Richard Nixon Essay, Research Paper

Richard M. Nixon was a very important figure in the history of the United States of America. Although his positive achievements are often overshadowed by his involvement in the Whitewater Scandal, I hope to shed some light on the true Richard Nixon.

Richard Milhouse Nixon was born in California to Quaker parents. He attended Whittier College, and then attended Duke University Law School. He graduated and then began practicing Law in his hometown of Whittier. After his work in Whittier was complete he began working for the office of Price Administration in Washington. He then joined the Navy and went on duty with the United States Navy. In 1946, after his discharge from the Navy he ran for Congress as a Republican and was elected to the house of Representatives. With the personality of a prosecuting attorney he made many enemies and very few friends. While serving on the House Un-American Activities Committee, which held public hearings accusing people of being communist, and treated those who refused to answer as guilty. While a member of this committee he won National attention with the famous Alger case. In this case Alger Hiss was convicted of perjury, he had been giving secret documents to Whittaker Chambers, a confessed former Soviet Courier. Throughout the case Alger’s key witneses were high ranking democrats. This caused the citizens to fear that the nation was getting soft on communism. With Nixon’s conviction of Hiss it helped elect Nixon to Senator of California in 1950. In 1952 he was elected to Vice President with General Eisenhower. IN 1960 he ran for president against John F. Kennedy, and Lost. Later in 1968 he ran for President again and this time won.

“Let us take as our goal: Where peace is unknown, make it known; Where peace is fragile, make it strong; Where peace is temporary, make it permanent.”

During President Nixon’s 5 1/2 year reign as President of the United States he made foreign peace his number one policy. Foreign Policy was unquestionably the environment where Nixon was at his best. It was his favorite subject in reading and conversation. Foreign policy was his safety net, it was where he felt strongest, and until the very end of his presidency it was were he looked back upon as his finest accomplishments. Nixon’s first priorities were, to get the United States out of the Vietnam War, and to improve relations with the communist world, mainly Russia and China.

The situation in Vietnam was escalating to an unjustifiable point and the people of the United States were fed up with all that was going on. He had promised an end to the war and the people wanted and awaited the end to the war. He reiterated his promise of an end in May of 1969 when he stated that he intended to keep that promise. He said that he “ruled out either a one sided withdrawal… or the acceptance of terms that would amount to a disguised American defeat.” Many people today feel that in order to protect himself from public hostility he told the public that he was removing soldiers from Vietnam, when in fact he was widening the war. Nixon’s “peace plan” was actually surrounded by secret bombings and plans and threats to bomb from Indonesia to North Korea. In order to avoid anti-war protests Nixons secret bombings were kept from nearly everyone , including the public and Congress. The secret bombings were so secret that the secretary of the Air Force was kept from knowing about them. These bombings were meant to force North Vietnam to accept the agreement with the U.S as well as pushing the South to step up and feel assured that the U.S was backing them although they would not be in Vietnam. Although Nixon was bombing and had more plans to bomb he was somewhat true to his word, he did start the removal of U.S soldiers from Vietnam. On January 15, 1973 Nixon announced that he was calling a halt to the United States offensive action in Vietnam, and on Jan. 27 all fighting was to stop in Vietnam. With this Nixon had done what he said he never would do. This ending was both “a one sided withdrawal” and the “acceptance of terms that would amount to a one sided defeat”. Many people felt that we were in the Vietnam War because of Communist China. Nixon himself said that “A United States defeat in Vietnam means a Chinese Communist victory.” It was Nixon’s job now to turn his attention towards Communist China.

Now, probably the one aspect of Nixon’s presidency that is most remembered today, the opening of China, was underway. In 1971 Nixon announced that he planned to fly to the Communist Nation of China. Here he hoped to open discussions between China and the United States. A few months after Nixon’s announcement of his plans he declared that the U.S was going to change its stand and support China’s part in the UN. One reason that nobody challenged his plan was because they knew that Nixon was a supreme fighter against communism. On February 21, 1972, President Nixon made his trip to Peking. He began to bring the relations of two super powers back to normal. Nixon used this trip to China as a campaign talking point, saying that the diplomatic initiative was part of his overall plan for world peace. Nixon’s seven day visit was the first time that an American diplomatic leader had ever visited China, and it also signaled and end to a twenty three year hostility between the two nations. The only problem with Nixons trip to Communist China was that Russia, who we were trying to get diplomatic relations with would look poorly at these talks. The two nations were bitter rivals. In order for Nixon to balance his knew ties to China he had to offer a gesture to the Soviets. A few months after Nixon made his trip to China he made a visit to the Soviet Union. Here Nixon and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev were to sign a series of small documents covering the environment, space and health. The main aspect of the visit was to sign the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty. SALT would prevent the Soviet Union from developing specialized weapons of mass destruction. Also, with the signing of this treaty both nations agreed to only have two antiballistic missile sights. Both these trips to China and to the Soviet Union helped reduce the threat of war with the super Communist Nations. The word Detente came into play now, detente means to relax of calm, and we hoped that with the trips by Nixon that the tension between the countries would end.

Richard Nixon did a lot for our nation. He was the man that we can give credit to for the intervention of China and the Soviet Union. Without his superb strive for foreign peace we could never know where we would stand now in the eyes of China and the Soviet Union. Although when many people look back on Nixon’s presidency they see it to be tainted with his dishonesty with the people of America, I hope that they don’t forget to also see the good that he did in fact do. I personally feel that Richard Nixon was a lier and a dirty President. From the fact that he hid almost all of his actions from not only his people but also from his selected staff. I do see the good that he did, but, I can now say with confidence that Richard Nixon was a sad man.