, religious, and scientific communities, united behind the concept of détente. ACEWA believed that détente had fundamentally altered the nature of U.S.-Soviet relations, and it articulated an agenda for détente that it believed would eventually end the Cold War. ACEWA was founded to demonstrate that there was broad-based elite support for détente and its members hoped to form a foreign policy consensus around détente in order to protect it from critics within the United States. ACEWA sought to create a favorable discourse on détente by discrediting these critics and presenting their own case for détente. The Committee also attempted to use its standing as an elite, well-

connected organization to influence policy in Washington and shape media coverage of U.S.-Soviet relations.

ACEWA faced internal hindrances in carrying out their mission. Its desire to elevate détente from political wrangling left it ill-prepared to engage its opponents or criticize the Carter Administration's handling of Soviet policy. The business representatives within ACEWA confined their arguments on the economic benefits of détente to other elite business interests, missing an opportunity to sell the potential benefits of détente to the public in a time of economic uncertainty. Perhaps most significantly, ACEWA was so consumed with the domestic threats to détente that it ignored the reality that Soviet behavior could also hurt the possibility of U.S.-Soviet cooperation, diminishing the credibility of their arguments.

Despite ACEWA's notable shortcomings and its failure to build a consensus around détente, the organization survived the foreign policy debates of the 1970s and the effective end of détente following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. The Committee's resilience and continued adherence to its policy positions served to preserve some elements of the original promise of détente.

The Senator from Boeing and the Professor from California

Washington State Senator Henry M. "Scoop" Jackson was the earliest, most vociferous, and most consistent critic of détente. Long a hawk on foreign and military policy, he had earned the moniker "Senator from Boeing" for his success in steering

defense contracts to the aircraft manufacturer in his home state. Jackson had his sights on a run at the White House in 1976 and hoped to unite the Democratic Party behind a liberal domestic policy and an assertive anti-communist foreign policy – post-World War II Democratic traditions that had seemingly been jettisoned by the party's nomination of George McGovern in 1972. Jackson had long been critical of arms control, including the 1972 SALT agreement, but the expansion of U.S.-U.S.S.R. trade relations under Nixon gave him the opportunity to build a broader support for his presidential campaign.¹⁷

The Jackson-Vanik amendment (co-sponsored by Democratic Representative Charles Vanik of Ohio) conditioned the approval of U.S.-Soviet trade agreements on the liberalization of Soviet emigration policy. With the amendment Jackson succeeded in focusing the debate on the plight of Jews within the Soviet Union and the restrictions placed on Jewish immigration by the Soviet state. Jackson and other supporters of the bill saw the chance to appeal to Jewish voters by highlighting the abuse of Jews in the Soviet Union. Jackson's legislation also gained the support of liberals such as Ted Kennedy and Walter Mondale, who were drawn to the amendment as an initiative for human rights. Jackson's reservations, first debated in 1972, remained a point of contention and negotiations between Jackson, Moscow, and the Nixon (later Ford) Administration. When the amendment was implemented in its final version in January 1975, the Soviet Union voided the 1972 trade agreements, considering Jackson-Vanik to be a violation of

¹⁷ Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 51-52. Zelizer, *Arsenal of Democracy*, 247-248.

their domestic sovereignty. The end result of Jackson's machinations was effectively an end to the trade component of détente.¹⁸

Fred Warner Neal, then a professor of international relations at Claremont Graduate School in southern California, must have viewed these developments with apprehension. In various ways throughout his life, Neal had been connected to foreign policy and national politics. He was a foreign correspondent for the *Wall Street Journal* from 1939 to 1943 and then served in the Air Force in the Soviet Union during World War II. Neal earned a doctorate in international relations from the University of Michigan and was a Nieman Fellow at Harvard. From 1946 to 1948 he worked in the State Department as a consultant on Soviet affairs and as chief of the Foreign Research Office for Eastern Europe.¹⁹ In 1968 he made a failed run at a southern California congressional seat as an anti-war Democrat. Neal was a Soviet specialist and had several high-ranking connections in Moscow as well as a lifetime of contacts in American media, academia, and foreign policy circles.

Neal feared that the Jackson-Vanik amendment would cause the détente process as a whole to deteriorate, threatening arms control and possibly plunging the United States back into the Cold War. Neal had been approaching prospective members for a committee in support of détente since at least the spring of 1974.²⁰ Originally named the

¹⁸ Raymond Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan*, revised edition. (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1994), 512-513.

¹⁹ Fred Warner Neal, ed. *Pacem in Terris IV: American-Soviet Détente, Peace and National Security*. (Santa Barbara, CA: Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, 1976). Fred Warner Neal, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Soviet Union*. (Santa Barbara, CA: Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, 1961).

²⁰ Neal claimed to have consulted with Secretary of State Henry Kissinger prior to forming the Committee. He also claimed to have had "continuing conversations" with Kissinger through 1976.

American Committee on U.S.-Soviet Relations, its immediate task was to defeat the Jackson-Vanik amendment.²¹ From the beginning the larger goal was to defend détente by explaining its benefits (especially avoiding nuclear war) to the American public and to lobby Congress on behalf of a more cooperative approach to dealing with the Soviets. Neal also charged the Committee with “defining détente” and envisioned it as a bulwark against Jackson and others who were increasingly portraying détente as a “one-way street . . . doing the Russians a favor.”²² From its inception the Committee had the twin goals of influencing both perception and policy.

The Committee, which announced its formation on July 10, 1974, had thirty-eight members who were drawn mostly from academic circles. There were two notable exceptions: Don Kendall of Pepsi Co., and Thomas Watson Jr. of IBM.²³ Throughout its history, the Committee would be an alliance of businesspersons who had a direct interest in increased U.S.-Soviet trade (Pepsi was selling American soft-drinks in the U.S.S.R. and Soviet vodka in the United States) as well as academics and various policy specialists who did not have the same personal or commercial interests at stake in détente. This divergence of interests would, in time, both steer and hinder the Committee’s direction.

The Committee was a disorganized and financially destitute organization in its early years. There was a diffused leadership in the form of an executive committee, but Neal seems to have provided all of the initiative. The Committee remained

Kissinger makes no mention of Neal or the Committee in his memoirs. Letter, Fred Warner Neal to Exec. Committee, ACUSSR, October 14, 1974, Box 146, JKG.

²¹ Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, “The Détente Lobby and the Jackson Amendment,” *Washington Post*, July 17, 1974, A21.

²² Letter, Fred Warner Neal to American Committee on U.S.-Soviet Relations Executive Committee, October 14, 1974. Box 186, John Kenneth Galbraith Papers, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library (hereafter JKG).

²³ Bernard Gwertzman, “U.S. Group to Back Détente is Set-Up,” *New York Times*, July 11, 1974, 5.

unincorporated until 1977, making personal and corporate contributions difficult. John Kenneth Galbraith, a prominent economist, author, and personal friend of Neal, personally provided a significant portion of the Committee's operating expenses in the early going.²⁴ The Committee grew slowly, barely doubling its membership by January 1977, and members were regularly solicited for donations to keep the Committee afloat.²⁵ It coasted along as loose association of Cold War doves and American business interests, with Neal as a guiding figure, but hardly a leader. Without any prospects for funding and without a cohesive strategy the Committee was in jeopardy of slipping into obscurity or fading out of existence.

Searching for Direction

As the new American Committee on U.S.-Soviet relations stagnated, the Gerald Ford Administration placed détente on hold. After reaching a preliminary agreement with Soviet party leader Leonid Brezhnev in November 1974 on the second Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II), Ford found the political landscape in the United States to be inhospitable to new agreements with the Soviets. Nixon could ensure Republican acceptance of détente, but Ford did not have the anti-communist caché to contain conservative opposition. By late 1975 Ford was facing a challenge for the presidential nomination from the conservative wing of his own party in the form of Ronald Reagan. Without disavowing détente, Ford banished the term from his campaign lexicon (he

²⁴ Letter, Neal to Executive Committee, ACUSSR October 14, 1974, Box 186, JKG.

²⁵ Letter, Neal to Executive Committee, ACUSSR, January 7, 1977, Box 186, JKG.

replaced it with “peace through strength”), relegating U.S.-Soviet relations to a kind of electoral purgatory for all of 1976.²⁶ The next administration would dictate the future of détente.

Forced into the nebulous position of defending a set of controversial policies, which the Ford Administration would neither promote nor renounce, the American Committee on U.S.-Soviet Relations reached for help. In January 1975 the Committee hired Carl M. Marcy as a consultant. Marcy held a Ph. D. in international law and international relations and had served as Chief of Staff for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee from 1955 to 1973 where he had worked with Chairman J. William Fulbright. Since his retirement from the Foreign Relations Committee in 1973, Marcy had worked as a consultant for the nuclear watchdog group Council for a Livable World and other organizations.²⁷

Marcy knew his way around Washington and had ideas on how to present ACEWA's message to legislative and policy circles. After being hired by the Committee he arranged for the publication of a full-page advertisement in the *Washington Post* on January 31, 1975. While the ad lacked any visual flare, it was the first thorough public explanation of the Committee's position, stressing the benefits of “friendly cooperation” and “mutual confidence” and arguing that the Jackson-Vanik amendment detracted from détente without improving the Soviet Union's human rights policies.²⁸ Neal and others in the Committee were impressed with the response to the ad (including \$500 in desperately

²⁶ Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 64. Zelizer, *Arsenal of Democracy*, 267.

²⁷ “Carl M. Marcy, Chief of Staff, Foreign Relations Committee, 1955-1973,” Oral History Interviews, Senate Historical Office, Washington, D.C.

²⁸ Display Ad, *Washington Post*, January 31, 1975, A9.

needed donations) and with Marcy's initiative on behalf of the Committee. Neal scraped together \$2,000 in contributions to pay Marcy for handling the responses to the ad (including donations and new memberships) and for drafting a fund-raising memo to members. A relieved Neal called Marcy "a good find" and was comfortable giving Marcy day-to-day control of the Committee.²⁹

The Committee's interest in arms control appealed to Marcy, but he must have seen the need for a major organizational overhaul immediately – he later described the Committee under Neal as "very, very informal" and one later director of the Committee described its early finances as "a mess."³⁰ Through diligent and desperate fundraising the Committee raised enough money in 1975 and 1976 to retain Marcy as a consultant. By the end of 1976 there was enough cash on hand to open an office in Washington and to pay Marcy as the full-time director and hire a secretary.³¹ Marcy began the process of reorganizing and incorporating the Committee to gain tax-exempt status, hoping to make the Committee more attractive to corporate and foundation donors.³²

In late 1976 the Committee hired Jeanne Vaughn Mattison who would serve with Marcy as co-director following the ongoing reorganization. After a brief career as an actress, Mattison had worked for several anti-Vietnam War organizations during the 1960s and had landed alongside Marcy at the Council for a Livable World. Her organizational and fundraising experience complemented Marcy's knowledge of

²⁹ Letter, Neal to J. Kenneth Galbraith, February 19, 1975, Box 146, JKG.

³⁰ "Carl M. Marcy, Chief of Staff, Foreign Relations Committee, 1955-1973," Oral History Interviews, Senate Historical Office, Washington, D.C. Jeanne M. Gayler, telephone interview with author, September 30, 2011.

³¹ Letter, Neal to Executive Committee, ACUSSR, January 7, 1977, Box 186, JKG.

³² Letter, Carl Marcy to Executive Committee, ACUSSR, March 23, 1977, Box 332, JKG.

Washington and policy making. Mattison had worked in Washington since the late 1960s, but she was entering a different sphere when she joined the Committee. In the 1970s foreign policy and strategic arms policy circles were still firmly the province of elite-educated men. The Committee itself had only four women out of a total membership of over one hundred, and Mattison was the only woman who would serve in a leadership role throughout the Committee's existence. Though rarely expressed to Mattison directly, there was skepticism of her competence from the beginning of her tenure.³³

As the American-Committee on U.S.-Soviet Relations re-ordered its own house, détente became an important issue in the 1976 presidential election. Ford had edged Ronald Reagan for the Republican nomination, but the ensuing convention denounced détente and signaled the rightward shift of the Republican Party. Meanwhile, Jimmy Carter had won the Democratic nomination (over Scoop Jackson and others) and went on to narrowly defeat Ford. Carter had supported arms control during his campaign, but was also critical of the secrecy with which Nixon, Ford, and Kissinger had engaged in détente. Carter had also promoted human rights as a cornerstone for American foreign policy, a nod to Jackson supporters, and a signal that he might sustain the Jackson-Vanik amendment and criticisms of Soviet human rights abuses. The prospects for continued détente were still unclear, but members of the American Committee on U.S.-Soviet Relations saw an opportunity to assert their influence on a new administration.³⁴

Another development galvanized the Committee to prepare itself to fight for continued détente. Shortly after Carter's victory in November, a group of former military

³³ Gayler interview.

³⁴ Letter, Fred Warner Neal to J. Kenneth Galbraith, January 25, 1977, Box 78, JKG. Letter, William Attwood to Fred Warner Neal, July 23, 1976, Folder 22, Box 13, WHA.

and diplomatic officials announced the formation of the Committee on the Present Danger (CPD). CPD was a reincarnation of an elite organization from the 1950s which had combated isolationist sentiments and advocated a stronger American military posture. The new Committee on the Present Danger's stated goal was to warn Americans that "the principal threat to our nation, to world peace, and to the cause of human freedom is the Soviet drive for dominance based upon an unparalleled military buildup." They argued that only after increasing defense spending to match Soviet expenditures could the U.S. "pursue a positive and confident diplomacy" and establish "reliable conditions of peace with the Soviet Union, rather than an illusory détente."³⁵ The American Committee on U.S.-Soviet Relations now had an organized opposition with superior funding sources (\$250,000 for the CPD to the American Committee's \$20,000 as of the beginning of 1977) with the common task of swaying the Carter Administration's defense and Soviet policies.³⁶ The task of organizing and invigorating the Committee took on a new immediacy.

Organizing East-West Accord

Carl Marcy had two immediate tasks to put the Committee on proper footing. The Committee needed to be federally incorporated as a 501(c)(3), tax-exempt educational organization to receive tax-deductible contributions. Second, Marcy needed a functional

³⁵ "On U.S. Dealings With the Soviet Union," *New York Times*, January 11, 1977.

³⁶ "Former Top U.S. Officials to challenge Carter on Any Cuts in Defense Budgets," *Los Angeles Times*, November 9, 1976. Summary financial statement, January 1, 1976-December 1, 1976, American Committee on U.S.-Soviet Relations, Box 186, JKG.

leadership structure to coordinate expanded initiatives and formalize his and Jeanne Mattison's positions as co-directors. With these changes the American Committee on U.S.-Soviet Relations was effectively folded into a newly incorporated committee named the American Committee on East-West Accord (ACEWA). On paper this was an entirely new organization with a formalized structure, but the mission of the Committee did not change.

The name change was to some degree an attempt at preemptive re-branding. Some members were concerned that a name indicating a specific focus on U.S.-Soviet relations would have the effect of pigeonholing the Committee, reducing its ability to raise money. Members also feared that the original name "gave Cold War people a gratuitous stick" to attack the Committee, and a new name might insulate it from such attacks.³⁷ Some members thought that the Committee should not bend to its opposition, and the issue of the Committee's name would remain a minor issue of contention over the next decade.³⁸

Marcy and Mattison ran the day-to-day operations of the reorganized Committee. Marcy also occupied the office of Secretary-Treasurer, with Robert D. Schmidt of Control Data Corporation as President and Fred Neal as Executive Vice-President. These offices held little official power, although Neal's position allowed him to retain some titular authority over the Committee that was his offspring.³⁹ A board of directors, numbering between ten and twenty members and approved by the general membership,

³⁷ Letter, Carl Marcy to Executive Committee, ACUSSR, March 23, 1977, Box 332, JKG.

³⁸ Letter, J. Kenneth Galbraith to Carl Marcy, March 30, 1977, Box 332, JKG. Letter, Carl Marcy to George Kennan, May 18, 1977, Folder 7, Box 144, George F. Kennan Papers, Seeley G. Mudd Library, Princeton University (hereafter GFK).

³⁹ Gayler interview.

approved major decisions and initiatives. A trio of prominent public figures assumed the role of co-chairs: John Kenneth Galbraith, George Kennan, and Donald Kendall.

The chairs were specifically chosen to be the public faces of ACEWA, to project a non-partisan and non-ideological orientation, and to convey an image of elite leadership and authority. Don Kendall of Pepsi Co. was a committed Republican and a friend and staunch supporter of Richard Nixon. John Kenneth Galbraith was the nation's most prominent liberal economist, a best-selling author, John F. Kennedy's ambassador to India, and a former head of Americans for Democratic Action, the organization that defined Cold War liberalism in the 1950s and 1960s. George Kennan was essentially apolitical. He had achieved iconic status as the original theorist of the U.S. strategy of containment in the 1940s and then as a prominent critic of the strategy as practiced during the Vietnam War. The chairs presented an image of ACEWA that its leaders hoped would mirror future public perception of U.S.-Soviet détente – an apolitical consensus of elites united behind a sea-change in U.S.-Soviet relations.

George Kennan had supported the contours of Nixon's détente and joined the Committee's general membership in the fall of 1974. He accepted his position as co-chair reluctantly. From the formation of ACEWA, Kennan worried over the demands his leadership might place upon his responsibilities as a Princeton scholar and public intellectual. Marcy reassured him that the Committee was not looking for his active leadership: "it's your name, your reputation for integrity, candor and knowledge that counts."⁴⁰ But Kennan, concerned with preserving the autonomy and authority of his opinions, rarely allowed ACEWA to use the force of his name in any of its publicly stated

⁴⁰ Letter, Carl Marcy to George Kennan, May 18, 1977, Folder 7, Box 144, GFK.

positions. Kennan's name carried great weight in the sphere of American diplomacy, but he never allowed his reputation to significantly assist ACEWA's initiatives. At the same time Marcy and Mattison would have to take care that their activities did not sully Kennan's academically detached and dignified reputation.

Kennan lent ACEWA diplomatic legitimacy; Don Kendall conveyed the same degree of legitimacy within the business community. Kendall has risen through the ranks of Pepsi-Cola Co. from salesman to chairman during the 1950s and 1960s, including serving as president of overseas operations, tripling Pepsi's international sales in that capacity. Kendall was a long-time friend and associate of Richard Nixon who had raised money for his campaigns in 1968 and 1972 and served as an informal adviser on corporate and foreign affairs.⁴¹ Kendall had been a member of the U.S.-U.S.S.R. Trade and Economic Council and had led the business community's opposition to the Jackson-Vanik amendment.⁴² Kendall served as a beacon for business interests who sought expanded trade with the Soviet Union. Beyond being Nixon's friend and booster, Kendall was known as a dyed-in-the-wool Republican. Pro-détente Republicans were becoming a rare breed in the late 1970s. By 1980 it was no longer reasonable to regard détente as an issue with any bi-partisan appeal. In spite of this trend ACEWA remained tied to its bipartisan position, symbolized by Kendall's co-chairmanship.

John Kenneth Galbraith was both the foremost liberal figure and academic member of the American Committee on East-West Accord. Galbraith would have been a

⁴¹ Arthur M. Louis, *The Tycoons*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981), 79-92. Beverage Forum, Donald M. Kendall Biography, <http://www.beverageforum.com/bevforumbios2004.htm>. Accessed December 12, 2011.

⁴² Leslie H. Gelb "Congress isn't Giving Anything," *New York Times*, September 30, 1973.

natural leader in defending attacks on détente by conservatives and the Committee on the Present Danger, but this is a role he never embraced. Although he had retired from Harvard in 1975, Galbraith nevertheless was an active scholar and public intellectual, and occupied himself with a diverse array of projects and organizations in the 1970s and 1980s. Galbraith was dismissive of the impact of détente's critics, including the CPD whom he privately called "idiotic" and joked that "the Russians obviously don't need friends" with American conservatives as enemies.⁴³ Galbraith retained an incongruous optimism about the state of U.S.-Soviet relations even as they began to ice over in late 1979.

As the stature of the Committee chairs indicates, ACEWA aimed to project an elite and distinguished image. This stature was also reflected in the general membership, which overwhelmingly consisted of individuals with institutional prominence, in academia, faith organizations, the defense and diplomatic establishment, and the business community. Fred Warner Neal envisioned a "small but high-level" organization of "responsible and prominent Americans whose devotion to the national interest could not be questioned."⁴⁴ ACEWA was well-equipped to work within the legislative and policy bureaucracy in Washington and to interface with other elite organizations. ACEWA conceived of itself, in part, as a beacon of respectability: they were not radicals, New Left revisionists, socialists or fellow travelers. American Committee on East-West Accord banners would never wave in the streets. They were elite, establishment figures organized as a demonstration to other elite establishment figures that détente was politically

⁴³ Letter, J. Kenneth Galbraith to Fred Warner Neal, March 28, 1977, Box 332, JKG. Letter, Galbraith to Carl Marcy, November 22, 1977, Box 243, JKG.

⁴⁴ Letter, Neal to ACEWA board of directors, September 19, 1977, Folder 7, Box 144, GFK.

acceptable – that what Galbraith called “the fear of being thought soft on Communism,” might no longer be anything to fear at all.⁴⁵ When ACEWA took their case to the American public directly it was an attempt to coax rather than lead.

Defining and Defending Détente

Identification of the collective philosophy of an organization with a diverse background is difficult to achieve with any precision. This is especially true when the issue at hand is complex as détente. The American Committee on East-West Accord took official positions on the policies of détente, but individual members naturally emphasized some elements over others based on their backgrounds. Despite these variations, there are several unifying themes and organizing principles that can be extracted from ACEWA’s public pronouncements and the private correspondence of its members.

ACEWA promoted an idealized, progressive vision of détente. Détente, ACEWA believed, had both revolutionized U.S.-Soviet relations and altered the American mindset about how to deal with the Soviet Union – all that was needed after Watergate was new leadership. Its members argued that détente could be more successful and accomplish more only if American leaders recommitted themselves to the process. The Committee consistently characterized détente as a forward-moving process, indefinite in duration, with continuous expansion of U.S.-Soviet cooperation and incremental amelioration of the superpower relationship. This conception likened the diplomatic process of détente to

⁴⁵ J. Kenneth Galbraith, “The Arms Race and American Politics” in Fred Warner Neal, ed., *Détente or Debacle: Common Sense in U.S.-Soviet Relations* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co.: 1979), 48.

a swimming shark – to survive it must continue to move forward. ACEWA members regularly used the language of progressive movement to describe détente. A public statement by the Committee in 1975 warned, “The momentum of détente must not be allowed to slacken,” and in 1977 another publication urged “Let’s put détente back on the rails.”⁴⁶ Conversely, the language of demobilization and regression – “stagnation,” “falter,” and “inertia” – was used to describe impediments and setbacks to détente.⁴⁷ This was a progressive vision for détente, anchored in a brighter future, in which U.S.-Soviet trade would naturally expand and flourish, arms limitation treaties would break through to arms reduction, and burgeoning cultural and scientific exchanges would thaw the popular enmity between the two nations from the top down. This vision was not an end to the basic superpower rivalry: détente was an end in and of itself. One member described this “progressively broadening détente” as “an ongoing and future process” with a need for “durable policy.” Don Kendall told a regional Chamber of Commerce in 1977 that “the fundamental ideological hostility of the political systems had not changed” but the realization by both the United States and the Soviet Union that they would “live side by side in the world for a long, long time and a consequent conviction both of the futility and of the dangers of continuing the attitudes of the Cold War” had produced détente.⁴⁸ ACEWA conceived of détente as a diplomatic process that would progressively, over the long term, de-fang the superpower relationship. ACEWA supporter J. William Fulbright

⁴⁶ ACEWA advertisement, *Washington Post*, January 31, 1975, A9. Samuel Pizar “Let’s Put Détente Back on the Rails,” in *Détente or Debacle*, 1-10.

⁴⁷ Fred Warner Neal, “Inertia on SALT,” *Washington Post*, January 22, 1979, A21

⁴⁸ Stephen F. Cohen, “Soviet Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy,” and Donald M. Kendall, “U.S.-Soviet Trade, Peace and Prosperity,” in *Détente or Debacle*, 20, 39-40.

expressed the promise that détente offered: “to promote the exchange of people and decrease the possibility of the exchange of missiles.”⁴⁹

The components of this idealized vision of détente were bilateral agreements and constructive cooperation on many levels. As an organization of intellectual, policy, and business elites, ACEWA envisioned cooperative exchanges with Soviet elites both in and out of government. Trade was the most heavily emphasized area of cooperation, but there was also potential for cooperation in the fields of public health, transportation, environmental protection, and all manner of scientific endeavors. This dialogue between “leading figures” as Kendall described, would “encourage a psychological pattern and attitude of cooperation.”⁵⁰ Private and civilian cooperation would be mirrored by the more pressing military and diplomatic negotiations on arms control, conventional force reductions, and international conflict resolution. While generally supportive of the components of détente as engineered by Nixon and Kissinger, it is important to note that ACEWA entirely rejected Kissinger’s tactic of “linkage” by which Soviet behavior or compliance in one area was tied to American cooperation in other diplomatic areas. ACEWA held up the Jackson-Vanik amendment as an example of the total failure of linkage, with disastrous results for détente. They pointed out (accurately) that Senator Jackson’s public exhortation on the issue of Jewish immigration led to a Soviet crackdown on immigration, while the Nixon and Ford Administrations’ private negotiations with the Soviet Union had previously produced more liberal immigration

⁴⁹ J.W. Fulbright, “Lend Lease Debts to Pay for Educational Exchanges,” *Just For the Press: Items on East West Relations*, Vol. I, No. 2, January, 1978, American Committee on East-West Accord.

⁵⁰ Kendall “U.S.-Soviet Trade, Peace and Prosperity,” in *Détente or Debacle*, 40.

policies.⁵¹ ACEWA promoted détente as an effort to seek out the areas where constructive agreements could be reached and American and Soviet interests coincided – chiefly the prevention of nuclear war – and elided areas where the two superpowers were unlikely to agree.

Preventing an “exchange of missiles” was ACEWA’s biggest private concern and their most earnest public appeal. By the early 1980s five of the Committee’s ten public positions concerned nuclear arsenals, doctrines, and negotiations.⁵² As U.S.-Soviet relations deteriorated during the late 1970s, ACEWA promoted détente as “an alternative to blowing each other up.”⁵³ An afterthought, but one related to this goal, was an end to the costly and wasteful arms race and unnecessary military expenditures. This potential benefit was often related to criticisms of the military-industrial complex usually expressed in speeches by Galbraith and promoted by the Committee. Overall, the greatest virtue of détente as presented by ACEWA was the prevention of nuclear annihilation. As U.S.-Soviet tensions increased in the late 1970s and early 1980s ACEWA expressed this theme with increasing vigor. A proposed ACEWA advertisement from 1978 concluded with this warning (capitalized in the original): “IF WE DON’T SOLVE THE PROBLEM OF U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS, THERE WON’T BE OTHERS TO SOLVE.”⁵⁴

The leaders of ACEWA did not necessarily believe that the collapse of détente would inevitably lead to a nuclear exchange or nuclear tensions that would be greater

⁵¹ The Soviets had responded by allowing Jewish immigration to increase to 35,000 between 1970 and 1973. Immigration then dropped to 13,000 by 1975. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 509-514.

⁵² ACEWA, Basic Positions, March, 1982, Folder 3, Box 14, William H. Attwood Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society (Hereafter WHA).

⁵³ *Just For the Press*, Vol. I, No. 5, July/August 1978.

⁵⁴ Draft advertisement, ACEWA, November 2, 1978, Folder 7, Box 144, GFK.

than during the height of the Cold War. They argued, rather, that the end of détente would bring a return to the scale of nuclear tensions that had characterized the 1950s and early 1960s. It was not a new threat that ACEWA warned of, it was an old threat: the threat of the Cold War past. ACEWA contextualized détente within the larger history of the Cold War, presenting a contrast between the relatively low U.S.-Soviet tensions of the Nixon era and those of the Eisenhower and Kennedy Administrations. It can be argued that ACEWA's rhetoric was at times alarmist – it stemmed from the Committee's desire to remind Americans of the recent past in which the prospect of nuclear war was far more evident. ACEWA saw the possibility of “returning” to the Cold War as particularly acute because of the confrontational rhetoric from voices such as the Committee on the Present Danger. While it may have appeared that ACEWA was overstating the threat of nuclear war in the mid-1970s, developments in U.S.-Soviet relations during the early 1980s bear out their proposition that the end of détente would induce a “new” Cold War.

ACEWA saw a host of obstacles preventing full public acceptance and official implementation of their conceptions of détente, but these impediments all revolved around what ACEWA described as “Cold Warriors,” “paranoids,” and “the scare tactics of alarmists” in American government and policy circles.⁵⁵ There was an increasingly organized opposition to détente and arms control among groups such as the American Security Council, the Coalition for Peace Through Strength, and especially the Committee on the Present Danger. ACEWA portrayed these groups as essentially warmongers (Galbraith termed them the “warrior class”) and living anachronisms during

⁵⁵ Press Release, ACEWA, November 13, 1978, Box 146, JKG. Letter, Carl Marcy to George Kennan, May 2, 1977, and draft advertisement, ACEWA, November 2, 1978, both in Folder 7, Box 144, GFK.

the era of U.S.-Soviet détente.⁵⁶ From 1977 to 1980 ACEWA assumed the task of publicly refuting the arguments of these organizations and battling them for influence within the Carter administration and Congress. Speaking of the CPD specifically, Carl Marcy told the *New York Times* in 1977:

There seems to be a few old cold warriors who neither die nor fade away but would brandish their sabers forever rather than help pave the way for a just and lasting peace, a reduction in international tensions and a lessening of the possibility of nuclear war.⁵⁷

ACEWA's fight to discredit the Committee on the Present Danger and these other organizations and their fight to promote détente were one and the same. As Marcy indicated, it was a struggle over not just the policies of détente, but over the fundamental direction of American foreign policy.

Jimmy Carter – A New Beginning?

Candidate Jimmy Carter had nominally supported the concept of détente, but had criticized the callousness and secrecy of Henry Kissinger's diplomacy. He promised an open and honest approach to foreign policy, with a heavy emphasis on human rights – a tacit endorsement of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment. Détente was still alive when Carter took the oath of office on January 20, 1977, but the characteristics of détente under the stewardship of the Carter Administration were still to be determined.

⁵⁶ Letter, Galbraith to Jeanne Mattison, May 2, 1980, Box 332, JKG.

⁵⁷ "Divulging of Secrets In Arms Negotiation Stirs Dispute in U.S.," *New York Times*, November 3, 1977, 3.

The American Committee on East-West Accord approached the candidate's camp shortly after Carter received the Democratic nomination in July 1976. New ACEWA member William Attwood, a journalist, author, and former ambassador under the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, met with Cyrus Vance, a Carter advisor and the eventual Secretary of State. Vance thought "very highly of the Committee" according to Attwood, and suggested a meeting between ACEWA members and the Carter team during the transition period if Carter was elected.⁵⁸ Fred Neal had correspondence with Vance, Carter advisers Zbigniew Brzezinski (later appointed National Security Advisor) and Stuart Eizenstat (later Chief Domestic Policy Advisor and Director of the White House Domestic Policy Staff). However, an alluded to meeting with President-elect Carter never materialized during the transition period or during the early months of his Administration.⁵⁹

ACEWA and Jimmy Carter both rejected diplomatic linkage as a tool for American policy towards the Soviet Union. For Carter, linkage was too reminiscent of the kind of secretive great power diplomacy of Henry Kissinger. By removing linkage from the American diplomatic arsenal, Carter was able to simultaneously pursue two of his main foreign policy goals: a new SALT agreement and strong emphasis on human rights that would include criticisms of the Soviet Union. Despite their shared support for arms control and their mutual distaste for linkage, ACEWA and the Carter Administration embraced fundamentally different tactics for the management of U.S.-Soviet relations.

⁵⁸ Letter, William Attwood to Fred Warner Neal, July 23, 1976, Folder 22, Box 13, WHA.

⁵⁹ Letter, Neal to Galbraith, March 7, 1977, Box 332, JKG.

Initially, however some ACEWA members were encouraged by statements from Carter shortly before the inauguration and hoped to guide the new Administration towards a renewed debate on the Jackson-Vanik Amendment.⁶⁰ Galbraith had recruited to the Committee in 1976 Meyer Berger, a Pittsburgh businessman and member of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council (NJCRAC). Berger was enlisted to try to move this and other Jewish interest groups to change their position on Jackson-Vanik, which Neal saw as “the single greatest bloc [sic] standing in the way of [a Carter] Administration commitment to détente.”⁶¹ Throughout 1977 Berger coordinated with the NJCRAC, ACEWA, and members of the White House staff, including Brzezinski and Eizenstat.⁶² The Jewish organizations never presented a united front against Jackson-Vanik to Carter, and the president offered his own criticisms of Soviet human rights abuses.⁶³

Carter had campaigned on a promise to make concern for human rights the cornerstone of his foreign policy. Although this emphasis was not applied to all nations, it would have been seen as highly hypocritical if Carter had not spoken out against the Soviet human rights record. Carter wasted no time in doing so. The Administration expressed support for noted Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov, criticized the arrest of two other Soviet citizens, and received an exiled Soviet dissident at the White House, all within two months of his inauguration. Carter may not have employed linkage in his

⁶⁰ Bernard Gwertzman, “Carter Will Pursue Early Panama Pact and Cyprus Accord,” *New York Times*, January 14, 1977, 41.

⁶¹ Memorandum, Fred Warner Neal to ACEWA board of directors, September 19, 1977, Folder 7, Box 144, GFK.

⁶² Letter, Meyer Berger to Stuart Eizenstat October 17, 1977, Box 332, JKG.

⁶³ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 628-631.

Soviet policy, but he clearly demonstrated that he shared Henry Jackson's concern for Soviet human rights.⁶⁴

Carter's first initiative on arms control was a push for so-called "deep cuts" in the U.S. and Soviet nuclear arsenals, a break from the 1974 agreement between Ford and Brezhnev. In a further divergence from Kissinger-era diplomacy, Carter publicized his agenda before sending Secretary Vance to Moscow for negotiations. The response from Brezhnev, who considered this proposal an abrogation of the earlier agreement, was categorical rejection, without even a counter-proposal.⁶⁵ Although ACEWA saw the SALT process as an avenue towards eventual arms reduction (something like the "deep cuts" proposal), the Committee declined to support Carter's proposal. By pushing, publicly, for abrogation of the previous agreement on SALT II Carter had provoked the Soviets, and threatened the SALT process and progress on détente. In order to achieve the progressive détente that ACEWA hoped for, the structures of negotiation and cooperation had to be maintained and nurtured, not jolted as Carter had done. ACEWA elected neither to defend nor denounce "deep cuts." Although Carter had "impeded progress" on détente, ACEWA was not yet ready to oppose his administration publicly.⁶⁶

The hopes of early 1977 that the Carter Administration could be persuaded to adopt ACEWA's conception of détente never materialized. However, ACEWA continued to meet both officially and informally with members of the administration. These contacts included correspondence with Vance, who continued to express support for the

⁶⁴ Ibid., 628-630.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 888-891.

⁶⁶ Fred Warner Neal, introduction to *Détente or Debacle*, Fred Warner Neal ed., xii. Press release, ACEWA, April 5, 1977, Box 332, JKG. Arthur Macy Cox, *Russian Roulette: The Superpower Game* (New York: Times Books, 1982), 81-82.

Committee, and members of the State Department. Members of the Committee had meetings with Marshall Shulman, the top Soviet authority in the State Department. Shulman expressed his dismay with the deterioration of U.S.-Soviet relations and sympathy with the Committee's goals, but was unable to affect any major policy decisions.⁶⁷ George Vest, Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, attended an ACEWA meeting in 1979, and other administration representatives attended ACEWA events that same year.⁶⁸

In June 1978 ACEWA was able to arrange a formal but off-the-record meeting between Zbigniew Brzezinski and about 60 members of the Committee, including Galbraith, Marcy, Sargent Shriver, and J.W. Fulbright. No notes appear to have been taken of the meeting, which consisted of an open discussion of all issues relating to U.S.-Soviet relations.⁶⁹ The most pressing issue was likely the involvement of Soviet and Cuban forces in conflicts in Africa, which prompted anti-Soviet vitriol from American hawks as well as a speech at the U.S. Naval Academy by Carter on June 7th (the day after ACEWA met with Brzezinski) in which the President criticized Soviet aggression and expansion. Marcy and Neal took the opportunity of the Brzezinski meeting (which received some press coverage) to send two open letters to Carter. The first, drafted before the Annapolis speech, called for Carter's "active intervention in clarifying" the state of U.S.-Soviet relations and "tempering the present dialogue." They were obviously less

⁶⁷ Douglas Martin, "Marshall D. Shulman, 91, Dies; Expert on Soviet Union," *New York Times*, June 23, 2007.

⁶⁸ Meeting minutes, November 13, 1979, Folder 3, Box 14, WHA.

⁶⁹ *Just For the Press*, Vol. I, No. 5, July-August 1978.

than satisfied with Carter's subsequent address to the naval cadets, which the second open letter called "unnecessarily provocative."⁷⁰

The letter also called on Carter to "resolve the inconsistencies within his Administration," a thinly veiled reference to the division in the Carter foreign policy team – widely recognized by 1978 – between Brzezinski and Vance. The perception (whose contours are widely endorsed by subsequent scholarship) was of a President who vacillated between two different emphases in dealing with the Soviets – Vance's preference for negotiations and Brzezinski's inclination towards linkage and confrontation – and the two advisors' jockeying for influence over the Administration's foreign policy. Sensationalized press coverage of Vance and Brzezinski's disagreements led to perceptions that Carter's foreign policy was schizophrenic and disorganized.⁷¹ Nowhere was this divide more evident than in Carter's Soviet policy, in which he continued to stress the need for an agreement on SALT (which was Vance's foremost concern) while simultaneously provoking the Soviets by moving closer to China, a move which Brzezinski advocated, and questioning Soviet intentions in his Annapolis speech.⁷²

The Carter Administration's handling of ACEWA supports the argument that Carter failed to implement a consistent Soviet policy in the first three years of his presidency. The Committee's access to the Administration was channeled to the State Department. Under the bailiwick of Vance, areas in which Carter was already seeking conciliation with the Soviets, mainly SALT, were the only aspects of Soviet policy in

⁷⁰ Open letter, ACEWA members to Jimmy Carter, June 6, 1978, Folder 7, Box 144, GFK.

⁷¹ Murrey Marder "Behind Carter Annapolis Speech," *Washington Post*, June 11, 1978, A1.

⁷² Burton I. Kaufman and Scott Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Early Carter, Jr.* 2nd Edition, Revised (Lawrence, University Press of Kansas, 2006), 113-114, 162, 199.

which ACEWA could effectively make itself heard. Other issues, such as administration rhetoric on human rights, were at odds with ACEWA's agenda, and counter-productive to achieving an accord on SALT. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the administration adopted a similar approach to the Committee on the Present Danger, directing them towards Brzezinski, the Administration's resident hard-liner.

Carter and ACEWA both rejected the tactic of linkage, but for fundamentally different reasons. ACEWA believed that linking two issues of U.S.-Soviet relations – trade and human rights, in the case of the Jackson-Vanik amendment – was counterproductive for détente. Carter operated under the mistaken belief that different issues of bilateral relations could be insulated from one another. The Soviets did not, for example, consider the Administration's criticisms on the U.S.S.R.'s human rights record and the simultaneous public push for deep cuts under SALT II to be discrete agendas, rather they were seen as a coordinated rebuke by the American administration.⁷³ Observing the apparent contradictions in Carter's approach to the Soviet Union, Fred Warner Neal determined as early as September 1977 that the Carter Administration was not committed to détente at all.⁷⁴

Elite Positions, Mass Appeal?

By the fall and winter of 1977 ACEWA found itself at a crossroads regarding its relationship with the Carter Administration and the nature of the Committee's mission.

⁷³ Ibid., 48-51.

⁷⁴ Letter, Fred Warner Neal to ACEWA board of directors, September 19, 1977, Folder 7, Box 144, GFK.

Their contacts with the Carter Administration had not led to any favorable policy decisions on U.S.-Soviet trade. The failure of the “deep cuts” proposal left Fred Neal and others with “deep misgivings” and wondering “who is running the store, if anybody” in the Carter Administration.⁷⁵ A board of directors meeting in October included a comprehensive discussion of the Committee’s strategy vis-à-vis the Carter Administration. The options ranged from a wait-and-see attitude, continued “behind the scenes” efforts to influence the Administration, or a shift in strategy to take the Committee’s message to the American public and attack Carter’s intransigence. This last option, as Neal acknowledged, might involve a transformation of ACEWA, from a small, elite group, to “an organization of many thousands.”⁷⁶ This prospect was an absolute non-starter for Jeanne Mattison, who sought to protect the Committee (and the esteemed George Kennan) from even the slightest association with “peace-nik” organizations of the Vietnam era.⁷⁷ The board of directors elected a compromise strategy – to “generate pressure” on the Carter Administration through a media and public relations campaign, while continuing to work within Washington. As Neal framed the strategy, they would oppose Carter’s apparent intransigence “without appearing to be ‘in opposition.’”⁷⁸

American public opinion was decidedly mixed on détente by late 1977.

Americans were skeptical of Soviet motives for negotiating with the United States and concerned with Soviet involvement in Africa. In spite of these misgivings, a majority of

⁷⁵ Letter, Neal to Kennan, April 27, 1977, Folder 7, Box 144, GFK.

⁷⁶ Letter, Carl Marcy and Jeanne Mattison to George Kennan and J. Kenneth Galbraith, September 6, 1977, and letter, Neal to ACEWA board of directors, September 19, 1977, both in Folder 7, Box 144, GFK.

⁷⁷ Gayler interview.

⁷⁸ Memorandum, Neal to ACEWA board of directors, September 19, 1977, Folder 7, Box 144, GFK.

Americans still supported U.S.-Soviet trade and a new SALT agreement. At the same time, Americans harbored distaste for the Soviet Union's record on human rights, which had been highlighted by Senator Jackson and President Carter, and there was growing distrust of the Soviet Union.⁷⁹ In short, most Americans favored a continuation of détente, but a majority also embraced the attitudes that lent controversy to the policies of détente. Public opinion polling also showed a confused evaluation of Carter's handling of the ship of state. Americans generally supported Carter's handling of specific foreign policy issues, yet generally disapproved of Carter's overall handling of foreign policy.⁸⁰ The state of American public opinion on U.S.-Soviet relations seemed to support the consensus in ACEWA that the American public was still behind détente, but would need to be better informed to embrace the hard choices that détente required.⁸¹

In their effort to take their message to the public, the American-Committee on East-West Accord looked to capitalize on membership that was rich in media background and personal connections. In 1977 they launched a media and publicity campaign aimed at a broad spectrum of opinion. Frustrated with their insufficient access to the policy wheelhouse of the Carter Administration, ACEWA approached this campaign as a means of bypassing Washington and taking their message directly to the American public.⁸² Evidence of their efforts was to be found in member appearances on “Good Morning America” and “Meet the Press,” in the *New York Review of Books*, and in local

⁷⁹ Louis Harris, “U.S.-Soviet Relations,” April 29-May 6, 1978. Gallup poll, “Rating of Nations,” in *Gallup Poll: 1980*, 47-49. Olav Njolstad, “Key of Keys: SALT II and the Breakdown of Détente,” in Odd Arne Westad, ed., *The Fall of Détente: U.S.-Soviet Relations during the Carter Years*, (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1997), 52-54.

⁸⁰ Kaufman and Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter, Jr.*, 185-186.

⁸¹ Minutes of ACEWA board meeting, November 13, 1979, Folder 3, Box 14, WHA.

⁸² Memorandum, Fred Warner Neal to ACEWA board of directors, September 19, 1977, Folder 7, Box 144, GFK.

newspapers across the country, in the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* and *Time* magazine. While the Committee hoped to move public opinion, their ultimate goal was still inside the Beltway. A media campaign would bring greater prominence and visibility to the Committee and lend further credibility to pro-détente views.⁸³ It offered the opportunity to debunk and discredit the Committee on the Present Danger. Most importantly, it could change the tenor of media coverage of U.S.-Soviet relations, which ACEWA claimed, focused on the arguments of “military hardliners” such as CPD and presented an “imbalance of information.”⁸⁴ ACEWA believed that détente was the only sensible option for U.S.-Soviet relations and that critics of détente were muddying the waters of public debate, preventing the American people from fully embracing détente. ACEWA’s media endeavors were primarily geared to boost their own profile and credibility, discredit their opponents, and reverse the tide of media sentiment; informing and empowering the American people was a secondary consideration.

In December 1977 the first edition of *Just for the Press*, the Committee’s newsletter was printed. A Washington-based foreign policy newsletter had been a pet project of Marcy’s since he had retired from the Foreign Relations Committee. His design seems to have been to influence the foreign policy conversation in Washington by sending complimentary copies to executive branch agencies, members of Congress, foreign embassies, and the Washington offices of major media outlets, with the hope that ACEWA’s perspective would find its way into the national dialogue. Appearing bi-monthly, *Just for the Press* (later re-named *East-West Outlook*) consisted mostly of

⁸³ Memorandum from Carl Marcy and Jeanne Mattison to ACEWA board of directors, November 11, 1978, Folder 7, Box 144, GFK.

⁸⁴ Press release, ACEWA, August 10, 1977, Box 332, JKG.

reprinted speeches and articles, with some original material from ACEWA members and government publications. The content ranged from wonkish articles on arms control to polemical broadsides against the Committee on the Present Danger, addressing a host of issues within the Committee's purview. Marcy also sought every opportunity to boost the Committee's image and the size of their profile, such as highlighting contacts between members and Carter Administration officials. Whatever impact the publication may have had on the substance of debate in elite circles was likely negligible, and in retrospect this initiative of Marcy's seems somewhat naïve. Still, *Just for the Press* illustrates the Committee's desire to alter the tone of debate on U.S.-Soviet relations within relevant policy circles and the media.

The two book-length edited volumes published by ACEWA were part of the same general strategy. *Common Sense in U.S.-Soviet Relations* (1978) and *Common Sense in U.S.-Soviet Trade* (1979) were compilations of previous speeches and articles that were repackaged for distribution along the same lines of *Just for the Press*. *Common Sense in U.S.-Soviet Relations* was published by W.W. Norton in 1979. Neither garnered much popular or academic attention.

Notably absent from ACEWA's popular appeals were the practical benefits of increasing U.S.-Soviet trade. The American economy seemed fragile and unstable in the late 1970s, plagued by a poor trade deficit, uncertain energy supplies, lackluster employment, and a fragile dollar.⁸⁵ ACEWA would almost certainly have found the American public receptive to arguments about the potential benefits to the American

⁸⁵ Kaufman and Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter, Jr.*, 186. Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 78-85.

economy that could stem from increases in U.S.-Soviet trade. However, ACEWA's popular outreach never included the economic benefits of détente. *Common Sense in U.S.-Soviet Trade* was firmly aimed at business leaders. With chapters on machine tools, chemicals, a Soviet oil pipeline, and the Soviet role in the world grain trade, this was not a book aimed at a popular or colloquial audience.⁸⁶ The diplomatic and military policy specialists within ACEWA appear to have seen the need to appeal to the American people, but the business specialists, such as Don Kendall and Robert Schmidt, missed a potentially important opportunity by confining their argument to the business elite.

ACEWA believed that the American people generally supported détente and that the public's "overwhelming common sense" on U.S.-Soviet relations would eventually translate into political support for the policies of détente.⁸⁷ The Committee tended to dismiss trends in public opinion that complicated this picture, including public concern over Soviet presence in Africa and Soviet human rights abuses, and a general downward trend in the number of Americans who had a favorable outlook on the Soviet Union. These were explained away as a lack of leadership to explain détente – a void ACEWA was attempting to fill – and as the effect of misinformation and fear-mongering on the part of CPD and other critics of détente. There appears to have been a confirmation bias at work within ACEWA. The Committee espoused the position that détente was the only reasonable approach to U.S.-Soviet relations, and saw public acceptance of that fact in opinion polls. While ACEWA believed détente had revolutionized the way the United States and the Soviet Union interacted, the American people were generally more hesitant.

⁸⁶ Margaret Chapman and Carl Marcy, eds., *Common Sense in U.S.-Soviet Trade*. (Washington, D.C.: American-Committee on East-West Accord, 1979).

⁸⁷ Curtis B. Gans, "Garbage: Propaganda Polls," *Just For the Press*, Vol. I, No. 3, February/March, 1978.

A majority of Americans supported arms control negotiation and U.S.-Soviet trade – these were sensible and practical policies – but Americans also harbored deep seeded distrust of the Soviet Union, and it would take more than a series of handshakes between American and Soviet leaders to eradicate a generation of animosity. ACEWA believed that the public simply needed to be educated on détente, but it is more likely that Americans had not completely made up their mind and that their media campaign failed to register.

Survival or Suicide

ACEWA's most definitive statement on the arms race was also its most widely received public pronouncement. In late 1977 Jeanne Mattison began producing a thirty-minute documentary film for ACEWA. It was a direct response to *The Price of Peace and Freedom*, a film produced by the American Security Council, a massive coalition that included members of Congress and munitions manufacturers. It was produced during the final months of the Ford Administration with assistance from the Defense Department under Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. The film warned of the immediate and on-going Soviet nuclear and conventional threat.⁸⁸ Before beginning production on ACEWA's film response, Mattison obtained free television airtime by sending protesting letters to hundreds of stations that had aired *Peace and Freedom*. Under the so-called Fairness Doctrine, Mattison claimed that the stations must allow for dissenting views on a public

⁸⁸ Harold J. Logan, "Hard-liners documentary" *Washington Post*, June 2, 1977, A1.

issue to be aired, securing free airtime for her own film from network affiliates across the United States.⁸⁹

Titled *Survival or Suicide*, the film was produced in 1978 at the cost of \$48,000, funded primarily through foundation grants.⁹⁰ Mattison had the cooperation of the Defense Department and film and television producer Norman Lear.⁹¹ Technical problems delayed release of the film until the late winter of 1979. The film premiered before a private audience of government officials at the State Department on March 23 and was shown publicly for the first time at on May 14 at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington. The audience included Carter advisor Anne Wexler, Senator Ted Kennedy, and Soviet academic-diplomat Georgi Arbatov. It was an opportune moment for the release of a film on the dangers of nuclear confrontation. In March an accident at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant had sent fear and shock along the east coast, reminding Americans of the inherent dangers of the atom. In June, when *Survival or Suicide* was being aired across the nation, Jimmy Carter and Leonid Brezhnev reached an agreement on SALT II that was submitted to the Senate for what was expected to be heated debate throughout the summer and fall.

Survival or Suicide contrasts the stark dangers of the Cold War and the arms race with the hope and promise of détente and SALT. Accounts of the Cuban missile crisis, the U.S. nuclear alert during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, and a Defense Department war game depict the United States and the Soviet Union in a fragile and unstable state of

⁸⁹ Memorandum, Carl Marcy and Jeanne Mattison, August 17, 1977, Folder 7, Box 144, GFK.

⁹⁰ Income and Expenses April 1, 1978 to March 31, 1979, ACEWA, Folder 1, Box 14, WHA.

⁹¹ Letter, Carl Marcy to Thomas B. Ross, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, July 26, 1977, Folder 7, Box 144, GFK. Press release on *Suicide or Survival*, ACEWA, Folder 1, Box 14, WHA.

peace that could be broken at any time. The film leaves no doubt as to the gruesome results of nuclear war. Extensive and graphic footage of the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, repetitive footage of hydrogen bomb explosions, and scientific descriptions of the power of nuclear weapons hammer home the destructive capability of nuclear arsenals. The horror of the hydrogen bomb is reinforced by the recorded speeches of each U.S. president from Eisenhower to Carter describing the near-apocalyptic outcome of a total nuclear war, played over repeated images of nuclear blasts. The disaster is made more personal with images of children at play and commuters on highways. The narrator asks, “What could you do? Where would you hide?” The arms race itself is presented as an endless cycle of development of weapons and delivery systems in which neither side has failed to keep pace.

The stated alternative to this state of affairs is détente, and more specifically the SALT process: “the most important negotiating process in the history of mankind.” *Survival or Suicide* shows Leonid Brezhnev’s call to “end this destructive process” and Carter Administration Secretary of Defense Harold Brown’s statement that “national security is more than a matter of military strength.” Through the testimony of weapons experts, the film presents the SALT agreements as eminently verifiable. Soviet and American officials are seen shaking hands and smiling in a spirit of accord. Other benefits of détente are mentioned, including increased American commerce and jobs, and environmental and scientific cooperation. The viewers are admonished to contact their senators to let their voices be heard during the upcoming debate on SALT II. In ACEWA’s most direct appeal to the American public, the narrator empowers individual

Americans: “It’s up to you: survival or suicide. You have a choice.” The film then ends as an ICBM launches from its silo.⁹²

Survival or Suicide was ACEWA’s most successful media endeavor. By the end of 1979, over 250 local television stations and network affiliates had broadcast the film, in addition to two national broadcasts on the Public Broadcasting System. Portions of the film aired nationally on the ABC news program “20/20.” Mattison boasted of many purchases of film prints, including by the Defense Department, libraries, universities, and unions.⁹³ Efforts to promote and publicize the film coincided with the national debate on the SALT II treaty, which would develop into a general referendum on détente and the state of U.S.-Soviet relations.

Survival or Suicide presents a stark choice, embodied in the film's title. It represents a sharp divergence from the education campaign discussed previously, towards an outright appeal to emotion – fear, most specifically. Clearly, ACEWA did not see the need to present the American people with a balanced picture of the choice that détente and SALT represented. Again, ACEWA demonstrated that it failed to grasp that Americans had legitimate concerns about détente, and elected instead to offer them a bombardment of sensationalized fear-mongering and a dubious choice. This unfortunate strategy created problems for ACEWA in contrasting its message with that of the Committee on the Present Danger, which will be discussed in more depth in the next chapter.

⁹² *Survival or Suicide*. Produced by Jeanne Mattison. (Washington: American Committee on East-West Accord, 1979).

⁹³ Letter, Carl Marcy and Jeanne Mattison to William Attwood, June 26, 1979, Folder 21, Box 13, WHA. Letter, Carl Marcy and Jeanne Mattison to George Kennan, January 7, 1980, Folder 1, Box 145, GFK.

SALT II – The Last Redoubt of Détente

In June of 1979 Jimmy Carter and Leonid Brezhnev shook hands in Vienna after their respective negotiating teams had reached an agreement on the second Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty. The mood surrounding SALT II could hardly have been more different than the air of breakthrough and grand accomplishment that had accompanied Nixon and Brezhnev on SALT I seven years earlier. Senate critics of SALT had signaled their intention for a fierce fight in March 1977, when the narrow confirmation of Paul Warnke to head the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency was transformed into a referendum on détente. (Fred Neal told Ken Galbraith “the animals are really gathering.”)⁹⁴ Carter had narrowly won ratification of a new Panama Canal Treaty in 1978, at the expense of a great deal of political capital. The Carter-Brezhnev meeting lacked the media fanfare that had accompanied Nixon and Kissinger’s trip to Moscow in 1972; in 1979 SALT hinged more on votes in the U.S. Senate than an American-Soviet handshake.

ACEWA supported the preliminary draft of the treaty, but with reservations, specifically the fact that it did not address the development of counterforce weapons such as the MX missile. SALT II met the Committee’s minimum requirements to “enhance the security of the United States,” but ACEWA choose to highlight mostly the dangers of rejecting SALT II. Such a rejection would unleash “fear and uncertainty” and send the message that “the American people had lost interest in . . . improving the prospects for world peace.” By 1979, as the United States economy was limping due to inflation and

⁹⁴ Letter, Neal to Galbraith March 7, 1977, Box 332, JKG.

energy shortages, ACEWA was also emphasizing the potential economic benefits of controlling the arms race, arguing that rejection of SALT II and arms control would inevitably increase inflation, presumably because of a bloated defense budget, that would also “divert human and material resources from uses beneficial to mankind.”⁹⁵

In the spring and summer of 1979 the approaching Senate debate over SALT II closely aligned ACEWA’s vision of détente and the political and diplomatic priorities of the Carter Administration for the first time. The Committee was one of eighteen organizations that the Carter White House looked to for support in an effort to sell the treaty to the Senate and the American public.⁹⁶ Paul Warnke held a reception at the White House for Jeanne Mattison and leaders of other pro-SALT organizations.⁹⁷ The push to ratify the treaty was coordinated by White House Chief of Staff Hamilton Jordan. The White House campaign included the organization Americans for SALT, which operated outside direct White House supervision but was widely known to be the grassroots organ of the Carter Administration. Mattison was a member of the executive committee of Americans for SALT, whose membership also included at least twelve members of ACEWA.⁹⁸ Other private organizations publicly arrayed themselves against SALT II, including the Committee on the Present Danger, the American Security Council, the Coalition for Peace Through Strength, and the American Conservative Union.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Press release on SALT, ACEWA, April 18, 1979, Folder 1, Box 14, WHA.

⁹⁶ “SALT-Leaning Nongovernmental Organizations” SALT Chron File Folder, Chief of Staff’s file, Box 129, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library.

⁹⁷ Gayler interview.

⁹⁸ Americans for SALT advertisement, *New York Times*, July 9, 1979, A13. ACEWA board of directors meeting minutes, April 18, 1979, Folder 1, Box 14, WHA.

⁹⁹ Richard Burt “Money is Already Starting to Flow From Both Sides in Treaty Debate,” *New York Times*, January 23, 1979, A12. Steven V. Roberts “Arms Pact Friends and Foes Rally for Senate Battle,” *New York Times*, April 13, 1979, A2.

ACEWA had no hope of matching the funding of the groups opposing détente, whose advertising budgets alone ranged into hundreds of thousands of dollars.¹⁰⁰ The Committee's efforts were largely confined to existing initiatives already discussed, including promotion of *Survival or Suicide* (focusing on media markets in states whose Senators were viewed as "close" on the Treaty), the adaptation of *Détente or Debacle*, and op-ed essays supporting SALT II and countering the arguments of CPD and other groups. Several proposed advertisements were delayed for lack of funds until the fall of 1980. The board of directors was largely content to subordinate ACEWA's efforts to those of Americans for SALT, which was better funded and was officially registered as a lobbying organization. The decision reflected a fear of jeopardizing ACEWA's tax-exempt status as a strictly "educational" organization, but also their inclination to take a long-view of détente, of which arms limitation was just one facet, and of SALT II which was part of an ongoing process.¹⁰¹ ACEWA's hesitation would prove to be a major miscalculation, as domestic and international events in the second half of 1979 would scuttle not just SALT II, but the very concept of U.S.-Soviet détente.

Any realistic hope for enacting SALT II was crushed when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in late December of 1979. The front page of the *Washington Post* on December 30 read: "Détente is dead." Carter suspended all exports to the U.S.S.R., asked the Senate to delay any vote on SALT II, and told the American people that the Soviet invasion was "the greatest threat to peace since the Second World War."¹⁰² Carter

¹⁰⁰ Roberts, "Arms Pact Friends and Foes Rally for Senate Battle," A2.

¹⁰¹ Board of directors meeting minutes, ACEWA, April 18, 1979, Folder 1, Box 14, WHA.

¹⁰² Jimmy Carter: "The State of the Union Address Delivered Before a Joint Session of the Congress," January 23, 1980. Jimmy Carter: "Address to the Nation on the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan," January 4,

drastically overstated his case, but the Soviet invasion immediately initiated the chilliest period of the Cold War since the 1960s.

ACEWA and Afghanistan

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan exploded ACEWA's conception of U.S.-Soviet relations. The Committee had invested in the proposition that the threats to détente emanated from the United States. However, the Soviet invasion could not reasonably be blamed on Jimmy Carter's flawed handling of détente or propaganda from the Committee on the Present Danger. For the previous five years ACEWA had been arguing that the Soviet Union was no more aggressive than the United States and that hawkish American sentiments were the principal threat to peace. The Soviet Union was now clearly the aggressor and their actions had definitively ended détente.

ACEWA's responses to the invasion of Afghanistan starkly demonstrated the Committee's philosophical inflexibility. ACEWA commended the Carter Administration for agreeing to abide by the terms of SALT II, but criticized all other elements of the American response, especially the suspension of trade. In the winter of 1980 the leadership offered a series of interpretations of Soviet behavior that, taken as a whole, bordered on an apologia for Soviet behavior. Kennan and Galbraith argued that the invasion was not actually as aggressive as the American response indicated (Afghanistan

1980. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=33079>. And <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=32911>. Peter Osnos, "Détente is Dead, Arms Race Resumes," *Washington Post*, December 30, 1979, A1.

bordered the Soviet Union and they had been politically involved in that country for years).¹⁰³ Neal noted that “one must condemn the invasion” before assigning most of the blame for the end of détente on the Carter Administration.¹⁰⁴ Blaming the Soviet Union for killing détente would have been a repudiation of everything that ACEWA had been arguing since its inception.

ACEWA's policy response was even more divorced from the reality of U.S.-Soviet relations following the invasion of Afghanistan. The Committee developed a proposal for a bilateral pact, in which the United States and Soviet Union would forswear military or political interference in non-aligned nations. The proposal equated the Soviet invasion with the American war in Vietnam – a facile comparison and hardly the sentiment that Americans would want to hear or one that any savvy political leader would want to promote. When it was released the proposal garnered no attention, which was probably to ACEWA's benefit. The Committee would have seemed blind to the implications of Soviet behavior and deaf to the American reaction to the Soviet invasion.

The leaders of ACEWA – particularly Marcy, Mattison, Neal, and Galbraith – believed that détente had fundamentally transformed the nature of U.S.-Soviet relations. They believed that if détente was carried out by executive leadership, protected from political attacks, and effectively explained to the American people, then the Cold War would essentially be ended over time. ACEWA saw the Soviets as willing partners in this endeavor, while specific groups in the United States were obstructing détente through the American political process, presenting a negative picture of détente to the public, and

¹⁰³ *Just for the Press* Vol. III, No. 1, January/February 1980.

¹⁰⁴ *Just for the Press* Vol. III, No. 3, June/July 1980.

wrongly depicting the Soviet Union as an untrustworthy partner in détente. There was, of course, some truth in this outlook. However, ACEWA was unable to adapt their philosophy to the fact that the Soviets provocative behavior in Africa and especially Afghanistan had much to do with the souring of U.S.-Soviet relations. The Committee was so consumed with the threats to détente from within the United States, it could not see, or could not accept, that Soviet military adventures also posed a serious threat to détente. This inability to account for Soviet actions, as well as the failure to account for Americans' distrust of the Soviet Union, can only be seen as weakening the legitimacy of ACEWA's overall argument in favor of détente.

The invasion of Afghanistan prompted ACEWA to reevaluate the policy outlook, if not its own narrative on the collapse of détente. U.S.-Soviet trade had essentially been cancelled. SALT now seemed impossible. ACEWA recognized and accepted that the Treaty had no future in the Senate and reverted to a long-view approach of looking “beyond SALT.”¹⁰⁵ Looking forward towards a new and presumably dangerous decade, ACEWA contemplated the failure of détente and looked for new ways to advance its message of “negotiation, not confrontation.”

Carrying the Torch of Détente

The American Committee on East-West Accord embraced the promise of détente as a framework for mitigating U.S.-Soviet tensions and reducing the possibility of nuclear

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. “Statement of position of the American Committee on East-West Accord on the Invasion of Afghanistan.,” January 21, 1980, WHA Box 14, Folder 1.

war. They believed that through expanding cooperation and negotiations the United States and the Soviet Union could continue to move beyond the Cold War and achieve a peaceful and normalized superpower relationship. ACEWA formed to defend détente from a host of domestic critics, who the Committee viewed as warmongers, proponents of the military-industrial complex, or just plain out of touch. From ACEWA's perspective, actions and policies which threatened détente, such as the Jackson-Vanik amendment, were retrograde and held the possibility of returning to the nuclear perils of the Cold War, exemplified by the Cuban missile crisis. ACEWA sought to preserve détente by building a broad-based coalition of elite Americans to demonstrate the continuing political viability of U.S.-Soviet negotiation and cooperation. The Committee advanced its message through its Washington connections as well as appealing to American public opinion through print advertisements and *Survival or Suicide*.

ACEWA was inhibited by internal obstacles and missed opportunities as they tried to achieve these ambitious goals. The Committee was hobbled by a desire to appear apolitical while it pointed out what they saw as dangerous Cold War attitudes emerging within the Carter Administration. They were torn between making broad popular appeals and working within Washington and elite policy and business circles. Their arguments on the benefits of increased U.S. Soviet trade were directed towards the business community, not the public, who were facing an uncertain economic outlook, which included high unemployment and a negative balance of trade. ACEWA falsely believed that the public shared its general outlook, compromising the credibility of their popular appeals. ACEWA never resolved these tensions relating to its identity and orientation, and they would

continue to hamper their efforts during the 1980s. ACEWA was also inhibited by an outlook that located the threats to détente almost entirely from within the United States. This outlook made it almost impossible for ACEWA to present a message that promoted détente in spite of Soviet involvement in Africa and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

ACEWA's importance in the history of détente is not as a mover of American policy or opinion. The Committee is significant for what they demonstrate about the impact of détente in the United States. ACEWA rallied around a concept – détente – that had been launched and defined by a president-turned-pariah, officially abandoned by its successor, only half embraced by Carter, all while American public opinion became less inclined to accept the tenets and preconditions of détente. Despite the fact that détente had become less popular and less politically tenable (and by late-1979 diplomatically untenable) ACEWA persevered and grew as a broad coalition of influential Americans who remained committed to the original promise of détente. The notion that the Cold War existed only in the past tense, short sighted as it would prove to be, had produced normative changes, at least for this segment of elites. Although détente was effectively over when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan (if not before) it had a tangible lasting legacy. Part of this legacy was the structures of U.S.-Soviet engagement that would endure into the 1980s. Another part of détente's legacy was the norms that were embodied in the American Committee on East-West Accord. These included the possibility that, through negotiations and American restraint, the Cold War might end without any climactic confrontations or defined victors. Détente set a precedent for significant and far-reaching U.S.-Soviet negotiation on the defining features of the bi-polar relationship.

Détente raised expectations about what could be achieved when the United States and the Soviet Union set aside their myriad conflicts and found arenas where the two superpowers could achieve accord. This included arms control, which, ACEWA believed, must ultimately progress into arms reductions. ACEWA served to institutionalize these expectations and helped to perpetuate them even as détente, the term they were largely associated with, gradually fell out of favor. The American Committee on East-West Accord was shaken by the seeming re-emergence of the Cold War in 1980, but the Committee remained in Washington throughout the 1980s, serving as a functional reminder of the former promise of détente and the future feasibility of an amelioration in U.S.-Soviet relations.

CHAPTER THREE: COLD WARRIORS AND NEVILLE CHAMBERLAINS

“If détente unravels in America, the hawks will take over, not the doves.”
– Richard Nixon to Leonid Brezhnev

The American Committee on East-West Accord was formed to elevate détente above partisan politics in the United States. By 1974 the founders of ACEWA saw the Jackson-Vanik Amendment and the swirling controversy of Watergate threatening to subsume U.S.-Soviet relations within the increasingly rancorous politics of Washington. American Cold War policy was never insulated from domestic politics, conforming to the argument advanced by Jeremi Suri that “the distinction between foreign and domestic politics is artificial.”¹⁰⁶ However, the politics of U.S.-Soviet relations between the Second World War and the Vietnam War were characterized by a consensus, which embraced the quest for and maintenance of American nuclear superiority and containment of Soviet and communist influence around the globe. It was a rough consensus and there were certainly controversial issues of Soviet policy in which politics intruded, but support for a muscular and resolute posture towards the U.S.S.R. and global communism was overwhelming. As these policies seemed to founder in Vietnam the consensus dissolved. Nixon’s détente seemed, for a brief time, to reconstitute a centrist foreign policy consensus built around a measured withdrawal from Vietnam and diplomatically modest yet sensationalized negotiations with the U.S.S.R. and communist China. The aphorism that “only Nixon can go to China” is instructive here; it was Nixon alone who could

¹⁰⁶ Suri, *Power and Protest*, 213.

corral conservative anti-communists and Republicans into such a coalition. Less than a year after Gerald Ford assumed the presidency the Jackson-Vanik amendment had been implemented, and détente was a leading political controversy in the United States. In seeking to de-politicize the Soviet policies instituted by the Nixon Administration and protect this fragile consensus, ACEWA had failed almost as soon as it began.

Between 1976 and 1981 ACEWA engaged in a conflict on multiple fronts with the critics of détente, who had coalesced behind the Committee on the Present Danger. The two organizations competed directly and indirectly, over media coverage and influence within Congress and the Carter Administration. They advanced two radically different approaches to Soviet policy and American diplomatic and military policy, more generally. Their rivalry was openly acknowledged on both sides. The efforts of CPD and ACEWA to advance their own position become almost synonymous with efforts to refute their opponents. The fight effectively ended in November 1980, when CPD member Ronald Reagan won the presidency and appointed many other CPD leaders to his administration.

Historians have been attentive, if not always kind, to the Committee on the Present Danger, but far less so to the American Committee on East-West Accord.¹⁰⁷ CPD was part of a burgeoning alliance of conservative Republicans and hawkish Democrats who would play an important part in the election and administration of Ronald Reagan. CPD itself was a significant organization for an important segment of disaffected Democrats known as neoconservatives. It is not my contention that historians have overemphasized CPD. But they have missed their principal rival for elite opinion in the

¹⁰⁷ Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 152-154. Zelizer, *Arsenal of Democracy*, 273-274. Kaufman and Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter, Jr.*, 47-48. Craig and Logevall, *America's Cold War*, 306-308.

American Committee on East-West Accord. Discussions of CPD have usually focused on their opposition to the defense and diplomatic policies of Jimmy Carter and their later influence in the Reagan Administration, but this is only part of their history. CPD and ACEWA both tried to pull the Carter Administration towards their positions on U.S.-Soviet relations, but the two organizations also competed for a wider spectrum of elite opinion. ACEWA and CPD offered radically different appraisals of the nature and objectives of Soviet leadership. The two organizations presented competing historical narratives of the Cold War in popular memory. CPD's argument also incorporated the backlash against 1960s radicalism. ACEWA and CPD's messages starkly contrasted in substance, but were sometimes very similar in structure and tone – they both warned of a great and approaching danger. Viewing détente through the lens of the ACEWA-CPD dispute offers a useful framework for understanding the broader stakes and implications of America's foreign policy choices in the 1970s.

“Come Home, Democrats”

The Committee on the Present Danger that existed from 1976 to 1992 was the second iteration (but not the final one) of an organization that had operated during the 1950s. The original CPD had lobbied for increased defense spending and the earnest adoption of the policy of containment, concomitant with a rejection of latent sentiments

of pre-war isolationism.¹⁰⁸ The origins of the second CPD can be found in the politics of foreign policy during the late-Vietnam War era, most notably the Coalition for a Democratic Majority (CDM). Many Democrats had abhorred the liberal presidential campaign of George McGovern in 1972, which, among other deviations from the post-World War II Democratic tradition, seemed to echo the Republican isolationism of the 1930s with its slogan “Come Home, America” (the conservatives in CDM countered with their own call: “Come Home, Democrats”). McGovern’s campaign was a political disaster, and CDM formed to salvage a Democratic Party that could remain electorally competitive without the stain of Vietnam-era radicalism.

This was the revolt of the neoconservatives, Democrats who resisted the radicalism of the 1960s and the widespread rejection of Cold War liberalism that accompanied it. CDM was the first step of a process that would lead conservative Democrats into the welcome arms of the Republican Party and Ronald Reagan during the 1980s. Throughout the 1970s, the spiritual leader of the neoconservative movement was Senator Henry Jackson, who seemed to embody the soul of Harry Truman and John Kennedy with his support of liberal domestic policy, relentless defense spending, and assertive anti-communism abroad. Many of the central figures in the Committee on the Present Danger were active members of CDM, including Norman Podhoretz, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Richard Pipes, and Eugene Rostow.¹⁰⁹

Neoconservatives made their first significant inroads in Washington during the Ford Administration, where they attempted to re-write the American intelligence

¹⁰⁸ Jerry W. Sanders, *Peddlers of Crisis: The Committee on the Present Danger and the Politics of Containment* (Boston: South End Press, 1983), 8-19.

¹⁰⁹ Coalition for a Democratic Majority advertisement, *New York Times*, December 7, 1972, A6.

assessment of Soviet strategic posture. Convinced that the CIA had critically underestimated the military strength of the Soviet Union, a team of analysts, led by Harvard historian Richard Pipes and including later CPD luminary Paul Nitze, won approval to conduct a second study outside of the CIA, which became known as the “Team-B” exercise. They concluded that the Soviet Union was on the verge of achieving nuclear superiority over the United States. Anne Kahn, a later scholar on the Team-B exercise has analyzed the numerous conceptual and statistical flaws in the report, whose outline became public in December 1976. The report became the key intellectual foundation of the CPD; it was confirmation of the serious scope and nature of “the present danger.”¹¹⁰

Searching for Consensus

The Committee on the Present Danger announced its re-formation on November 11, 1976, nine days after the United States elected Jimmy Carter. Its founding statement was titled “Common Sense and the Common Danger” and warned of the Soviet Union’s “unparalleled military buildup” and its assertive diplomatic campaign, which “encourages every divisive tendency” in the non-communist world. The statement called for increased defense spending and also a national effort to “restore our will, our strength, our self-confidence.” Failure to heed this warning would result in a continued “drift” in which the

¹¹⁰ Anne Cahn, *Killing Détente: The Right Attacks the CIA* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1998), 163-196.

United States would become “second best” to the Soviet Union, inevitably resulting in political subservience to the more powerful Soviet adversary.¹¹¹

In a sense, ACEWA and CPD had identical agendas with fundamentally different philosophies. Both organizations hoped that their example as elite coalitions and their efforts to educate the public would rebuild a foreign policy consensus in the wake of the Vietnam War. The CPD board of directors contained prominent businesspersons, labor leaders, publishers, former government officials, academic professionals and public intellectuals. Like ACEWA, CPD presented itself as an organization of elites united in a bi-partisan coalition whose mission transcended national politics. The two organizations diverged radically in the nature of the consensus they hoped to build. For ACEWA this consensus would center on its progressive vision of détente, with continually expanding U.S.-Soviet trade and increasingly comprehensive arms negotiation, free of all but fringe political opposition. This imagined consensus consisted of an understanding that the nuclear arms race was the greatest threat to American security and that détente had fundamentally changed the nature of the U.S.-Soviet relations. CPD aimed to rebuild the consensus of the 1950s and early 1960s, when American actions in the name of containment and American military expenditure and strategic posture were largely unquestioned in the political sphere. This consensus would be dominated by an understanding that the Soviet Union was “the principal threat to our nation, to world peace, and to the cause of human freedom.”¹¹² Here were two of the principal fragments

¹¹¹ Committee on the Present Danger, “Common Sense and the Common Danger,” in *Alerting America: The Papers of the Committee on the Present Danger*, Charles Tyroler II, ed. (Washington: Pergamon-Brassey, 1984), 3-5.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 2.

of the former elite consensus on the Cold War, jockeying over which persuasion would dictate the future course of American foreign policy.

Soviet Mentality – The Kennan-Pipes Debate

The debates on détente in the 1970s prompted new discussions on the nature of Soviet leadership. What were their strategic outlooks and intentions? What was their perception and understanding of détente? Attempts to answer these questions are not the purpose of this study, but the efforts of CPD and ACEWA to answer these questions offer a particularly sharp example of the divergent positions of the two organizations. The two committees embraced drastically different interpretations of Soviet leadership and Soviet intentions. These opposing viewpoints served as first principles for their positions on détente, American nuclear doctrine, and U.S.-Soviet relations.

ACEWA espoused the opinion that Soviet leadership had undergone a minor transformation since the Stalin era. In his 1977 book *Cloud of Danger* (which was embraced and promoted by ACEWA) George Kennan characterized the Soviet governing structure as an aging and self-stabilizing bureaucracy, concerned chiefly with preserving and enhancing their power domestically rather than projecting it abroad. Soviet leadership was not embodied in one figure, as it had been during Stalin's reign, but was diffused among an entrenched bureaucracy.¹¹³ Don Kendall took the argument a step further, calling the Soviet leaders “quite ordinary” and “highly conservative men” who

¹¹³ George Kennan, *Cloud of Danger: Current Realities of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Atlantic-Little Brown, 1977), 173-200.

were “given to everything else but rash adventure.”¹¹⁴ The Soviet political and military involvement around the globe was “not unlike that of any other great power,” including the United States.¹¹⁵ ACEWA saw a group of leaders who sought stability and the maintenance of their position domestically and internationally – technocrats, not militaristic ideologues. A major war or confrontation with the United States, Kennan argued, was anathema to the Soviet leadership.

Harvard historian Richard Pipes best expressed the Committee on the Present Danger’s outlook on the mentality of the Soviet leadership. Pipes acknowledged changes in Soviet leadership, but denied that such changes had any lasting significance. While Leonid Brezhnev’s regime was far less brutal and absolutist than Stalin’s, the change was superficial, not structural. Brezhnev and other Soviet leaders’ advanced age was a concern from Pipes perspective, because “when Brezhnev passes from the scene it would be entirely possible to reactivate the Stalinist policy.” While the Soviet leadership of the 1970s may appear to be “quite ordinary men,” it would be dangerous and myopic to believe that Soviet leadership was benign.¹¹⁶

The reality, Pipes and CPD argued, was quite the opposite. He advanced the proposition, which was a staple of the neoconservative foreign policy heritage, that the Soviet Union had never accepted the concept of mutual assured destruction. This theory posited that if two adversaries were equally vulnerable to nuclear retaliation, neither side would initiate a nuclear war since even a minor exchange of missiles would escalate,

¹¹⁴ Donald Kendall, “Monsters of Sorts or Quite Ordinary Men,” *Just For the Press*, Vol. I, No. 3, Feb/March 1978.

¹¹⁵ Kennan, *Cloud of Danger*, 179.

¹¹⁶ Comments by Richard Pipes to the Foreign Policy Association, March 14, 1978, in *Alerting America*, 24-26.

guaranteeing the virtual destruction of both societies. CPD did not claim that the Soviet Union was seeking such a nuclear altercation, but neither were the Soviets convinced that such a war was un-thinkable or un-winnable. As demonstrated by their efforts at civil defense and their nuclear arms buildup, CPD argued, the Soviets “take seriously the possibility of nuclear war” and were seeking to place themselves in a position to emerge from such a conflagration stronger than the United States.¹¹⁷ Since mutual assured destruction required both parties’ acceptance, the concept was null and void and should be shunned from the American strategic lexicon. From that point, CPD advocated a range of American strategic measures, which will be discussed later.

ACEWA and CPD saw two different images of the Soviet Union. One image, defined by Kennan, was that of a typical world power: meddling, inflexible, sometimes threatening but far from reckless. Moreover, the Soviet Union behaved more like the United States than Americans seemed to appreciate. CPD rejected this image, and the methodology from which it was derived. Beginning with the Team B exercise and continuing during the Carter Administration, Richard Pipes sought to change the lens through which the U.S. policy and intelligence establishment viewed the Soviet Union. The problem, as Pipes saw it, was mirror imaging. Americans mistakenly viewed Soviet behavior as being driven by the same motivations as the United States. This was one of the assumptions underlying Nixon and Kissinger’s approach to détente. It was also the flaw in intelligence that Pipes and other members of the Team B exercise sought to correct. The Soviet Union did not approach the strategic weapons arena in a manner similar to the U.S. – in fact they rejected the fundamental strategic assumption (mutual

¹¹⁷ Committee on the Present Danger, “What is the Soviet Union Up To,” in *Alerting America*, 11-12.

assured destruction) that had defined the American nuclear doctrine since the 1960s. To Pipes and other members of CPD the Soviet Union was not an ordinary power – it was extraordinarily aggressive in its approach to strategic weaponry.¹¹⁸

Becoming Number 2 – The Changing Strategic Balance

The Committee on the Present Danger advanced an argument of American military and diplomatic policy that was both intellectually justifiable and culturally resonant. They lamented the loss of American strategic superiority to the Soviet Union and vigorously opposed détente because it seemed to perpetuate and institutionalize the United States loss of relative power. Furthermore, they argued, détente had been a “one-way street” in which the United States had acquiesced to Soviet adventures abroad and produced arms control agreements that served Soviet strategic interests over those of the United States. These positions, while not always advanced in everyday language, were framed by the concept that the United States was “becoming number two” behind the Soviet Union.

This concept of America’s slipping strength referred specifically to the decline in American nuclear and general military superiority to the Soviet Union. However, it also spoke to an American populace that was struggling to come to terms with a humiliating and unprecedented defeat in Vietnam while also suffering through economic recession, inflation, and painful energy shortages. Whether or not the United States had truly

¹¹⁸ Comments by Richard Pipes to the Foreign Policy Association, March 14, 1978, in *Alerting America*, 24-26.

become “number two” was up for debate, but for many Americans in the 1970s, the United States did not *feel* very much like “number one.”¹¹⁹ While experts would debate the scientific, technical, and strategic minutiae of SALT II (a debate that was positively inscrutable to the vast majority of Americans) it was undeniable that détente and arms control corresponded with a very real sense of American decline that was difficult to confirm or refute. When the Committee on the Present Danger advanced arguments against détente and SALT II that couched the issue in terms of American decline, the American Committee on East-West Accord had no real response.

Assessments of the U.S.-Soviet strategic balance were complex indeed, and a thorough analysis of differing assessments is outside of the scope of this study. It was widely accepted, however, that by 1979 the Soviet Union had reached rough parity with the United States in terms of the destructive power of each side’s nuclear arsenal. CPD asserted that the Soviet Union would be able to claim a clear superiority by the mid-1980s. ACEWA disputed CPD’s data, but Soviet superiority was an eventuality that any member of ACEWA would likely have dismissed as irrelevant considering the Brobdingnagian size of each arsenal.¹²⁰ But it was Soviet strategic doctrine as much as the fact that America was “becoming number two” in nuclear weapons that influenced CPD’s policy prescriptions.

¹¹⁹ Gallup polls, “Power Expectations,” December 12-15, 1975 and December 10-15, 1976, in *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1972-1977*, Vol. 2. (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1978), 645-646, 936-937. Gallup poll, “Power Expectations,” November 18-21, 1977, in *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1978* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1979), 14-18. 1975-1978. ABC News-Harris Survey, “Americans Concerned that United States’ Strength Slipping Behind the U.S.S.R.’s,” October 29, 1979.

¹²⁰ Willard C. Matthias “What It Means To Be Number Two – A Reply,” *Just For the Press*, Vol. II, No. 1, April/May 1979.

As mentioned above, CPD argued that the Soviets had never accepted the concept of mutual assured destruction, and they were systematically preparing for victory should a nuclear war erupt. The Soviets were improving their air defenses and outpacing the United States in anti-ballistic missile (ABM) technology within the terms of the 1972 ABM Treaty. The Soviet Union was also increasing the accuracy of its ICBMs, making older U.S. missiles vulnerable to a Soviet first strike, further reducing the credibility of U.S. deterrence. CPD argued that U.S. policy should reflect this emerging reality, through improvements to American civil defense programs, increased research in ABM technology, and, most significantly, development of the MX missile. The MX was a highly accurate, heavily MIRV-ed missile, designed to survive a first-strike and capable of inflicting significant damage on the remaining Soviet ICBM arsenal.¹²¹

The American Committee on East-West Accord believed that the development of such “counterforce” weapons might destabilize the nuclear balance and unleash a new and more dangerous arms race. While the MX theoretically increased the deterrent power of the American arsenal, as CPD argued, ACEWA saw in the MX a weapon of such great utility, that it made the use of nuclear weapons much more feasible in a crisis atmosphere. ACEWA rejected the notion that a nuclear war could also be a limited war, a sentiment best expressed by former Assistant Director of the ACDA and ACEWA board member Vice-Admiral John Marshall Lee. He argued that, once the first nuclear missile was launched a “clear limit is passed, we move into a new world, with its own unknown

¹²¹ Committee on the Present Danger, “Where We Stand on SALT,” 20-21, “Is America Becoming Number 2?” in *Alerting America*, 65.

dynamic, under appalling pressures, imminently facing an apocalyptic conclusion.”¹²²

Furthermore, if, as was widely acknowledged, the Soviet Union had achieved parity with the United States, the MX would fling that balance out of whack, prompting a new arms race and destroying any possibility of further arms control agreements. New developments like the MX would, simply put, kill détente and revive the Cold War in its most dangerous form.

Humanity has been fortunate that the nuclear doctrines and theories developed since the Second World War have never been put into practical demonstration. It remains practically unknowable how any given state or leader will respond at the brink of nuclear world annihilation. CPD and ACEWA produced different images of the Soviet Union and offered radically different policy directions, each grounded in the arcane, convoluted, and ultimately sobering language of nuclear war theory. ACEWA warned of the dangers of a new arms race; CPD warned of the dangers of Soviet ascendancy. The arms race and the Soviet menace were not new concepts to Americans; they had been staples of life in the Cold War since the 1950s. But by the late 1970s CPD was warning of something new – outright Soviet superiority. This was not the spurious “missile gap” of 1960, it was an empirical demonstration of the ground that the United States had lost in the late 1960s and 1970s. And it was framed in such a way as to remind Americans that their overall national strength was then slipping – SALT was just one example of the United States “becoming number two.” ACEWA might warn Americans of a new arms race, but Americans had already survived the arms race. Historian H.W. Brands has written that

¹²² John Marshall Lee, “Cold War vs. Détente, War Fighting vs. Deterrence,” *Just For The Press*, Vol. I, No. 3, February/March, 1978.

the abandonment of détente “represented a desire for landmarks in a confusing international landscape.”¹²³ In an era in which the United States was already beaten down by recession, energy shortages, political and cultural discord, a humiliating defeat in Vietnam, and a world which defied American mastery, the prospect of resurgent American strength was comforting and, perhaps, worth the risk of a new arms race.¹²⁴

Norman Podhoretz, Munich, and the Culture of Appeasement

Befitting its alarmist name, the Committee on the Present Danger embraced an ominous outlook on America's place in a post-Vietnam world. Everywhere the CPD saw signs that the United States and the Western world were repeating the mistakes of the 1930s, in which cultural malaise, diplomatic appeasement and isolationism, and military complacency had left the Western powers unprepared for the fascist onslaught of the Second World War. As we will see later, this was not the only historical analogy that CPD employed to express the magnitude of the “present danger,” but these were not simply convenient framing devices for public edification. The leaders of CPD, in line with larger currents of neoconservative thought, earnestly believed that Americans had forgotten the all important lessons of World War II in the wake of Vietnam, and CPD sought to remind them. For as much ink as CPD spilled in discussing nuclear arsenals, strategic doctrine, and the failures of Jimmy Carter’s foreign policy, these were merely supporting

¹²³ H.W. Brands, *American Dreams: The United States Since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2010), 212.

¹²⁴ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 874-877, 1126, 1141. H.W. Brands, *The Devil We Knew: Americans and the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 161. Lloyd C. Gardner, *A Covenant With Power*, 210.

arguments. The most direct expression of the “present danger” of the 1970s was that the United States was repeating the same mistakes that led to World War II and all its attendant atrocities.¹²⁵

Analogies between post-Vietnam America and the 1930s permeated neoconservative writing and the leadership of the Committee on the Present Danger, but the most vigorous and articulate spokesman for this thesis was Norman Podhoretz. An influential figure in CPD as well as the Coalition for the Democratic Majority, Podhoretz was also the editor of *Commentary*, a New York-based journal of intellectual opinion. *Commentary* was a principal mouthpiece of neoconservatism and also a major outlet for the views of CPD. Podhoretz and *Commentary* published articles on a wide range of topics and served as an important bridge between the political, intellectual, and foreign policy strands of the conservative resurgence in the late 1970s.¹²⁶

Podhoretz viewed any manner of American retrenchment as creeping neo-isolationism regardless of the language in which it was couched. He laid out this argument in his 1975 article “Making the World Safe for Communism.” Although their rhetoric contrasted, in Podhoretz’s view there was no difference between the foreign policies of Nixon and Kissinger and those of the McGovern campaign. Kissinger surveyed the world scene and saw (incorrectly, in Podhoretz’s assessment) no alternative to an American decline and set about managing that decline. McGovern’s isolationism, however, originated from a sense of America’s moral deficiency. The sense that the

¹²⁵ Bacevich, *The New American Militarism*, 73.

¹²⁶ Gary Dorrien, *The Neoconservative Mind: Politics, Culture, and the War of Ideology* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 165. John Ehrman, *The Rise of Neoconservatism: Intellectuals and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1995* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 113-114. Sanders, *Peddlers of Crisis*, 179.

United States had nothing positive to offer the world created a “spiritual surrender” by McGovern and the New Left.¹²⁷

As the residue of Kissinger’s détente fused with the anti-Vietnam appointments to the Carter Administration, Podhoretz identified a “culture of appeasement” in an October 1977 article for *Harper’s*.¹²⁸ Here, Podhoretz drew a direct parallel between the British appeasement of the 1930s and the American détente of the 1970s (to Podhoretz and others the terms “détente” and “appeasement” were often used interchangeably). Just as British intellectuals had nurtured sentiments of national weakness and aversion towards conflict after the First World War, so leftists in the 1960s and 1970s had convinced Americans to seek cooperation rather than confrontation with the Soviet Union in the wake of Vietnam. Détente was, in part, a symptom of a degraded American culture. In Podhoretz’s view the chief culprits that were degrading the American will to resist Soviet domination, as in Britain in the 1930s, were homosexual intellectuals and a permissive attitude towards homosexuality. Podhoretz condemned homosexuality’s alleged “hostility to one’s own country” and “derision of the idea that it stands for anything worth defending or that it is threatened by anything but its own stupidity or wickedness.” Détente, although a danger to American security, was merely a symptom of an infected culture, a policy that was rooted in the cultural convulsions of the 1960s as much as the geopolitical considerations of American policy-makers.¹²⁹

While his incrimination of homosexuals was bigoted at worst, eccentric at best, Podhoretz’s concept of a culture of appeasement spoke to an undercurrent of resentment

¹²⁷ Dorrien, *The Neoconservative Mind*, 167-169.

¹²⁸ Norman Podhoretz, “The Culture of Appeasement,” *Harper’s Magazine* (October 1977), 25-32.

¹²⁹ Dorrien, *The Neoconservative Mind*, 170-173. Ehrman, *The Rise of Neoconservatism*, 108-109

and cultural backlash against the counterculture of the 1960s. This backlash was mostly manifested in purely social issues – school busing, abortion, the Equal Rights Amendment, affirmative action – but there was often an implied connection between the radicalism of Vietnam-era defeatism and détente. If Podhoretz’s argument was idiosyncratic it was because it expressed a sentiment that was typically implied rather than fully articulated. Policy was only a part of the discussion of détente. The rhetoric of the Committee on the Present Danger and other figures placed détente in the context of an American society that seemed to have lost its way, spurning its former greatness and strength for a pernicious self-loathing.¹³⁰

CPD and ACEWA were both products of their times. They recognized that the policy goals of their organizations were intrinsically tied to competing cultural sentiments, although they did not approach their cultural tasks with equal vigor. ACEWA tried to discredit what they saw as militaristic sentiment belonging to a different era that endangered world peace and stood in opposition to their vision of a lasting, progressive détente. They attempted to appeal to lingering war-weariness among the American people. CPD sought to associate the proponents of détente with defeatist attitudes born in the 1960s that were precipitating the decline of American power. These attitudes were leading Americans to make the same mistakes that had precipitated the Second World War. The Committee on the Present Danger, and Podhoretz in particular, were more keenly aware that the fight over détente would not just take place in the halls of Washington power brokers and policy makers. It would also be fought, in the words of

¹³⁰ Norman Podhoretz, *The Present Danger: “Do We Have the Will to Reverse the Decline of American Power”* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1980), 73-74.

historian Andrew Bacevich, in the protean arena “in which politics, culture, and morality converge.”¹³¹ While both ACEWA and CPD had messages designed to resonate with Americans in the wake of Vietnam, CPD’s message was more thoroughly developed and more rigorously applied.

Memories of October

As the 1980 election season approached Americans were still mired in the political, social, and economic turmoil that had characterized the previous fifteen years. The Kennedy presidency and the 1950s preceding it seemed a bastion of calm before the storm. This popular image elided the many social and cultural conflicts of the 1950s, but 1958 seemed positively serene compared to 1968. In popular culture there was a surge in 1950s nostalgia including films like *Grease* and the aptly named television show *Happy Days* that recalled a time of prosperity, youth and possibility. Kennedy’s Camelot embodied the same image of youthful charisma. The deceased president was highly regarded in popular memory, and his dynamic image contrasted sharply with a seemingly indecisive Carter.¹³² Kennedy and the early 1960s had come to define America’s past vitality in domestic and foreign affairs, before the tumult of the later 1960s and the emerging culture wars of the 1970s and before the Pentagon Papers and Watergate had shattered Americans’ faith in the honesty and virtue of their national leaders. They were the final years of the American Cold War consensus, a time when American military and

¹³¹ Bacevich, *The New American Militarism*, 72.

¹³² Gallup polls, “Comparison of Presidents,” December 8-11, 1978, in *Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1979* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1980), 38-39.

economic strength seemed unassailable. The Kennedy years were also the most recent period of acute and sustained U.S.-Soviet tension, with the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962 providing a generation of Americans with a framework for understanding what the days and hours before nuclear war might feel like. ACEWA and CPD both encouraged Americans to seek guidance from the Kennedy years and the Cuban missile crisis, each organization suggesting a very different lesson that might be gleaned from that time.¹³³

ACEWA presented the Cuban missile crisis as a paradigm for the inherent dangers and instability of the Cold War, and attempted to brighten the image of détente by coupling it with the legacy of President Kennedy. *Survival or Suicide* presents Kennedy's leadership during the crisis as a moderating force among his advisors, some of whom advocated a more aggressive response than the naval quarantine that Kennedy eventually ordered. The film recounts the events of the crisis in newsreel-style summary in which diplomacy, not force, preserves an ever-fragile peace between two enemies armed to the teeth with nuclear weapons. The aftermath of the crisis, from ACEWA's perspective, was a crucial moment of clarity and sobriety, which engendered the Limited Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty and the Moscow-Washington hotline. ACEWA saw Kennedy as the first president to engage in U.S.-Soviet détente.¹³⁴ They remembered the president who spoke at American University in 1963, articulating the promise that ACEWA saw in the détente of the 1970s: "peace must be . . . the sum of many acts. It must be dynamic, not static,

¹³³ Brands, *The Devil We Knew*, 163.

¹³⁴ *Just For The Press*, Vol. 1, No. 5, July-August, 1978.

changing to meet the challenge of each new generation. For peace is a process – a way of solving problems.”¹³⁵

The Committee on the Present Danger chose to remember the President Kennedy who said: “Only when our arms are sufficient beyond doubt can we be certain beyond doubt that they will never be employed.”¹³⁶ For CPD, the Cuban missile crisis was the paradigm for an entirely different threat to American security. The Soviet Union, CPD argued, had learned a crucial lesson from the crisis: nuclear superiority could be used to extract geo-political concessions from an enemy without resorting to a shooting war. If the Soviet Union continued to gain ground on the United States in field of strategic weaponry, the argument continued, it could force the U.S. to cede its position in Western Europe or the Middle East during a crisis situation – “a Cuban missile crisis in reverse.”¹³⁷ Thus the United States might be forced to fall back upon a “fortress America,” effectively surrendering its position as a world power and opening the door for Soviet global hegemony.¹³⁸ When the Committee on the Present Danger looked backwards on the Cuban missile crisis, they de-emphasized the nuanced response of the Kennedy Administration – it was a superior American nuclear arsenal that had preserved peace and forced the Soviets to concede. When the CPD surveyed the strategic situation in the late

¹³⁵ John F. Kennedy: "Commencement Address at American University in Washington," June 10, 1963. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9266>.

¹³⁶ John F. Kennedy: "Inaugural Address," January 20, 1961. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=8032>.

¹³⁷ Committee on the Present Danger, “Is America Becoming Number 2?” in *Alerting America*, 41.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 43.

1970s, they saw a Soviet arsenal that would soon be able to force a similar American capitulation.¹³⁹

“Chewed up in controversy” – Kennan and Nitze

The ACEWA-CPD rivalry was in one sense a continuation of policy debates between Paul Nitze and George Kennan, a contest that lasted nearly the entire length of the Cold War. Nitze had served under Kennan on the State Department Policy Planning staff during the turbulent foundational years of American Cold War policy in the Truman Administration. Kennan and Nitze had wrangled over the development of the hydrogen bomb and the American response to the Korean War. Nitze spent most of the Cold War in government service, including stints as Secretary of the Navy in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations and most recently as a member of the American SALT negotiating team in the Nixon Administration. Kennan served as ambassador to the U.S.S.R. and Yugoslavia and embarked on a widely respected academic career at Princeton. The two men had maintained a warm, if not intimate friendship since the 1940s, while they advanced competing approaches to American foreign and military policy, Kennan for forbearance and Nitze for assertiveness.

Both men were in their seventies when they faced off again, this time over détente. By then they were both noted elder statesmen whose words commanded public and official notice. Nitze had resigned from the SALT delegation in 1974, claiming the

¹³⁹ Gardner, *A Covenant with Power*, 220-222.

negotiations favored the Soviets.¹⁴⁰ Kennan had cautiously supported SALT and Nixon's Soviet policies more generally, although he felt they did not go far enough towards curbing the arms race or tamping down the Cold War, while also creating unrealistic public expectations.¹⁴¹ In the spring of 1977 Kennan published *The Cloud of Danger*, which, although it never mentioned CPD or Nitze by name, dissected and refuted the positions of Nitze and his associates. An issue of *New York Times Magazine* in 1978 presented Nitze and Kennan in a head-to-head contest. Just as the wrangling of Brzezinski and Vance served to personify the indecisiveness of the Carter Administration, the Nitze and Kennan dispute depicted the détente debate within the larger policy establishment. Nitze and Kennan's co-biographer described them as "the diplomatic equivalents of Larry Bird and Magic Johnson" during the late 1970s.¹⁴²

Kennan was reluctant to embrace this latest round of feuding with Nitze, and his role in the larger debate on détente. *The Cloud of Danger* was Kennan's sole assault on CPD, and an indirect one at that. After the publication of the *Times Magazine* article featuring himself and Nitze he told a friend, "My means and energies are obviously limited. For me to try to involve myself in public disputes with Paul Nitze and others would merely mean to get myself chewed up in controversy."¹⁴³ The aging diplomat rarely allowed the force of his words to speak for the Committee, and he bristled when his name was associated with ACEWA statements that might be politically

¹⁴⁰ Nicholas Thompson, *The Hawk and the Dove: Paul Nitze, George Kennan, and the History of the Cold War*. (New York: Henry Holt, 2009), 241-242.

¹⁴¹ John L. Gaddis, *George F. Kennan: An American Life*. (New York: Penguin Press, 2011), 614.

¹⁴² Thompson, *The Hawk and the Dove*, 270.

¹⁴³ Gaddis, *George F. Kennan*, 638.

provocative.¹⁴⁴ He valued the prestige that his words carried in the public sphere more than he cared about the debate on détente, and certainly above his public rivalry with Nitze or the ACEWA-CPD contest. Kennan distrusted the democratic process at best, and disdained it at worst, especially when it intruded on the work of diplomacy.¹⁴⁵ He was comfortable writing and speaking to scholarly audiences or testifying before Congressional hearings in a manner befitting a man of his experience and stature. In Kennan's mind, to mingle his voice with the increasingly bitter political debates over foreign policy, or to subsume himself within an organization such as ACEWA, would mean to "lose what little value I may have as a force in public opinion."¹⁴⁶ When prompted later in life to draft an obituary for himself, Kennan would write, "I am independent . . . I've always revolted against trying to say things as a member of a collective group."¹⁴⁷ Kennan supported ACEWA's objectives, but usually revolted against adding his prominent voice to support their initiatives.

Nitze shared none of Kennan's reticence. He was the most visible face of the Committee on the Present Danger and one of its chief strategists. Nitze and Kennan both received comparably extensive press coverage during the late 1970s, but while Nitze's comments were almost always associated with CPD, Kennan publicly associated himself ACEWA irregularly, even as the Committee viewed Kennan as their standard-bearer. Additionally, Kennan spent his summers in leisure at his vacation home in Norway, placing himself far from any Washington ferment for several months each year. Would

¹⁴⁴ Letter, George Kennan to Jeanne Mattison, July 1, 1978, Folder 7, Box 144, GFK.

¹⁴⁵ Kennan, *Cloud of Danger*, 3-9.

¹⁴⁶ Letter, George Kennan to Carl Marcy and Jeanne Mattison, November 14, 1977, Folder 7, Box 144, GFK.

¹⁴⁷ Gaddis, *George F. Kennan*, 692.

ACEWA have been more successful if Kennan had been less guarded and more active in his association with the Committee? They would certainly have garnered more press coverage. However, there is a more incisive question, and one that Marcy, Mattison, Neal or others might have asked, themselves: was ACEWA's position truly enhanced by Kennan's affiliation when he consistently and purposefully distanced himself from the Committee's public statements? Insofar as Kennan's name appeared on the ACEWA's masthead and publicity brochures he was an asset for fundraising and gaining recognition for the Committee, but ACEWA received little from George Kennan to boast of beside his name.

"Paul, would you please let me finish?"

Like ACEWA, the leaders of CPD hoped that the Carter Administration would be receptive to their agenda. While both were more or less rejected by the new president who was determined to pursue his own hybrid policy towards the Soviet Union, the CPD's response to this rejection was far more severe. While ACEWA debated what stance to take towards the Carter Administration, CPD stood in rigid opposition to nearly every element of Carter's foreign policy agenda.

Paul Nitze had been an early booster of Jimmy Carter, donating to his campaign and offering advice on foreign policy matters even before Carter had received the Democratic nomination. Nitze, hoping to work his way back into policy making, apparently pushed his expertise too aggressively at a July 1976 conference with Carter

and other foreign policy advisors. Every attendee received appointments to the Administration except Nitze. In December the newly minted CPD, in conjunction with the Coalition for a Democratic Majority, submitted fifty-three names to the Carter transition team to be considered for foreign policy and national security appointments. Like Nitze, these individuals were all passed over.¹⁴⁸

When Carter subsequently nominated Paul Warnke to head the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and serve as chief SALT negotiator, the message was clear to the Committee on the Present Danger: the Carter Administration was embracing the worst tendencies of the post-Vietnam era. Warnke was a former Johnson Administration official and later a critic of the Vietnam War and advisor to the McGovern campaign.¹⁴⁹ In 1976 he penned a *Foreign Affairs* article advocating unilateral American arms reduction.¹⁵⁰ CPD was part of an all-out effort to defeat Warnke or, failing that, to cripple the SALT negotiations by signaling conservatives' distrust of Warnke and the SALT process. Under the auspices of the CDM, opponents of the nomination organized the Emergency Coalition Against Unilateral Disarmament. This umbrella organization linked the traditional armaments lobby in the form of the American Security Council, neoconservatives in CPD and CDM and luminaries of the New Right, including Paul Weyrich and Richard Viguerie, whose pioneering direct mail apparatus was thrown behind the anti-Warnke effort. Paul Nitze offered perhaps the sharpest criticism of the nomination and of Warnke himself, telling a Congressional committee that Warnke's

¹⁴⁸ Thompson, *The Hawk and the Dove*, 252-254. Sanders, *Peddlers of Crisis*, 180.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 92, 104.

¹⁵⁰ Paul C. Warnke, "Apes on a Treadmill," *Foreign Policy*, No. 18 (1975), 12-29.

views were “screwball, arbitrary, fictitious.”¹⁵¹ Warnke was confirmed in April 1977, but by less than the two-thirds margin that would be required for the Senate to accept the SALT II treaty that he was now charged with negotiating.¹⁵²

The Warnke debates demonstrated to Jimmy Carter and any other observers that a SALT treaty would be confronted by an intransigent element when it reached the Senate for confirmation. It was perhaps from recognition of this fact that Carter invited several members of the Committee on the Present Danger to meet with him at the White House on August 4, 1977. It would have served Carter’s interests to co-opt or at least muffle an organization that could command significant intellectual and policy muscle, and the meeting signaled to the CPD leaders that they might now have the ear of the Administration after striking out on their appointment suggestions the previous winter. Both parties departed the meeting disappointed. The CPD leadership, including Nitze, Gene Rostow, Lane Kirkland of the AFL-CIO, and former Deputy Defense Secretary David Packard initially made some impression on Carter, but the President told the men that the American people would not accept the increases in defense spending they were advocating. “No, no, no,” Nitze murmured in response, prompting Carter to protest “Paul would you please let me finish?” A “mood of exasperation” permeated the rest of the meeting, according to one source. Carter tried to encourage channels of communication

¹⁵¹ U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relation, *Nomination of Paul C. Warnke to be Director of the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency*, 95th Cong., 1st Session, 1977, 143.

¹⁵² Johnson, *Congress and the Cold War*, 232. Sanders, *Peddlers of Crisis*, 208-210.

between CPD and Brzezinski or Defense Secretary Brown, but the Committee on the Present Danger opted for a different course.¹⁵³

While Rowland Evans and Robert Novak of the *Washington Post*, consistent critics of détente and Carter's foreign policy, described a meeting in which Carter bickered with the CPD representatives and was unreceptive to their counsel, *The Christian Science Monitor*, presumably on the basis of information provided by the Administration, depicted Carter as attentive and amenable to CPD's advice. So, while Carter was still seeking CPD's validation (or at least the appearance of it), the Committee had now decided to distance itself from Carter, who they viewed as a lost cause. CPD now had more to gain by working outside the Administration. As one early CPD scholar explained, "they simply could not afford to come out of the meeting expressing confidence in Carter's leadership without jeopardizing their own source of strength as outside Cassandras."¹⁵⁴

The American Committee had been faced with a similar decision in 1977, having failed even to gain a meeting with Carter. Despite being shut out, ACEWA refrained from outright vituperation towards Carter, remaining apolitical both in name and spirit. In sharp contrast, the Committee on the Present Danger did not pull any punches when denouncing Administration policy and attempting to engineer the defeat of SALT II. Carter, in pursuing his own set of priorities in Soviet policy, seems to have hoped to placate ACEWA and CPD by channeling their grievances to the subordinates who were most likely to share their viewpoints – ACEWA was nudged towards Vance (see chapter 2)

¹⁵³ Sanders, *Peddlers of Crisis*, 247-248. Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "A Touchy Carter: Shades of Former Presidents?" *Washington Post*, August 13, 1977, A15.

¹⁵⁴ Sanders, *Peddlers of Crisis*, 248-249.

and CPD toward Brzezinski. The leaders of ACEWA largely accepted their relegation; CPD did not, and they proceeded to launch an all-out assault on SALT and Carter's Soviet policy.

Plugging Leaks

In addition to offering public condemnations of Carter's foreign policy, the Committee on the Present Danger actively sought to undermine the viability of SALT II. Paul Nitze, using his contacts within the State Department and intelligence community, on at least two occasions helped leak information that would impair the SALT negotiations or damage public perception of the treaty. These aggressive tactics on the part of CPD demonstrated a ruthlessness that ACEWA could not match or neutralize.

In November 1977 CPD convened a press conference at which Nitze announced extensive details of both the U.S. and Soviet negotiating postures in the SALT II talks. A year later a CIA analyst released information to Richard Perle, a member of CPD and an influential aide to Senator Henry Jackson, which purported to reveal the deceptive intentions of the Soviet SALT negotiators.¹⁵⁵ These and other more minor leaks prompted Carl Marcy to write CIA director Stansfield Turner and publicly condemned the leaks as designed to undermine the constitutional process of treaty ratification.¹⁵⁶ In confronting the issues of coordinated links between administration officials and critics of arms control

¹⁵⁵ Susanna McBee, "SALT Critic Reveals Details of Arms Talks," *Washington Post*, November 2, 1977, A2.

¹⁵⁶ Charles R. Babcock, "SALT Battle Apparently Has Started," *Washington Post*, November 14, 1978, A7. Letter, Carl Marcy to Stansfield Turner, December 18, 1978, Folder 1, Box 145, GFK.

outside of the administration, ACEWA and the Carter Administration were also confronting the legacy of Nixon, Kissinger, and Watergate. Carter's effort to uphold campaign promises and eschew the secrecy of Kissinger's "back channel" diplomacy had failed with Carter's early "deep cuts" proposal. Even if secrecy was a dirty word in post-Watergate America, it appeared to be a necessary feature of any successful arms control negotiation. There was something of an irony here: Nitze and Perle, zealots on national security, were disseminating sensitive national security information, while ACEWA, which was advocating a very different conception of national security, and the Carter Administration, which had promised a more open government, was defending close-lipped negotiations.¹⁵⁷

It is difficult to assess what impact these leaks had on the SALT II negotiations, but a later Nitze-related leak would play a critical role in preventing the treaty's ratification. In August 1979, as the Senate was set to begin hearings on SALT II, Nitze encouraged a friend in the CIA to leak information that the Soviet Union had stationed a brigade of combat soldiers in Cuba. Nitze apparently believed that the public release of such information, which would come as little surprise to anyone in the know in the State Department, Pentagon, or CIA, would remind Americans of the Soviet presence on their doorstep.¹⁵⁸ The leak touched off a storm of debate in the media and in Congress, feeding the arguments of the opponents of SALT and causing erstwhile boosters of the Treaty, such as Senator Frank Church, to mitigate their support. ACEWA's press release on the Soviet brigade stated baldly "nothing has happened in Cuba" and called it "a non-

¹⁵⁷ Ernest Conine, "The People-Are-Dumb School of Diplomacy Has Reopened," *Los Angeles Times*, November 29, 1977, D7.

¹⁵⁸ Thompson, *The Hawk and the Dove*, 273-274.

issue.”¹⁵⁹ SALT II was already facing an up-hill battle in the Senate, but the brigade hullabaloo delayed any serious consideration of the Treaty until the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan made SALT a moot point.

While these efforts by Nitze to undermine SALT II were not carried out under the banner of the Committee on the Present Danger, they certainly aided CPD’s policy goals. Nothing in the history of the American Committee on East-West Accord suggests that its members were willing to engage in anything like what Nitze did during the Carter Administration by working surreptitiously outside the normal channels of public advocacy, elite consensus building, or Washington policy making. This is not to suggest that Nitze’s actions were illicit or irresponsible. Leaks, even of a sensitive nature, are a fact of life in Washington. Nitze did, however, demonstrate a degree of opportunism and an ability to extemporize in order to succeed in defeating SALT II. Nitze was CPD’s attack dog, a role in which he was effective; one Carter Administration official bleakly praised Nitze, saying, “Paul Nitze is worth 100 bureaucrats.”¹⁶⁰ Nitze’s counterpart in this role was nowhere to be found within ACEWA. Kennan, Nitze’s long-time foil, was disenchanted with maintaining a vigorous public profile and unwilling to speak for ACEWA. Carl Marcy was busy sharing the day-to-day duties of running ACEWA and was not well known outside of Washington. Fred Warner Neal was probably ACEWA’s most vigorous advocate and seems to have shared Nitze’s zeal, but had none of his name recognition, fewer Washington connections, and lived three thousand miles from Washington, teaching in Southern California. Nitze, on the other hand, was essentially a

¹⁵⁹ Press release, American Committee on East-West Accord, September 28, 1979, Box 146, JKG.

¹⁶⁰ C. Robert Zelnick, “Paul Nitze: The Nemesis of SALT II,” *Washington Post*, June 24, 1979, G1.

professional anti-détente, anti-SALT, and anti-Carter advocate, willing and able to work both behind the scenes and in public to further the policy goals of the Committee on the Present Danger.

Congress and Arms Control

Following Watergate and the 1976 election, an overwhelmingly Democratic Congress, along with President Carter, attempted to realign the national security priorities of the United States, including modest reductions in defense spending, an emphasis on human rights, a new focus on Third World problems, a renegotiated Panama Canal Treaty, and an effort towards more substantive arms reduction between the United States and the Soviet Union. These efforts would be frustrated by a concerted conservative Republican resurgence that exploited an escalating series of conflicts and crises in Africa, Nicaragua, Cuba and eventually Iran and Afghanistan to highlight the preponderance of threats to American security and the urgent need for a renewed American strength. As ACEWA and CPD sought to assert their influence on members of the Senate who would decide the fate of the SALT II Treaty, ACEWA found decreasing receptivity to its ideas, while the rhetoric of CPD flourished and came to dominate debates on SALT II. The 1980 election demonstrated that political support for détente and arms control had all but disappeared.

ACEWA's co-director, Carl Marcy, was a familiar figure on Capitol Hill, having served for almost two decades as Chief of Staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (FRC). In preparation for the crucial Committee hearings on SALT II, Marcy

cultivated a relationship with his successor, Norvill Jones, and with the man who became chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee in 1978, Idaho Democratic Senator Frank Church.¹⁶¹ Church was strong supporter of arms control and would make an appearance in ACEWA's film *Survival or Suicide*, asking viewers "Must we go on . . . knowing that no purpose can ever be served by this senseless arms race?" However, the cards appeared to be stacked against Church and SALT II. The 1978 elections had sent the FRC and the Senate as a whole in a more conservative and hawkish direction, with Senators S.I. Hayakawa, Richard Lugar, and Jesse Helms joining the Committee.¹⁶² By the summer of 1979 Church's own seat was threatened by a highly aggressive and organized movement in Idaho to unseat him.¹⁶³ In the face of these challenges, Church took an uncharacteristically hostile stance to news of the Soviet brigade in Cuba, declaring that the FRC would not consider SALT II until Carter confirmed that the Soviets did not pose a threat to the United States. Despite his newfound hawkishness, Church would lose in the 1980 election, along with several other notable moderates and liberals on foreign policy. After 1980, with the Republican Party in control of the Senate and the White House and now unified behind rebuilding American military strength and purging U.S.-Soviet relations of détente, ACEWA found little reception for its arguments in the halls of Congress.

The Committee on the Present Danger was created with a natural ally in the Senate in the form of Henry Jackson. Jackson was an icon to neoconservatives, a

¹⁶¹ Letter, Carl Marcy to Norvill Jones, June 20, 1978 and Carl Marcy and Jeanne Mattison to George Kennan, August 8, 1978, both in Folder 7, Box 144, GFK.

¹⁶² Johnson, *Congress and the Cold War*, 242-243. Zelizer, *Arsenal of Democracy*, 286.

¹⁶³ LeRoy Ashby and Rod Gramer, *Fighting the Odds: The Life of Senator Frank Church* (Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press, 1994), 576.

demonstration of the once and future strength of liberal anti-communism. Influential Jackson aide Richard Perle was himself a member of CPD, serving as an effective bridge between Jackson in the Senate and CPD's more expansive work. Jackson's opposition to SALT II demonstrates how CPD's alarmist and inflammatory rhetoric suffused into the public sphere. In June 1979, as Carter prepared to travel to Europe to sign SALT II, Jackson held a widely noted press conference under the auspices of the Coalition for a Democratic Majority, in which he echoed the CPD line, from global Soviet machinations, the specter of American inferiority, and the analog of détente to appeasement, a word he used no fewer than five times in the speech.¹⁶⁴ When the Treaty later stalled in Church's Foreign Relations Committee, Jackson's Senate Armed Services Committee stepped in, despite lacking any formal role in approving the Treaty. Carter had changed his position and agreed to increase the defense budget in an attempt to mollify defense hawks (he had already consented to develop the MX missile), but Jackson and Perle pushed a report through a "bitterly divided" Armed Services Committee condemning SALT II and shrugging off Carter's defense increase.¹⁶⁵ Jackson had already told Carter privately that he would oppose SALT II in any form that might be acceptable to the Soviets.¹⁶⁶ Jackson's intransigence on arms control and power in the Senate made him the perfect political ally for CPD.

Carter's attempts to placate hawks with defense spending and the MX missile were unsuccessful and made SALT II less palatable to the more liberal elements within

¹⁶⁴ Robert G. Kaiser, "Jackson Rips 'Appeasement' of Moscow," *Washington Post*, June 13, 1979, A1.

¹⁶⁵ Robert G. Kaiser, "Armed Services Committee Split on Anti-SALT Report," *Washington Post*, December 19, 1979, A2. Johnson, *Congress and the Cold War*, 246.

¹⁶⁶ Miller Center. "Interview with Jimmy Carter." University of Virginia. November 29, 1982. Accessed April 29, 2012, <http://millercenter.org/president/carter/oralhistory/jimmy-carter>.

his own party. Senator Ted Kennedy, a leading figure of the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, had been an honored guest at ACEWA's premiere of *Survival or Suicide* and seemed to be a natural supporter of SALT II along with fellow liberal George McGovern. However, Carter's overtures and conciliations to conservatives made the treaty look more like a placeholder than progress towards reducing nuclear stockpiles. Carter's own push for arms reduction in 1977 had raised expectations of a SALT pact that might progress beyond arms control.¹⁶⁷ McGovern believed that even with SALT II, the MX would "destroy hopes for real arms reduction," while Kennedy was disappointed that the Treaty would not be accompanied by a modified American position on nuclear first-use.¹⁶⁸ SALT II did not go far enough in reducing arms for some, and Carter's political trade-offs made it a bitter pill to swallow for liberals such as Kennedy and McGovern.

Liberal Democrats may have voted to confirm the Treaty in spite of their reservations, but a Treaty that was viewed alternately as a form of surrender and an impediment to peace would be difficult to ratify. The debates over the new Panama Canal treaty the previous year had demonstrated the organizational power of conservatives, and a handful of Senators who had supported that Treaty had lost or surrendered their seats in 1978.¹⁶⁹ What seemed like a great Democratic majority after Watergate had fragmented into an unpredictable Senate increasingly dominated by an assertive conservative coalition. The election of 1980 continued this trend, with Frank Church and George

¹⁶⁷ Kaufman and Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter Jr.*, 187-189.

¹⁶⁸ Robert G. Kaiser, "A Skeptical Senate Responds Cautiously to SALT II Appeal," *Washington Post*, June 19, 1979, A14.

¹⁶⁹ Johnson, *Congress and the Cold War*, 239-241. Zelizer, *Arsenal of Democracy*, 284.

McGovern among the nine Democratic senators unseated.¹⁷⁰ As ACEWA watched support for their style of détente erode in the Senate, the election of Ronald Reagan would give the Committee on the Present Danger new access to the foreign policy machinery of the United States.

Insights on the Détente Debate

The American Committee on East-West Accord and the Committee on the Present Danger gave the two most comprehensive arguments for and against détente, respectively. Abstractly, ACEWA and CPD made similar arguments. They both believed that relations with the Soviet Union were the most pressing American foreign policy problem and they both identified an existential danger in U.S.-Soviet relations. Each organization argued that the course they advocated was essential if the United States was to avoid catastrophe. Conversely, they each believed that their opponents' ideas led directly to ruin. There was congruity in their actions as well. They each competed for influence in Washington and in the arena of public opinion. Each organization sought to build an elite consensus to address the dangers they saw. CPD tried to revive a previous consensus that supported large defense budgets, an effort to deploy a nuclear arsenal superior to that of the Soviet Union, and diplomatic containment of the Soviet Union. ACEWA aimed to build a new consensus around the concept of détente and lessons learned from Vietnam about the dangers of containment. These two organizations' efforts to discredit one another and

¹⁷⁰ Zelizer, *Arsenal of Democracy*, 297-298.

present their arguments to the public provide insight into the declining support for détente in the United States in the 1970s.

The Committee on the Present Danger never mounted a philosophical attack on détente; it never claimed that negotiation with the Soviet Union or arms control was wrong on principle. Its reservations were practical and strategic. They argued that détente was causing the United States to drop its guard against Soviet expansion and that the SALT had become a vehicle for Soviet strategic dominance. While many members of CPD probably did feel that negotiations with America's foremost enemy were philosophically wrong, this would have been a difficult position to sell to the public. One observer of the debate on détente observed that support for U.S.-Soviet negotiation, in general, was a firmly mainstream position. Nixon had successfully coupled détente with the idea of peace – a basic human desire. Because of this association, few groups or individuals proclaimed themselves to be categorically opposed to détente or arms control, to do so would be like claiming “dislike of mother love or apple pie: it seems to cut one off from the normal value systems of mankind.”¹⁷¹ The Committee on the Present Danger recognized this normative shift on détente. CPD claimed that their policy arguments were the only basis to achieve “hardheaded and verifiable agreements to control and reduce armaments” and realize “reliable conditions of peace with the Soviet Union” - a “genuine détente.”¹⁷² While CPD's positions may have been unlikely to bring the Soviets to the bargaining table, they were presented as consistent with the idea of détente – a general peace and a harnessing of the arms race.

¹⁷¹ Coral Bell, *The Diplomacy of Détente: The Kissinger Era*, (New York: Martin Robertson, 1979), 201.

¹⁷² “Common Sense and the Common Danger,” in *Alerting America*, 2-3, 15.

The American Committee on East-West Accord also recognized that the general ideals of détente had gained widespread public acceptance. The opponents of détente, ACEWA believed, were either acting out of self-interest or reflexively clinging to old ideas and ignoring the new realities that détente had created – they could easily be discredited. ACEWA believed that détente needed stronger public advocates, a role that it hoped to fill. In short, ACEWA believed that the fight for détente had mostly already been won. All that was needed now was to firm up the new consensus, discredit the final vestiges of Cold War mentality, and demonstrate to policy makers that elite and popular opinion was strongly behind détente. The only alternative, as ACEWA saw it, was a return to the Cold War and the danger of nuclear holocaust. If this was true the prudent course would be self-evident, of course.

However, the shift in norms created by détente did not necessarily mean that Americans were prepared to make the hard choices that détente required. After the United States had extricated itself from the Vietnam War the concept of peace had less drawing power than when Nixon had launched détente.¹⁷³ Americans supported détente in principle, but, as discussed in the previous chapter, they remained concerned with Soviet human rights abuses and the Soviet presence in Africa – two major stumbling blocks for advancing détente.¹⁷⁴ While Jimmy Carter and ACEWA believed that détente signaled an end to Americans' "inordinate fear of communism," distrust of the Soviet Union had been ingrained for a generation and this distrust was stoked by Soviet meddling in Africa. The upward trend in Americans' favorable view of the Soviet Union during the 1970s proved

¹⁷³ Schneider, "Conservatism, Not Interventionism" in *Eagle Defiant*, 60.

¹⁷⁴ Harris poll, "U.S.-Soviet Relations," May 22, 1979.

fleeing.¹⁷⁵ ACEWA was invested in the idea that it was the Committee on the Present Danger and their confederates who were threatening détente, and ACEWA had no way of explaining Soviet behavior that addressed Americans' concerns with apparent Soviet aggression. ACEWA's rhetoric relied on reminding Americans of the constant danger of nuclear war that had characterized U.S.-Soviet relations prior to détente, but this danger had never resulted in the “exchange of missiles” that ACEWA warned of – most Americans had survived the Cold War. Moreover, arguments which rely on stoking fears of nuclear war have been shown to increase support for policies that claim to offer peace through strength – essentially what the Committee on the Present Danger was offering.¹⁷⁶ ACEWA's belief that, as one member put it, “there is no sane or moral or otherwise desirable alternative to . . . détente” prevented the Committee from recognizing the very real obstacles they faced in building their desired consensus.¹⁷⁷

What caused such myopia? The best answer is, ironically, one of the principal problems that ACEWA identified in the public's understanding of détente. ACEWA had warned that the Nixon Administration had presented a simplistic and grandiose explanation of détente to the public, which had produced “unrealistic expectations and needless disillusionment” when détente seemed to stall.¹⁷⁸ Yet ACEWA itself basically accepted that détente was a “revolution” and sought to coax greater public acceptance of this sentiment.¹⁷⁹ ACEWA was enamored with the promise of détente, believed that it

¹⁷⁵ Gallup poll, “Rating of Nations,” in *The Gallup Poll: 1980*, 48.

¹⁷⁶ Hogan, *The Nuclear Freeze Campaign*, 192.

¹⁷⁷ Cohen, “Soviet Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy” in *Détente or Debacle*, 18.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁷⁹ Fred Warner Neal, *A Survey of Détente: Past, Present, and Future*. (Washington: American Committee on East-West Accord, 1977).

was long overdue, and that its benefits were obvious. In their appeals to public opinion, ACEWA rarely addressed the substantive claims of CPD and other detractors of détente, instead relying on ad hominem attacks that labeled their opponents as anachronistic hawks. ACEWA's commitment to détente prevented it from fully realizing that the “systematic Cold War attitudes” for which it criticized CPD and later Ronald Reagan had not been purged from American public and could not be dismissed by simply reminding Americans of the dangers of the nuclear arms race.¹⁸⁰

In 1974 ACEWA saw détente becoming subsumed within the Watergate scandal and Washington partisanship. ACEWA structured itself as nonpartisan and apolitical in order to elevate détente from political vitriol. As a result, by the time it was clear that détente had become one facet of an increasingly polarized debate on foreign policy, ACEWA was effectively hobbled by its own structure. This would continue to present a problem into the 1980s. ACEWA's misreading of the trends of public opinion on détente also tempered their willingness to push their own agenda aggressively. After all, it would not befit the Committee to engage CPD on their own level if their views could simply be dismissed as hawkish anachronisms.

There was an aggressive neoconservative style at work in the Committee on the Present Danger, which Andrew Bacevich has described as “ruthless demolition” of any opposing viewpoints, and unrelenting promotion of neoconservative ideas, which were “portrayed as self-evident and beyond dispute.” In CPD this style was demonstrated by Paul Nitze, who became a one-man shock force against arms control. Also by Norman Podhoretz's take no prisoners approach in tearing down and denouncing advocates of

¹⁸⁰ Letter, Stephen F. Cohen to Carl Marcy and Jeanne Mattison, May 13, 1981, Folder 21, Box 13, WHA.

détente. CPD had largely sprung from the Coalition for a Democratic Majority, an expressly political and agenda driven organization. There was no disparity in the intellectual convictions of the ACEWA and its rival, but CPD was much better adapted to operate in the increasingly rancorous environment of 1970s Washington.¹⁸¹

The Committee on the Present Danger was not just more politically active, it found itself in the stream of larger political trends and its goals backed by a network of similarly oriented groups. After almost a decade of trying to bring the Democratic Party “home,” the neoconservatives threw their support behind the Republican Ronald Reagan and his strident Cold War rhetoric in the 1980 election and afterwards.¹⁸² They joined a new coalition that was backed by vast network of think tanks, conservative publications, and right-leaning foundations as sources of funding. CPD found far greater purchase for their case than ACEWA. After the 1976 election “détente” was a dirty word in the Republican Party, and moderates who might favor arms control and increased U.S.-Soviet trade were being voted out of office. At the same time, the Democratic Party was sharply divided on Soviet policy and arms control, with the Scoop Jackson faction taking a hard line while liberal senators such as Kennedy and McGovern began to sour on the SALT process. There was little political will to challenge Jackson on U.S.-Soviet trade, while CPD and their anti-détente confederates had made arms control a liability.

In advancing their own understanding of détente, CPD spoke to established historical and cultural sensibilities of many Americans. Their solutions to the problems of American foreign policy were presented as the only way of avoiding the mistakes that led

¹⁸¹ Bacevich, *The New American Militarism*, 72.

¹⁸² Ehrman, *The Rise of Neoconservatism*, 170.

to the Second World War. Norman Podhoretz and CPD argued that Americans could reject some of the cultural rot of the 1960s by rejecting détente in the 1970s. The Committee on the Present Danger, along with Ronald Reagan and others, offered a reminder of a not-so-distant past, when America felt more united than divided and American strength and international prestige were unmatched – “old ideas in a new era,” as one CPD leader explained it.¹⁸³ Since Vietnam the world had seemed far more complicated and that recent past was littered with the indications of American decline; détente and the concurrent rise of Soviet strength were central to this perception. CPD claimed that the Cold War had never ended, and now the United States was losing it. Calls for the United States to reengage in the Cold War offered Americans a return to a familiar framework for understanding the world and the prospect of stemming American decline. In this framework spokesmen for détente, such as ACEWA, were actually the spokesmen for American decline.

ACEWA had no effective response to this interpretation, besides the relatively stale and presumptuous charge that CPD and other hawks were anachronistic Cold Warriors. As one early scholar of the transition away from détente asserted: “Whilst the discussion purported to be about details and facts, it was predominantly about mood.”¹⁸⁴ CPD both exploited and darkened the mood surrounding détente, while ACEWA and other proponents of détente seemed to be courting danger at best, assisting in the downfall of the United States at worst. In their zeal to remind Americans of the previous dangers of the Cold War, ACEWA prevented itself from pointing out that the United

¹⁸³ Ibid., 114.

¹⁸⁴ Fred Halliday, *The Making of the Second Cold War*, 2nd edition (London: Verso, 1986), 121.

States and the Soviet Union had been negotiating nuclear issues since the 1950s.

ACEWA's arguments looked to a new future that was difficult to define. By their very nature these arguments were abstract and hypothetical. Each organization offered a roadmap for Soviet policy: ACEWA's was unknown and indirect; CPD's course was familiar and straightforward.

The crises of late 1979 served to confirm the Committee on the Present Danger's thesis. On November 4th Iranians stormed the American embassy in Tehran and took fifty two Americans hostage. It would be more than a year before their release would be negotiated, punctuated by a disastrous and embarrassing failed rescue operation in April 1980. ABC News framed the larger meaning of the crisis four nights a week with "The Iran Crisis: America Held Hostage." In December the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, a development that seemed to confirm all pronouncements of the essential militarism and aggression of Soviet policy.¹⁸⁵ The CPD announced that they had been right, that the modern-day appeasers had been discredited, and "the tides are once again rushing the world towards general war."¹⁸⁶ Jimmy Carter essentially confirmed this understanding of the invasion, saying that it "posed the most serious threat to peace since the Second World War."¹⁸⁷ Carter withdrew SALT II from Senate consideration and significantly curtailed American exports to the Soviet Union, signaling the definitive end of détente.

¹⁸⁵ Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 109.

¹⁸⁶ Committee on the Present Danger, "The 1980 Crisis and What We Should Do About It," in *Alerting America*, 176-177.

¹⁸⁷ Jimmy Carter: "The State of the Union Address Delivered Before a Joint Session of the Congress.," January 23, 1980. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=33079>.

Most Americans probably did not want to return to the Cold War. However, neither ACEWA nor Jimmy Carter presented any effective arguments for why détente remained an acceptable alternative to the traditional approach to the Soviet Union presented by Ronald Reagan and the Committee on the Present Danger. The inherent danger of nuclear war was not new, and the world seemed rather dangerous already for Americans and American interests, especially by 1979. Whether or not the nature and objectives of Soviet leadership had changed, as debated by Kennan and Pipes, Americans who observed Soviet interventions in Africa and were reminded of Soviet human rights abuses by President Carter and others, were unlikely to believe that the Soviets had drastically changed their ways since the days of Stalin. The previous era of Cold War had its perils to be sure, but it had featured a definable enemy which the United States was able to match, as well economic prosperity national self-confidence. The late 1970s held their own dangers which were diffuse and immutable, and the United States was mired in economic difficulties and seemed to have lost its political and social cohesion. When the United States seemed to heading downhill as a world power, rejecting détente was one way for Americans to change course.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON EAST-WEST ACCORD AND THE NEW COLD WAR

As *détente* faded from the American lexicon the American Committee on East-West Accord found itself as the standard bearer for a concept that had been roundly repudiated by political turmoil, Cold War rhetoric, and apparently menacing Soviet behavior against the backdrop of a confusing international landscape. The 1980s presented a host of obstacles and opportunities for ACEWA. The Committee would grow in size and in the stature of its membership, but it also found its range of action to be limited by the prestige and political orientation of its membership. The emergence of the Nuclear Freeze movement in the early 1980s brought widespread attention to many of the problems and dangers that ACEWA had emphasized since 1974. However, while the Freeze movement and ACEWA were similarly aligned on the issue of arms control, their membership, political and intellectual orientation, and tactics contrasted sharply. After a period of sustained U.S.-Soviet tension early in his administration, Ronald Reagan would pursue his own form of U.S.-Soviet rapprochement, contributing to the decline of the American Committee on East-West Accord as an advocate for wholesale changes in the United States approach to the Soviet Union.

As the Cold War geared down some of ACEWA's principal objectives had been realized. U.S.-Soviet trade increased in the late 1980s, military and diplomatic tensions had eased considerably since the early years of Reagan. ACEWA disbanded, however, because of internal mismanagement, not through a realization that its objectives had been

completed. Believing that détente could effectively end the Cold War, ACEWA had sought to purge the attitudes and policies that the Cold War had engendered and which obstructed détente. The Cold War ended before ACEWA achieved this goal, and many of these attitudes and policies would survive well beyond the Cold War.

“We are all living in ever more perilous times.”

The leadership of the American Committee on East-West Accord struggled to come to terms with the implications of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the increasing militarization of Jimmy Carter’s approach to the Soviet Union (which was extended and enhanced by Ronald Reagan), and the widespread perception of crisis in American foreign policy in 1980 and 1981. Opinion within ACEWA was fractured over an official response to the invasion of Afghanistan, the continued use of the term “détente,” the viability of ACEWA’s name in light of a new period of U.S.-Soviet tensions, and the orientation of the Committee as an elite-minded organization. Ultimately, ACEWA vacillated until the Nuclear Freeze movement provided new opportunities and renewed popular concern over U.S.-Soviet nuclear tensions.

During the winter of 1980, ACEWA member Arthur Macy Cox, an author and former CIA analyst, drafted a proposal for a U.S.-Soviet non-intervention pact. In its final version, it proposed a bilateral agreement not to intervene politically or militarily, directly or by proxy, in any developing or non-aligned nation. Eventually billed as a means of ensuring “No More Afghanistans (or Vietnams),” it was a rather naive response to the

invasion of Afghanistan.¹⁸⁸ As George Kennan and other members recognized, such an agreement would have been a complete non-starter if it ever reached the Senate for confirmation and was completely out of line with American public sentiments, which were focused on the Soviet's bad behavior in Afghanistan.¹⁸⁹ If anyone had noticed, the proposal would have made ACEWA appear to be severely disconnected from reality. The proposal was released in April 1980, a few days before the disastrous attempt to rescue the American hostages in Iran; no one took notice of ACEWA's suggestion.

For ACEWA, the uncertainty of the 1980 election season gave way to a sense of serious danger after Ronald Reagan took office. There was a massive influx of the membership of the Committee on the Present Danger into the new administration, including Eugene Rostow as director of the ACDA, Jeane Kirkpatrick as ambassador to the UN, Richard Pipes as Director of Soviet Affairs on the National Security Council, Richard Perle as Assistant Secretary of Defense, and Paul Nitze as chief negotiator for the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces talks.¹⁹⁰ Even worse, Reagan and senior members of his administration seemed to be exhibiting the same "systematic Cold War attitudes" that had been characteristic of CPD during the Carter Administration. William Attwood articulated the general mood within ACEWA: "we are all living in ever more perilous times."¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ ACEWA, "Statement by American-Committee on East-West Accord on New Policy Guidelines for U.S.-Soviet Relations," March 10, 1980, Folder 6, Box 14, WHA.

¹⁸⁹ Letter, George Kennan to Carl Marcy, March 12, 1980 and letter, Curtis Gans to George Kennan, March 27, 1980, both in Folder 1, Box 145, GFK.

¹⁹⁰ "Members of the Board of Directors Appointed to the Reagan Administration," in *Alerting America*, ix-xi.

¹⁹¹ Letter, Stephen F. Cohen to Carl Marcy and Jeanne Mattison, May 13, 1981 and letter, William Attwood to Carl Marcy, January 31, 1981, both in Folder 21, Box 13, WHA.

ACEWA grappled with the problem of packaging their message after so many new developments since 1979. In January of 1981 ACEWA considered reverting back to its original name, the American Committee on U.S.-Soviet Relations. It was the “accord” that was the most troubling to some board members, who feared that the Committee would be perceived as out of touch if they were openly advocating accord with an apparently aggressive Soviet Union. The idea was seriously considered, but shelved for the time being to maintain the name recognition the Committee had garnered.¹⁹² There was a similar discussion of ACEWA’s continued use of the term *détente*. As Ronald Reagan continued to denounce the past policies of *détente* from the bully pulpit of the presidency, a consensus formed within ACEWA that “*détente* is a killer in the present atmosphere” and should be dropped from the Committee’s public pronouncements.¹⁹³ One new ACEWA board member dissented. Stephen Cohen, a Russian history scholar and Kennan protégé, protested the decision as a political surrender: “If we give up the word we cave in to the hard-liners . . . good politics builds on defeats.”¹⁹⁴ Cohen’s argument was less about the word “*détente*” and more about ACEWA’s seeming acceptance of its own impotence following Reagan’s election. These debates demonstrate that ACEWA had suffered a sort of spiritual capitulation – *détente* was dead, the concept of U.S.-Soviet accord was a political liability. With *détente* lifeless as both rhetoric and

¹⁹² Letter, William Attwood to Carl Marcy, January 13, 1981. Folder 21, Box 13, WHA. Minutes of ACEWA strategy meeting, January 7, 1981. Box 78, JKG.

¹⁹³ Ronald Reagan: “The President’s News Conference,” January 29, 1981. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=44101>. Memorandum, Willard Matthias, July 16, 1981, Folder 22, Box 13, WHA. Letter, Jeanne Mattison to Stephen F. Cohen, August 20, 1981, Folder 21, Box 13, WHA.

¹⁹⁴ Letter, Stephen F. Cohen to Carl Marcy and Jeanne Mattison, August 29, 1981. Box 13, Folder 22, WHA.

policy, ACEWA would need a new vehicle to promote its vision of U.S.-Soviet relations. That opportunity soon presented itself in the form of the Nuclear Freeze movement.

“There will be cranks” – ACEWA and the Nuclear Freeze

The Nuclear Freeze movement was partially a response by peace activists and the left to the failure of arms reduction to materialize from the SALT process and a reaction to the increased mood of militarism and U.S.-Soviet hostility during the early Reagan years. The movement also touched a widespread sentiment that the United States, and the Western world, were approaching a new world war.¹⁹⁵ The Freeze Movement was based on the concept of an immediate halt in the production and development of nuclear weaponry. Lacking any schemes for its implementation, the Freeze was more of a germinal idea and a rallying point than a concrete policy proposal. The movement was coordinated by a national office in St. Louis, but was primarily a community-based movement endorsed by hundreds of city councils, twenty-three state legislatures, and a host of professional and religious organizations. The Freeze produced a demonstration of over one million people in New York City in June 1982, and a watered-down Freeze resolution passed the House of Representatives in May 1983. The Freeze received varying degrees of endorsement from several major Democratic presidential candidates in 1984, included the eventual nominee Walter Mondale.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁵ Adam M. Garfinkle, *The Politics of the Nuclear Freeze* (Philadelphia: Foreign Policy Research Institute, 1984), 7. Lawrence S. Wittner, *Toward Nuclear Abolition: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 169-170.

¹⁹⁶ Wittner, *Toward Nuclear Abolition*, 170-185. Garfinkle, *Politics of the Nuclear Freeze*, 219-221.

The origins of ACEWA's relationship with the Freeze emerged from George Kennan's acceptance of the Albert Einstein Peace Prize on May 19, 1981. Kennan used the occasion to deliver an eloquent and compelling argument for "an immediate across-the-boards reduction by 50 percent of the nuclear arsenals now being maintained by the two superpowers." Kennan's was a concrete policy proposal, if only a half-developed one. The prudence of the proposal and the eminence of its author commanded the attention of both the policy community and the media. The CBS Evening News and several major national newspapers reported on the speech, and Eugene Rostow, now in the Reagan Administration, claimed that the ACDA was considering the proposal.¹⁹⁷ ACEWA sought to capitalize on this media attention and their association with Kennan to advance a more concrete proposal of their own.

ACEWA adapted Kennan's idea into a fully developed, bi-lateral agreement for mutual "deep cuts" in the U.S. and Soviet nuclear arsenals. Noel Gayler, a former U.S. Navy admiral and director of the National Security Agency under Nixon, drafted the proposal in 1981 and 1982. It was conceived as a means of bypassing the pedantry of the SALT negotiations by ignoring differences in weapon delivery systems and counting each nuclear device only by the weight of fissionable material it contained. Weapons would be transported to a neutral location and handed over to a bi-lateral or third party inspection team that would verify each weapon and supervise the transfer of the fissionable material for use in civilian power supply. Gayler and ACEWA launched the campaign to promote the proposal at a press conference in April 1982, with Kennan giving his endorsement to

¹⁹⁷ George Kennan, "A Modest Proposal," *New York Review of Books*, June 16, 1981. Gaddis, *George F. Kennan*, 647-649. CBS Evening News, May 19, 1981, Vanderbilt Television News Archive, Nashville, TN.

the “bold and decisive” proposal.¹⁹⁸ ACEWA conceived their program as a concrete complement to the concept of a nuclear “freeze” and hoped to ride the wave of media attention on nuclear issues generated by the Freeze movement to draw attention to their own proposal.

Why did the American Committee on East-West Accord opt to piggyback on the momentum and media coverage of the Freeze, rather than throw the weight of their prestigious membership behind the largely popular movement? ACEWA and the Freeze seemed to complement one another, one a movement of community-based, grassroots activism, the other a coalition of elite Americans with ties to major American public and private institutions especially in the executive branch. They shared a desire to see arms control progress towards actual arms reduction. Numerous prominent members of ACEWA’s board offered endorsements of the Freeze resolutions, including chairmen Galbraith and Kennan.¹⁹⁹ ACEWA could have given the Freeze greater access to elite policy circles and lent the movement some notable spokespersons, while the Freeze could have given ACEWA’s initiatives the popular attention that had largely eluded the Committee.

There was, in fact, a limited discussion within ACEWA about the association of the Committee with the Freeze Movement. Stephen Cohen was trying to lead ACEWA in a more politically assertive and popularly oriented direction. Cohen recognized that “times are different than when the committee was created” and believed that in order for

¹⁹⁸ Associated Press, “Plan Calls for Giving Up N-Arms,” *Boston Globe*, April 30, 1982, 1. Noel Gayler, “Massive Reductions in Nuclear Weapons” October 19, 1982, Folder 8, Box 14, WHA.

¹⁹⁹ Other prominent ACEWA members who endorsed the Freeze were Hodding Carter III, Townsend Hoopes, Paul Warnke, Thomas Watson, and George Ball. Garfinkle, *The Politics of the Nuclear Freeze*, 92.

ACEWA and the policies it advocated to remain relevant in the midst of high U.S.-Soviet tensions the Committee must “try something new, something dramatic, something that would reopen a real discussion of American-Soviet relations.” Cohen advocated that ACEWA not just ally itself with the Freeze movement, but also consider assuming a leadership role. He recognized that détente was now fundamentally a political issue, and ACEWA should join the Freeze movement in a “vigorous aggressive and planned effort to influence and mobilize public opinion.” In the same correspondence in which Cohen fought against ditching the term “détente” he also censured ACEWA for political timidity in praising the occasional references to arms control emanating from the Reagan Administration. He suggested a politically provocative campaign of national religious leaders, several of whom were ACEWA members, to be called the “Moral Majority for Détente,” as a counter to the Reverend Jerry Falwell’s anti-Soviet, pro-family, and pro-Reagan Moral Majority. Cohen believed ACEWA could assume a leadership role at the head of a broad popular and political coalition – a “coming together of all people and groups who favor, for whatever reasons, at least the minimum essentials of détente.”²⁰⁰

Cohen’s urgings fell on largely deaf ears among the directors of ACEWA.²⁰¹

Gayler’s deep cuts proposal was publicly presented as an initiative that was consistent with Reagan’s pronouncements on arms control and arms reduction. The proposal ignored the slew of rhetoric from the president and other members of the Administration that was inconsistent with attempting to achieve such an agreement and which completely

²⁰⁰ Letter, Stephen F. Cohen to Carl Marcy and Jeanne Mattison, May 13, 1981, and letter, Stephen F. Cohen to Carol Marcy, August 18, 1981, both in Folder 22, Box 13, WHA. Stephen F. Cohen, telephone interview with author, September 20, 2011.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

contradicted ACEWA's vision. (By 1983 Reagan's agenda included the Strategic Defense Initiative, just the sort of development that ACEWA saw as strategically destabilizing and a roadblock to arms control). The deep cuts proposal was said to be compatible with the concept of a nuclear freeze, and ACEWA included a note of "support" for the movement in its media materials on their own proposal, but there was no formal association with the Freeze and minimal association with other like-minded organizations.²⁰² The Freeze itself was much sound and fury, but did not directly result in any progress towards arms reduction. A variety of internal tensions and socio-political persuasions within ACEWA prevented it from adapting to the new challenges presented by Ronald Reagan and the new opportunities presented by the Nuclear Freeze. These failures contributed to ACEWA's decline as an organization with the ability to influence American diplomatic policy.

The leadership of the Freeze largely consisted of groups that have been called the "Professional Left" - organizations which institutionalized and carried the flame of 1960s protests.²⁰³ Kennan, who had been appalled by the counter-culture of the 1960s even as he shared their opposition to the Vietnam War, surveyed the growing Nuclear Freeze Movement with cynicism, saying at an ACEWA meeting, "This holds dangers. There will be cranks. But [the] press coverage will be helpful."²⁰⁴ Kennan's perspective on the Freeze was instructive for other leaders of ACEWA, especially for co-director Jeanne Mattison, who viewed herself as something of a steward of Kennan's public image and tried to keep the Committee's reputation "clean, relevant, and . . . credible," unassociated

²⁰² Letter, Carl Marcy to William Attwood, October 16, 1981, Folder 13, Box 21, WHA.

²⁰³ Garfinkle, *The Politics of the Nuclear Freeze*, 1-5.

²⁰⁴ Notes on ACEWA board of directors meeting, April 29, 1982. Folder 8, Box 144, GFK.

with the “peace-niks” and “marchers” of the Freeze.²⁰⁵ The Freeze popularized one of ACEWA’s main objectives, and yet it was seen as a liability, something that must be kept at arms-length. ACEWA’s attitude toward the Freeze was another form of political surrender to conservative critics – they maintained an operational distance from the Freeze not because a closer association would be ineffective or counterproductive, but because it might sully their image and possibly expose them to unflattering associations. The Freeze was probably ACEWA’s greatest opportunity to assert its agenda in conjunction with broad public support, but the Freeze was too provocative for Kennan and other elite minded members, too incendiary for a group whose tactics remained essentially conservative.

The Freeze also presented a form of political confrontation that ACEWA could never adopt towards Ronald Reagan. Just as CPD members flocked to the Reagan Administration, ACEWA received a large influx of former Democratic officials and politicians after 1981, including Robert McNamara, Frank Church, George Ball, Paul Warnke, and George McGovern. But even as attitudes towards U.S.-Soviet relations and arms control became more sharply divided along partisan lines, ACEWA’s membership still contained a significant Republican influence. Their emphasis on U.S.-Soviet trade attracted many Republican-leaning representatives of firms interested in doing business with the Soviets. Co-chairman Don Kendall (who Carl Marcy called “our most avid Reagan supporter”) was the CEO of Pepsi Co., and other members included executives of Control Data Corporation (their executive vice-president, Robert D. Schmidt, was ACEWA’s president), IBM, International Paper, Lockheed, Dow, Xerox, General Electric,

²⁰⁵ Gayler interview.

and Exxon.²⁰⁶ It seems likely that, while these men may have cringed at U.S.-Soviet diplomatic or military tension, they and their firms were primarily interested in expanded U.S.-Soviet trade and little else.²⁰⁷ Carl Marcy and the leaders of ACEWA rejected Cohen's proposal to align with like-minded but mostly politically liberal groups associated with the Freeze out of fear of alienating and losing the conservative business interests in the Committee.²⁰⁸ This imperative also restrained ACEWA's ability to oppose Reagan's policies and rhetoric directly. The corporate membership represented up to one-third of the Committee's funding, and any overtly political stand against Reagan would have jeopardized that funding.²⁰⁹ Attacking the Reagan Administration directly would probably have wrecked ACEWA from within. Rather than challenge Reagan, ACEWA actually considered recruiting conservative Republicans with the hope of gaining greater access to the Administration. Although many members of ACEWA viewed the Reagan Administration as a provocative threat to world peace, they were constrained by their membership, and never truly confronted the administration.

The composition and political disposition of the American Committee on East-West Accord was crafted for the political realities of 1974. Then, the challenges to détente were a growing partisan divide on the issue and the Jackson-Vanik amendment, which threatened the crucial economic component of détente. ACEWA was, and remained, a bipartisan alliance of business and policy elites whose interest in U.S.-Soviet trade and

²⁰⁶ Letter, Carl Marcy to George Kennan, November 7, 1980. Folder 1, Box 145, GFK.

²⁰⁷ Stephen F. Cohen, telephone interview with author.

²⁰⁸ Letter, Carl Marcy to William Attwood, October 16, 1981, Folder 13, Box 21, WHA. Membership update, ACEWA, March 1981. Annual All-Member meeting guest list, ACEWA, May 4, 1984, Folder 3, Box 14, WHA. Membership list, ACEWA, January 1, 1977, Box 332, JKG.

²⁰⁹ Carl Marcy interview by Donald A. Ritchie. United States Senate Historical Office – Oral History Project. Cohen interview. Contributors list, January 1975-December 1976, ACEWA, Box 332, JKG.

nuclear arms control happened to align together in support of Nixon's détente. ACEWA was unable to adapt to the changing political realities of foreign policy in the United States. By the 1980s the Republican Party, led by President Reagan, was largely united on policies of increased defense spending and containment of the Soviet Union. A non-partisan defense of détente was no longer viable – the Nuclear Freeze Movement was just the latest demonstration that new reality. The leadership of ACEWA was unable to do the political dirty work that would have been necessary to advocate their vision of U.S.-Soviet relations in the early 1980s.

“Gorbachev was better than the Committee.”

Mikhail Gorbachev emerged as the new leader of the Soviet Union in 1985. He began a program of domestic reforms, raising hopes of new U.S.-Soviet negotiations. Over the final years of his presidency, Ronald Reagan bucked the conservatives within his own party, as well as neoconservatives and the Committee on the Present Danger, and agreed with Gorbachev on the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in 1987. The Cold War ended dramatically and largely unexpectedly with the destruction of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the toppling of communist regimes in Eastern Europe, and finally the dissolution of the Soviet Union.²¹⁰

ACEWA had long since ceased to be an organization with the same ambition that had characterized it in the 1970s and early 1980s. Carl Marcy retired in 1983 and Jeanne

²¹⁰ Zelizer, *Arsenal of Democracy*, 350-353.

Mattison was forced out as director following a romantic scandal with Noel Gayler (the two were later married). Since his Einstein Award Speech Kennan's work with ACEWA had mainly focused on a series of summits of the living American ambassadors to the Soviet Union. Kennan stepped down as co-chair in 1985, Galbraith shortly afterwards. The next year the Committee reverted to its original name, the American Committee on U.S.-Soviet Relations, dropping the "accord" that had signaled its aspirations to redefine an American consensus on the Soviet Union.

The Committee shifted its attention more fully towards U.S.-Soviet trade, to such an extent that at least one reporter identified this goal as their only objective.²¹¹ As U.S.-Soviet relations improved, the Committee renewed its calls for a presidential waiver of the Jackson-Vanik amendment.²¹² They provided a natural forum for public officials who espoused the same opinion, including Senator Bob Dole and former Representative Charles Vanik, who had co-sponsored the amendment and now advocated that it be waived by presidential order.²¹³ Reagan never issued a waiver of Jackson-Vanik, but he did nominate William Verity Jr., former head of Armco Steel and a member of ACEWA, to serve as Secretary of Commerce in 1987.²¹⁴ ACEWA and others continued to press Reagan's successor, George H.W. Bush, to waive the amendment, which finally occurred

²¹¹ Thomas L. Friedman, "Bush Gets Appeal for Freer Trading With Soviets," *New York Times*, May 5, 1989, A6.

²¹² Clyde H. Farnsworth, "New Focus on Soviet Trade Ties," *New York Times*, March 24, 1986, D1.

²¹³ Clyde H. Farnsworth, "Dole Proposes Suspension of Law Restricting Soviet Trade," *New York Times*, April 25, 1986, A8.

²¹⁴ Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "A Détentist at Commerce," *Washington Post*, August 26, 1987, A23.

in 1992. Despite the Jackson-Vanik barrier American exports to the Soviet Union increased sharply after 1986.²¹⁵

It seems possible that the business wing of the Committee would be influential as the Reagan and Bush Administrations became more amenable to increasing U.S.-Soviet trade, but it is equally unlikely that ACEWA's diplomatic or military recommendations received any attention from the Republican Administrations. Just as CPD members had been culled by the Reagan Administration, former Democratic officials joined ACEWA, including not just high-profile names, but also a host of lesser-known individuals affiliated with the Democratic Party.²¹⁶ Even into the late 1980s the diplomatic and military policy specialists in ACEWA were dominated by men like Fred Neal, Arthur Cox, and Noel Gayler, who were former détente boosters who had also criticized Reagan's policies in his first term. Even if the Reagan Administration would have been inclined to accept any of ACEWA's diplomatic and policy proposals, ACEWA likely would have been viewed as anathema politically.

The policy specialists stayed busy nonetheless. They continued to write essays for publication, criticizing Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger, and the Administration's intransigence on the Strategic Defense Initiative and nuclear testing. In the spring of 1988 ACEWA released the conclusions of a two-year study on U.S.-Soviet "coexistence." The panel's recommendations were mostly reiterations of previous ACEWA positions and ideas to recapture the détente of the Nixon era. One of the panel's participants said,

²¹⁵ Jonathan Fuerbringer, "Chances of Better Soviet Trade Ties Rise," *New York Times*, December 6, 1988, A20.

²¹⁶ List of new members, ACEWA, March 1988, Folder 3, Box 14, WHA and Addition to the membership, ACEWA, both in Folder 2, Box 14, WHA.

perhaps jokingly, “we don't pretend to have new ideas.”²¹⁷ The Committee had dropped “accord” from its title and “détente” from its lexicon, but it continued to espouse essentially the same policies.

What made this panel notable was the fact that it was conducted with a delegation from the Soviet Union, led by Georgi Arbatov, director of the U.S.A.-Canada Institute in the Soviet Union.²¹⁸ Since 1982, ACEWA had sought means of bypassing the American administration, believing that Reagan's provocative rhetoric and support for destabilizing weapons systems had created a dangerous crisis in U.S.-Soviet relations. The deep cuts initiative was one way of bypassing Reagan, and ACEWA also began conferring with their elite counterparts in the Soviet Union. ACEWA could claim several notable Soviet figures in their network in the early 1980s, including Arbatov, Ambassador to the U.S. Anatoly Dobrynin, Mikhail Gorbachev, and Deputy Foreign Minister Georgi Korniyenko.²¹⁹ What eventually became the joint commission originated from an assortment of ideas for ACEWA-led U.S.-Soviet endeavors. They included a high-profile summit between American elites (many being ACEWA members) and high-ranking Soviet officials and a Washington facility to serve as part U.S.-Soviet back-channel, part crisis management center. Neither of these grand ideas progressed much beyond general discussion. Beyond the joint-commission, ACEWA participated in U.S.-Soviet exchange

²¹⁷ Pamela Constable, “U.S.-Soviet Panel Proposes 14 Steps to Decrease Superpower Tension,” *Boston Globe*, May 6, 1988, 3.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Letter, Jeanne Mattison to Anatoly Dobrynin, January 6, 1984, Folder 4, Box 14, WHA.

programs which brought Soviet legislators to Congress in 1989 and sent several ACEWA members to the Soviet Union in 1990.²²⁰

Aside from trade policy, ACEWA was closer to being a think-tank than a lobbying or public education organization by the time the Berlin Wall fell. On issues of arms control and American military and diplomatic policy the achievements of Reagan and Gorbachev greatly overshadowed any proposals that the Committee could suggest. For at least one member of ACEWA who had urged the Committee to take a more aggressive stance towards the Reagan Administration, this was an afterthought. Twenty years after the end of the Cold War Stephen F. Cohen reflected that “the Committee was over, but you didn’t need the Committee, because Gorbachev was better than the Committee.”²²¹

²²⁰ Felicity Barringer, “Washington Talk; Soviet Visitors Learn From Congress,” *New York Times*, August 25, 1989, A11. “Evolution in Europe; Soviet Exchanges with U.S. Booming,” *New York Times*, May 28, 1990.

²²¹ Cohen interview.

CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION: FRED NEAL’S LAMENT

The former ACEWA folded in the fall of 1992 when its operating expenses began to exceed its budget as foundation support dried up during the denouement of the Cold War. Fred Warner Neal, who had created ACEWA as his own project and was still serving as Executive Vice-President, was disheartened by the end of the Committee, which he believed still had so much work to do: “The Cold War, as we have known it, is over, but the conflict-prone attitudes it generated remain.”²²² ACEWA had believed that the Cold War could not dissipate before Americans rejected the policies and attitudes by which the United States had waged it – reflexively large defense budgets, massive and elaborate nuclear arsenals, interventionist foreign policies, and confrontational rhetoric. Ronald Reagan (and Mikhail Gorbachev) had proven ACEWA wrong on every front, with some moderation in Reagan’s confrontational rhetoric.

The American Committee on East-West Accord failed to achieve the ambitious goals that inspired its formation in the 1970s. The Committee failed to build a new bi-partisan foreign policy consensus around the concept of *détente*, a word that was nothing more than a memory after 1980. They failed to discredit the Committee on the Present Danger and the neoconservative approach to American foreign policy it promoted. They failed to capitalize on the media attention of Kennan’s deep cuts proposal and the Nuclear Freeze Movement. Most starkly, they were unable to organize political opposition to the Jackson-Vanik amendment, the legislation that sparked their formation and which

²²² Letter, Fred Warner Neal to ACEWA board of directors, September 27, 1992, private collection of Stephen F. Cohen, New York, NY.

remained part of American law in 2012. The historical import of ACEWA is not to be found in their achievements; their history is important in shedding light on the intellectual and political history of détente and the lasting impact of the Cold War in American foreign policy discourse. ACEWA's running debate with the Committee on the Present Danger highlights the difficulty of changing the ingrained conceptions and symbols which Americans use to make sense of an ever complex world. That debate also crystalizes the very fundamental issues that were at stake during the fights over détente in the 1970s. Finally, ACEWA's history offers insight into the legacy of détente beyond the 1970s as well as the Cold War attitudes that ACEWA attempted to discredit.

“Old ideas in a new era.”

Détente did not end the Cold War, but observers from the 1970s can be forgiven for believing that it had fundamentally altered the nature of U.S.-Soviet relations. ACEWA believed that détente had ushered in a new era, but they also believed that détente had not gone far enough under Nixon. ACEWA hoped to guide the United States into an era of continuous détente that would truly end the Cold War as Americans knew it. The most important roadblock was Jackson-Vanik, which had destroyed the crucial trade component of détente. A vigorous and expanding trade between the United States and the Soviet Union would, ACEWA argued, decrease the likelihood that either superpower stood to gain through direct or indirect military conflict with each other. The mutual prosperity gained through this trade would loosen the Cold War animosities between the

Soviet and American people. SALT was a breakthrough and a valuable space for U.S.-Soviet dialogue, but ACEWA believed that arms control must proceed to wide-ranging arms reduction. ACEWA, contrary to the arguments of CPD and the later policies of the Reagan Administration, believed that progress towards arms reduction would necessarily entail a halt in the development and production of all new types of nuclear delivery vehicles, allowing a dangerous nuclear standoff to be transformed into a mutually defensive posture. Nixon's détente was modest and conservative indeed compared to ACEWA's vision of a progressive, transformative, almost utopian détente.

The Committee on the Present Danger offered an approach to U.S.-Soviet relations that was fundamentally different, yet familiar. Whereas ACEWA offered a forward looking approach, CPD hoped to revive previous attitudes and previous diplomatic and military approaches to dealing with the Soviet Union. CPD promoted "old ideas in a new era" as member Ben Wattenberg explained it.²²³ Neoconservatives and CPD relished the American strategic superiority and Cold War consensus of the 1950s and early 1960s, implicitly reminding Americans of a previous era of prosperity and political tranquility. They believed, emphatically, that détente had not ended the Cold War – it had merely served to blind Americans to the fact that they were now losing. The first Committee on the Present Danger had helped spur the United States to confront the Soviet Union in the early 1950s, and its second iteration hoped to do the same in the 1970s and 1980s.

The Committee on the Present Danger asked the American policy establishment and the American people to embrace a program that was well known, even if it was no

²²³ Ehrman, *The Rise of Neoconservatism*, 114.

longer as widely embraced: increased defense spending and a larger military, development and deployment of new weapons systems, a strong global military presence to protect American interests and deter Soviet aggression, and unflagging diplomacy to display American resolve and deny Soviet inroads in the Third World and Western Europe. Perhaps most importantly, it was based on a principle that Americans knew: “the greatest threat our nation, to world peace, and to the cause of human freedom is the Soviet drive for dominance.”²²⁴ The American Committee on East-West Accord offered an equally well articulated, but considerably more contemporary and nuanced approach to the Soviet Union. It was based on the proposition that the Soviet Union was not an especially aggressive power and, by and large, not a serious threat to the security of the United States and that it could be counted on to behave as a rational state. Since the 1960s Americans had gradually held more favorable views of the Soviet Union, but this was still a new and tentative development.²²⁵

ACEWA and other proponents of arms control and détente did not present Americans with convincing new evidence to disabuse them of the notion that the Soviet Union could not be trusted. Their rhetoric focused mostly on the dangers and absurdities of the arms race, but a preponderance of weapons of mass destruction was nothing new to Americans, all of whom had lived alongside the bomb for thirty years – for younger Americans their entire lives. For all their differences in outlook, strategic or otherwise, there was an ironic convergence in the worst case scenarios presented by these two

²²⁴ “Common Sense and the Common Danger,” in *Alerting America*, 3.

²²⁵ According to Gallup polling, the American public’s favorable ratings of Russia peaked at 40% in 1977 but plummeted to a twenty-year low of 12% by January 1980. Gallup poll, “Rating of Nations,” January 25-28, 1980, in *Gallup Poll: 1980*, 47-49.

organizations. Both described a geopolitical or military crisis that would bring the United States and Soviet Union into direct confrontation with the possibility of escalation to a nuclear shooting war. ACEWA claimed that arms control and détente could prevent such a confrontation from occurring; CPD argued that a robust U.S. military and nuclear posture would preserve “peace through strength,” just as it had in the twenty years after the Second World War. While the argument in favor of arms control may have been more prudent, CPD’s argument was more accessible, and offered the revitalizing prospect of a strong United States exercising a vigorous presence in the world.

Proponents of détente, from Nixon (who declared an end to the post-World War II era) to Carter (who attempted to lay to rest Americans’ “inordinate fear of communism”) to ACEWA, implored Americans to adopt a new and different outlook on the world and support policies that reflected that new outlook. They asked this at a time when Americans were also grappling with political and cultural upheavals, sustained economic difficulties and energy shortages, political uncertainty, and the bitter conclusion of the long war in Vietnam. Concurrently, Ronald Reagan and CPD offered Americans facing a hazy future the opportunity to reaffirm the old verities of the Cold War that had characterized the period in which American prosperity and self-confidence were at their height. Critics presented détente as a radical and dangerous departure and a surrender of American prestige and neither ACEWA nor any other leader emerged to effectively discredit this notion. The sequence of events in late 1979 all but confirmed this suspicion,

and by 1980 the United States had become, in the words of Walter Cronkite “a helpless, pitiful giant.”²²⁶

Regardless of which organization offered the more prudent course for the United States, there was clearly more at work than the relative merits of détente or a more traditional approach to U.S.-Soviet policy. Critics of détente found ways, often indirectly, to link the debate to the general sense of American angst. These linkages were intuitive, they felt true regardless of any proven connection. Détente, especially the version of détente presented by ACEWA, proposed a new departure for Americans. Meanwhile, CPD and other critics of détente reminded Americans that their society seemed to have lost an indefinable something and suggested that what the United States needed was not an entirely new approach to the Soviet Union, but to re-embrace an old approach. If there is a lesson to be learned from the debates between ACEWA and CPD it is that periods of general uncertainty and low national self-confidence make fundamental changes in American foreign policy difficult for Americans to accept. Détente was not directly related to high-inflation and high unemployment, nor was it directly related to the energy shortages of the 1970s. It had no bearing on the revolutions in Nicaragua or Iran, and it had no bearing on the Iranian hostage crisis. Yet in an intuitive, affective sense, détente seemed linked to these crises, and the arguments of CPD presented détente as yet another example of declining American potency. In this way, détente and ACEWA were the victims of the turbulent and confusing 1970s.

²²⁶ CBS News “America: Where Do We Go From Here?” January 30, 1980. Vanderbilt Television News Archive, Nashville, TN.

Ultimately, the decisions on American policy were made by the American people and the leaders they elected. The American Committee on East-West Accord failed to exert any appreciable influence on these decisions. Although it faced a well-organized opposition from the Committee on the Present Danger, and was attempting to discredit entrenched attitudes, ACEWA's failures were largely internal.

From its creation, ACEWA possessed a structural inability to effectively advocate its agenda. In 1974 Neal and the other founding members of the Committee saw the need to project an elite and apolitical disposition. This, they believed, would demonstrate a constituency for détente and elevate it above the political tumult surrounding Watergate. This disposition gave ACEWA an image of authoritative objectivity, but it also limited its course of action at several important junctures in its history. ACEWA declined to take a stance against Jimmy Carter's approach to the Soviet Union out of reluctance to appear political. The Committee's Republican-leaning membership from the business community prevented them from doing the same against the Reagan Administration. Perhaps most significantly, ACEWA's desire to maintain its distance from any popular movements, and protect the reputation of George Kennan, prevented it from taking a more active role in the Nuclear Freeze movement.

ACEWA also demonstrated a philosophical inflexibility and an almost dogmatic belief in the self-evidently transformative nature of détente. ACEWA espoused that détente was losing steam solely because of forces within the United States, not taking into account that the Soviet presence in Africa and Soviet treatment of dissidents made Americans skeptical that the Soviet Union was acting in good faith under détente.

ACEWA never made an effective argument for why the Soviet Union could now be trusted. Its inability to hold the Soviets to account for their behavior diminished the credibility of their arguments and placed them somewhat outside of the mainstream of American thought. ACEWA also believed that détente was the only reasonable course for U.S.-Soviet relations – after all, what sane person or society would want to return to the Cold War if there was another option? ACEWA believed that by encouraging leadership on détente and by educating Americans on its benefits, détente would gain the overwhelming support of the American people and their elected officials. But, while most Americans did support the basic components of détente, they also harbored serious reservations. ACEWA treated CPD and other opponents of détente dismissively – they were warmongers or out of touch Cold Warriors – but CPD spoke to genuine American concerns about the slipping strength of the United States and worries about Soviet intentions. ACEWA's approach to “educating” the American people relied mostly on stoking fear rather than engaging in an honest debate. The members of ACEWA were blinded by their own belief in the dramatic positive change initiated by U.S.-Soviet détente, making them ill-equipped and unable to convince the American people that détente was in their best interest.

The Politics and Symbols of Foreign Policy

In the late 1970s the American Committee on East-West Accord assumed the unenviable historical task of challenging the emerging tactics and thinking of neoconservative foreign policy ideas as presented by the Committee on the Present Danger. ACEWA failed to offer a coherent or compelling reason for the American public or the American policy elite to reject those views that ACEWA saw as truly irresponsible and dangerous. They failed to offer an alternative or a counterargument to the powerful symbols of decline and appeasement imbued in CPD's messaging. ACEWA's ambition to discredit the Committee on the Present Danger was an attempt to brand Cold War mentality and rhetoric as an anachronism. Neither ACEWA's efforts, a transformation of the Soviet regime under Gorbachev, nor the winding down of the Cold War itself was enough to silence conservative Cold Warriors, who continued to level charges of appeasement on Reagan and his successor George H.W. Bush as they negotiated with the U.S.S.R.²²⁷ CPD shuttered its offices in 1992, but re-emerged in 2006 when American support for a global war on Islamic terrorism seemed to be flagging. The third CPD's mission statement essentially mirrors that of its predecessor, with Islamic terrorism replacing the Soviet Union. Again CPD sees a tendency towards "appeasement" and identifies both a physical threat and a cultural threat, with liberal ideals such as "sensitivity" being exploited by terrorist ideologies.²²⁸ When Fred Warner Neal

²²⁷ Zelizer, *Arsenal of Democracy*, 340, 352.

²²⁸ "Committee on the Present Danger Mission" Committee on the Present Danger, accessed November 23, 2012,

considered the end of the Cold War and the end of ACEWA in 1992, observing that “the conflict prone attitudes that [the Cold War] generated remain,” he expressed both ACEWA’s great failure and a lasting legacy of the Cold War.

There are certainly important lessons from the Second World War. The failure of isolationism to ensure American security and the importance of the Anglo-American alliance are two that continue to shape American foreign policy. However, *direct* analogs between contemporary diplomatic policy and historical events (*détente is* appeasement, not *détente resembles* appeasement) are inherently tenuous and often counter-productive. They restrict the choices of policy makers and present rigid and dubious frameworks for public understanding of complex problems in international relations.

These simplistic understandings and historically evocative framing devices still abound, propagated by commander-in-chiefs – George W. Bush’s “axis of evil” construction, evoking the Second World War and Reagan’s “evil empire” – in colloquial discussions – facile popular comparisons of the war in Afghanistan to the Vietnam War – and from the third iteration of the Committee on the Present Danger, which frames its current role and the current “present danger” as analogous to the challenges Americans faced in the 1950s and 1970s.²²⁹ More than twenty years after its conclusion the Cold War still informs the manner in which public officials frame approaches to foreign policy – witness presidential candidate John McCain’s 2008 evocation of Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin’s KGB background and President Barack Obama’s framing of

http://www.committeeonthepresentdanger.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=50&Itemid=54.

²²⁹ “Committee on the Present Danger History,” Committee on the Present Danger, accessed May 15, 2012, <http://www.committeeonthepresentdanger.org/index.php>.

his administration's approach to Iran in terms of containment.²³⁰ I am not advancing any particular approach to the many challenges confronting contemporary American foreign policy. I am arguing, based on the history of the confrontation between ACEWA and CPD, that such framing devices and analogies are so culturally and historically resonant (even if the historical comparison itself is shaky) that if the policies which they are meant to reinforce are to be challenged, these framing devices must themselves be challenged. Simply asserting, as ACEWA did, that such sentiments are anachronistic are not sufficient to discredit them. They must be confronted directly and debunked with honest candor.

Resisting simplistic and symbolic understandings of American foreign policy is a challenge without a ready solution. As evidenced by the dualities of public opinion on foreign policy during the Carter years (see chapter two) the American people often fail to grasp the complex and often obscured or inscrutable realities of by which a world power conducts diplomacy. An obvious solution is political leadership which eschews facile rhetoric. This is a development much to be desired, but seems unlikely to emerge in the near future. A public which is adequately informed on issues of foreign policy would also go a long way in improving public discourse, but this too seems unlikely in the diffuse and entertainment-driven media landscape of the 21st century. These are problems of political and civil leadership, not an indictment of the American people. The task may fall upon the informed and engaged segments of Americans to ensure an honest and appropriately nuanced public debate.

²³⁰ Presidential debate transcript, *New York Times*, accessed May 20, 2012, <http://elections.nytimes.com/2008/president/debates/transcripts/first-presidential-debate.html>. Barack Obama, interview with Jeffrey Goldberg, *The Atlantic*, accessed May 20, 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/obama-to-iran-and-israel-as-president-of-the-united-states-i-dont-bluff/253875/>.

During the 21st century, the United States will again face the challenge of adjusting its international posture as new global economic and military powers emerge, such as China, India, and a refurbished Russian state. As during the 1970s, this trend of relative decline can be expected to have repercussions in the political and popular discourse around American foreign policy. This history of ACEWA and CPD, and the era of détente, suggest that efforts to change American approaches and attitudes to foreign policy, such as détente, will be met with popular and elite backlash. Some possible manifestations of this backlash are already visible in protestations of President Obama “bowing” to other world leaders (“a sign of really deep sense of inferiority” says one observer) and repeated charges from conservatives that President Obama “apologizes for America” – “the overall effect of this policy has been to weaken American power on the world stage rather than strengthen it.”²³¹ In the event that American policy makers should choose to disengage or de-escalate the offensive against Islamic terrorists, these declamations alluding to perceptions of American decline will continue to ring out in popular and political discourse – and the new Committee on the Present Danger will undoubtedly be among the chorus. The history of détente in the United States suggests that these notions must either be soothed or directly discredited if real change in American foreign policy is to be implemented and accepted.

²³¹ Wesley Pruden, “Obama bows, the nation cringes,” *Washington Times*, November 17, 2009, accessed May 19, 2012, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/nov/17/pruden-obama-bows-the-nation-cringes/>. Nile Gardiner and Morgan Lorraine Roach “Barack Obama’s Top 10 Apologies: How the President Has Humiliated a Superpower,” The Heritage Foundation, accessed May 19, 2012, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2009/06/barack-obamas-top-10-apologies-how-the-president-has-humiliated-a-superpower>.

ACEWA wanted to move American foreign policy forward, beyond the Cold War. They argued for an end to bellicose and confrontational rhetoric, a draw down in the gargantuan size of the American military establishment and a sharp reduction in the amount of treasure that the United States spent on its armed forces. In short, that perception of American strength and vitality should not be based on such crude demonstrations of the ability and will to use brute force. These were the “conflict prone attitudes” which Fred Neal lamented in 1992. These attitudes were the essence of its conflict with CPD and its differences with the Reagan Administration. The Cold War ended, in part because of the structures of US-Soviet engagement that détente created. It certainly did not end by the means that ACEWA proposed to end it. The salient features by which the United States waged the Cold War were never repudiated, and continue to be the principal features of the rhetoric of the Republican Party, whose contemporary approach to foreign policy was largely forged during the era of détente.

ACEWA and the Legacy of Détente

ACEWA was unable to construct a new consensus on U.S.-Soviet relations or produce a meaningful shift in public discourse on American engagement with the Soviet Union. Despite their signal failings, they were not without accomplishments. ACEWA helped to maintain the split consensus on American Cold War policy – they in essence helped keep détente, or at least the promise of détente alive. In the early 1980s, amidst Reagan’s alarming rhetoric and drastically increased U.S.-Soviet tensions, ACEWA

served as something of a rallying point for like-minded former government officials and other elites. That ACEWA's efforts failed during this time is less interesting than the fact that a credible organization existed to harbor elite dissatisfaction in the midst of a renewed Cold War.

ACEWA had dropped the term “détente” following the election of Ronald Reagan, but their proposals remained essentially the same, as evinced by its U.S.-Soviet commission which basically reiterated the ACEWA agenda from the 1970s. The Committee remained committed to the promise of détente that had brought it together: if the United States and the Soviet Union sought areas of mutual agreement and benefit and engaged in negotiation on these issues then tensions between the two superpowers would gradually erode. ACEWA also held to the conviction that the existing structures of arms control could progress into bilateral reductions in armaments. It was still unable to move American policy, but ACEWA's continuing presence as a mainstream elite organization demonstrated the staying power and legitimacy of its positions within the policy community.

Détente had failed, but the promising breakthroughs achieved by Nixon and Kissinger lingered. Reagan himself privately confessed to Leonid Brezhnev to being inspired by the initial breakthroughs of détente between Nixon and the aging Soviet leader.²³² When Reagan pointed out in 1988 (standing beside Mikhail Gorbachev in Moscow) that his “evil empire” speech was from “another time, another era,” the elements of the policy community represented by ACEWA could nod their heads in vigorous agreement, even if they believed Reagan to be a decade behind in that

²³² Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*, 350.

sentiment.²³³ Reagan's rhetorical shift during his second term culminated with his speech in Moscow in May 1988, in which he matched ACEWA's forward-looking and utopian vision of détente:

We do not know what the conclusion will be of the journey . . . We may be allowed to hope that that the marvelous sound of new openness will keep rising through, ringing through, leading to a new world of reconciliation, friendship, and peace.²³⁴

True to form, the Committee on the Present Danger again shouted “appeasement!” when Reagan and George H.W. Bush failed to meet their standards for waging the Cold War, but there was another large segment of the policy community that vocally supported negotiations. (And many of the former CPD members had been removed or marginalized from the Reagan Administration.)²³⁵ Reagan and Bush knew that they would not be alienating the policy (or business) elite. It was perhaps during this era that ACEWA finally achieved one of its original goals, “to ensure the President, the Congress, and the American people at large that a growing constituency supports improved relations with the Soviet Union.”²³⁶ ACEWA helped demonstrate that accommodation with the Soviet Union and far-reaching U.S.-Soviet negotiations were not outside the mainstream of elite opinion. This was perhaps even more important during the George H.W. Bush Administration, when the United States moved tentatively in its relationship with the Soviet Union in the uncertain post-Cold War environment. ACEWA, institutionalizing and demonstrating the last legitimacy of détente, helped to ensure that American efforts

²³³ Heilbrun, *They Knew They Were Right*, 192.

²³⁴ Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan*, 263.

²³⁵ Zelizer, *The Arsenal of Democracy*, 350.

²³⁶ ACEWA advertisement, *Washington Post*, January 31, 1975, A9.

to de-escalate the Cold War in the late 1980s were not widely viewed as betrayals of American interests or American values.

The détente of the 1970s made American efforts to wind down the Cold War less revolutionary, even if the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union itself were themselves very dramatic events. The enduring features of détente were not the decisive factors, but the lingering shadows of détente lent expediency to the efforts of Gorbachev and Reagan. Détente raised expectations in the United States that the Cold War could be ended, not in cataclysm or outright victory, but through mutual consent on the part of communists and capitalists. These expectations were nurtured and institutionalized within ACEWA and appeared in a drastically different manifestation during the Nuclear Freeze movement. After the era of détente, there was a precedent, albeit a politically contested one, for far-reaching and high-level U.S.-Soviet negotiations and expansion of trade with the Soviet Union. Détente also created the enduring negotiating structures that would eventually serve as ready pathways for Reagan and Gorbachev to achieve groundbreaking agreements in U.S.-Soviet relations and which undermined one-party rule in Eastern Europe through the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe. Despite its general repudiation in the United States by 1980, both normatively and substantively the legacy of détente was a factor in the end of the Cold War, and America's non-violent triumph over global communism.

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