

Richard Nixon Presidential Library
Contested Materials Collection
Folder List

<u>Box Number</u>	<u>Folder Number</u>	<u>Document Date</u>	<u>No Date</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Document Type</u>	<u>Document Description</u>
17	1		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Foreign Policy	Book	A book entitled, "The Nixon Years", by Victor Leaky. RE: The facets of the Nixon Administration including: foreign policy, political support, and the Nixon papers. Covers chapters 1-9. 222 pgs.

DOCUMENT WITHDRAWAL RECORD [NIXON PROJECT]

DOCUMENT NUMBER	DOCUMENT TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE OR CORRESPONDENTS	DATE	RESTRICTION
N-1 [Doc # 1]	MSS.	The Nixon years by Victor Laskey, Prologue, chapters 1-8	n.d.	C

FILE GROUP TITLE HRH BOX NUMBER 267

FOLDER TITLE The Nixon years by Victor Laskey [Part 1 of 3]

RESTRICTION CODES

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| <p>A. Release would violate a Federal statute or Agency Policy.
 B. National security classified information.
 C. Pending or approved claim that release would violate an individual's rights.
 D. Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of privacy or a libel of a living person.</p> | <p>E. Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information.
 F. Release would disclose investigatory information compiled for law enforcement purposes.
 G. Withdrawn and return private and personal material.
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Presidential Materials Review Board

Review on Contested Documents

Collection: H. R. Haldeman
Box Number: 267

Folder: The Nixon Years by Victor Lasky [Part 1 of 3]

<u>Document</u>	<u>Disposition</u>
1	Return Private/Personal

THE NIXON YEARS

by

Victor Lasky

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PROLOGUE

On the 27th of May 1970, forty-five of the nation's top financial and industrial executives were invited to a private dinner at the White House. It had been one of the most turbulent months in the nation's history. Controversy still raged over the American incursion into Cambodia. Reverberations over the tragic deaths at Kent State University were still being felt on the nation's campuses. And from the point of view of business, things didn't look too good either. Among other things, the stock market had been on a long, scary slide. The nation's future looked gloomy indeed.

It was at this dinner in the State Dining Room that Richard Nixon sought to demonstrate that the ship of state was being steered through troubled waters by competent hands. Speaking without notes, the President briefed the troubled executives on his Cambodian decision as well as his economic policies. Then the floor was thrown open to questions.

The floor was grabbed by Isidore Cohen, an elderly clothing manufacturer from New York who, as it later turned out, had been invited by mistake. It was another Cohen, also in the same business, who was supposed to have been invited. At any rate, the man who did come to dinner got up and, after congratulating the President for meeting businessmen face-to-face, launched into a twelve-minute attack on the condition of the economy as well as the President's failure to end the war in Vietnam. Uneasiness and embarrassment rippled through the ornate room as Cohen droned

on and on. Stage whispers of "Sit down!" and "Shut up!" could be heard. The President, sitting just four places down the dinner table from Cohen, cupped his chin in his hand and listened closely.

As Cohen later recalled the episode, "The fellow next to me gave me a tug at my coat, but I would not sit down until I had said what I wanted to say. Toward the end of my comments, the President started to rise, but I said, 'Please, Mr. President, may I add one remark?' and he let me continue. He was wonderful. He was the one who could have cut me short, but he let me go on for twelve minutes."

When the peppery little New Yorker began to take the President to task for having invited "those hardhat bullies" to the White House, some of the guests began to boo. The President rose to quiet the group. "Please don't do that," he said. "This man has a right to his convictions. I understand his feelings, and the feelings of all those who are convinced this war is morally wrong. But to set the record straight, let me tell you about those hardhats who came to see me."

And the President told the story of George Daley, a gold star father in the construction workers' delegation which had visited him in the Oval Room to voice support for his Cambodian action. Daley, said Mr. Nixon, had commented sadly that if only the incursion had taken place earlier "the Allies might have captured the bullet that killed my son in Vietnam" some months previously.

Then President Nixon turned to Cohen and said quietly, "The doors of the White House will always be open to a man like that. So don't let anyone give me any ~~crap~~ about inviting the hardhats to the White House." With that the tension was dispelled, Cohen was chastened without being humiliated and the business executives gave the President a thunderous standing ovation.

The extraordinary thing about the dinner was not the Cohen episode but the fact that, despite all the seemingly insoluble problems facing him, President Nixon exuded an air of confidence which, as one of the guests put it, was "almost infectious."

"Here we were with our elected leader at a time when the country seemed to be coming apart," the guest explained. "But there was no sign of the panic that seemed to be gripping the editorial writers and some of the boys on the tube. Mr. Nixon and his top advisers calmly and forthrightly explained what they were doing and most of us knew they had things under control."

And, as the President predicted, things eventually did quiet down.

Crises rarely faze Richard Nixon. He's lived through so many he's lost count. Unlike others who preceded him in the Oval Room in the White House, you will hear no moaning from the thirty-seventh President of the United States about the terrible demands of office or the loneliness of his exalted position.

"After all," as he told this writer quite candidly, "no one forced me to run for the Presidency."

CHAPTER 1

Indeed, no one had forced Richard Nixon to run for President. But as he had written back in 1962, once a man has "drunk too deeply of the stuff which makes life exciting" he can never be satisfied again with just the "froth."

And "the stuff which makes life exciting" for Richard Nixon was, of course, politics. To reach the highest pinnacle of politics -- the Presidency of the United States -- had been his ultimate ambition. He had had his chance, a golden chance, in 1960, but he lost it by an eyelash -- 113,000 votes.

He could have contested that loss to John F. Kennedy. There was ample evidence to back up Republican contentions that the election had been "stolen." And there could be little doubt that a lot of hanky-panky had indeed occurred at the polls, particularly in Chicago and in certain Texas counties.

The pressure on Nixon to charge that he had been cheated of the Presidency was enormous.

Dissappointed as he was about losing the election, Mr. Nixon resisted the pressure. In fact, he called his top advisers together in order to discourage speculation that he might demand recounts in several states. He also called in Earl Mazo, then national political editor of the New York Herald Tribune, to request the discontinuance of publication of a series of articles detailing the election frauds allegedly perpetrated by the Democrats. And he did so in the name of "national unity."

"Earl," he said, "our country can't afford the agony of a constitutional crisis -- and I damn well will not be a party to creating one just to become President or anything else."

This, incidentally, was the only time Mr. Nixon was ever known to have exerted influence to stop a newspaper from running articles. That is, until his third year in the White House when his Attorney General sought to prevent further publication of top-secret documents pilfered from the Pentagon.

In both cases, none of the material could have been harmful to Mr. Nixon's personal interests. What was at stake in both instances, he believed, was the institution of the Presidency itself.

A week after the bitter 1960 contest, John F. Kennedy paid a visit on the man he had so narrowly beaten. It was obvious what was on Mr. Kennedy's mind. "Well," said the President-elect, "it's hard to tell who won the election at this point." Mr. Nixon replied that while the verdict was close the final result had been pretty well determined. And that remark obviously set Mr. Kennedy's mind at ease.

"Oh," Mr. Nixon was to tell me later on, "I could have contested the election. It would have cost millions and have taken years for the courts to decide. Meanwhile, the country would have been ripped apart and American democracy would have been made to look ridiculous in the eyes of the world."

Deferring his political dreams, Richard Nixon returned to his home state of California where he joined a prestigious Los Angeles law firm. For a man of his extraordinary energy,

however, it was not an ideal life -- "unless you like to golf all day," [as he told me in the summer of 1961.] [One of the highlights of a typical day was receiving the airmail edition of The New York Times which kept him in touch with national and international problems.] Extremely restless, he decided to try his hand at writing a book on his political experiences. The result was the best-selling Six Crises, an analysis of various crises in which he was a participant ranging from the Alger Hiss case to his race for the Presidency.

But politics still was his number one interest. The question was how he could make a comeback. After considerable reflection, he decided to make a try for the Governorship of California, running against the incumbent Edmund G. (Pat) Brown. A week before Election Day, Mr. Nixon talked to me in his campaign plane, a Convair in which he was flying around the state. It was a far cry from the huge Boeing 707 in which he had campaigned in all fifty states just two years before. ^{He said} And he ~~told me~~ matter-of-factly that he didn't think he could win the election. In his opinion, what with Californians having just gone through the traumatic experience of a direct confrontation with the Soviet Union over missile sites in Cuba, few voters could get overly excited about who would be the next Governor. Besides "Pat" Brown, bumbler that he was in so many ways, hadn't been that bad a Governor. And, ironically, many Californians considered Mr. Nixon a "carpetbagger," seeking the Governorship as a steppingstone to a Presidential nomination.

"Do you still want to be President?" I asked him.

The man who for eight years had been a heart-beat away from the Presidency turned to stare through the plane window. "Victor," he said finally, "after this election I doubt whether I could be elected dog catcher."

Mr. Nixon, no matter his private thoughts, kept fighting right down to the wire. In speech after speech, he hammered away at the opposition and staged an eve-of-election telethon-type television show in which he replied to questions phoned in from onlookers. But, as he knew it would be, it was all for naught.

Once it came, his defeat was difficult to stomach, particularly when certain members of the press corps began to taunt his press spokesman, Herb Klein, because the candidate had failed to come down to go through the public motions of conceding. "What's the matter, Herb, is Nixon afraid to face us?" asked one television reporter who had never hidden his hostility during the campaign.

Mr. Nixon, who was preparing to ^{leave} ~~slip out of~~ the hotel while Klein was talking to the press, heard the question on the television set in his suite. Ignoring entreaties of some of his staff, the defeated candidate made his way down to the Beverly Hilton ballroom where before a startled audience he held what he termed "my last press conference." And in that dark moment of despair Richard Nixon meant it. As a two-time loser he was through with elective politics. And most observers of the political scene could only agree. "Barring a miracle," as Time put it, Mr. Nixon's public career was over.

But such are the ironies of politics that actually the best thing that ever happened to Mr. Nixon was to lose the gubern-

torial contest. He himself now recognizes that had he won he undoubtedly would have again been nominated for the Presidency in 1964 and while he probably would have done better than the GOP nominee, Barry Goldwater, he nonetheless would have lost to Lyndon Johnson. And that loss would have doomed any possibility of his ever reaching the White House.

None of this went through his mind, however, when in the bleak post-election weeks he pondered his future. Eventually he decided to move to New York not out of political considerations but because, frankly, unlike others who had spent years in public service and somehow had prospered, he was financially hardpressed. And for a lawyer, Manhattan was "the center, the hub" and also "a very challenging place to live. You have to bone up to keep alive in the competition here." Moreover, he ~~was bored stiff with Los Angeles and~~ missed the stimulation of the Washington-New York axis.

He joined the Wall Street firm of Mudge, Stern, Baldwin & Todd. [And ironically for a man who but for 113,000 votes could have been President of the United States, Richard Nixon had to prove himself to his colleagues as one who could carry his weight. This he did by] immersing himself in his work and bringing in some prestigious clients including Pepsi-Cola, for which he was to do considerable traveling around the world.

Many of the firm's lawyers were Democrats, as Mr. Nixon soon discovered. [But that did not faze him a bit. In fact, he became quite fond of] one outspoken liberal who headed the litigation department, ^{was} ~~an~~ ex-jazz clarinetist, Leonard Garment, who once

"filled in" for a week with the old Woody Herman Band. The Brooklyn-born-and-educated Garment considered himself as "sort of Democrat of convenience" who was wont to shop around among candidates and causes. In fact, as he informed Mr. Nixon in one of their early talks, he had voted for Jack Kennedy in 1960. ~~Such candor seemed to intrigue and even amuse Mr. Nixon.~~

"What surprised me, as it does most people who get to know him, was his real openness," says Garment. "He is always receptive to new ideas and opinions. What he was primarily interested in those days was information about the firm and the corporate law practice in New York. And he couldn't have cared less about my politics, though he was interested in what I -- as a typical liberal New Yorker -- thought of things."

Some months later, ~~Mr.~~ Nixon gained admittance to the New York bar and he so impressed his examiners with his cogent essay on constitutional principles that they did an unusual thing by ~~agreeing~~ *decided* to make it public. Still he remained very green in Manhattan law circles. Len Garment decided to rectify this situation by hosting a cocktail party for ~~Mr.~~ Nixon, to which he invited all the judges in town. There were no turndowns and for Garment this alone did much to answer office mumblings that the Nixon name would lend the firm but scant prestige. Garment also observed that the guest of honor, while still feeling his way as a New York lawyer, came off superbly as an instinctual politician in the politically-charged milieu of that evening. And he recalls thinking that, however much Mr. Nixon was discouraging such speculation, public office was still very much a part of his future.

Others were thinking in those terms, too. On the very morning President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, this is what James P. Reston had to say in The New York Times:

"The argument for Nixon is that he would have ready-made strategy against the President. He lost to Kennedy by only 113,000 votes, and he could argue with considerable force that Kennedy's performance has fallen far short of all the promises he made about leadership, economic growth, unemployment, education, Latin America and the Atlantic alliance.

"The Kennedy emphasis in the last election that the Republicans had allowed the defenses of the nation to fall into a dangerous state is particularly vulnerable to attack. For the so-called 'missile gap' vanished miraculously almost as soon as Kennedy entered the White House, and Nixon feels that this alone is sufficient to assert that he lost the election of 1960 on a deception."

That morning, by a strange coincidence, Nixon was preparing to leave Dallas just as President Kennedy was about to arrive. In Texas on business, Mr. Nixon the previous day had held a press conference at which reporters asked him about rightwing demonstrations reportedly being planned against the President. ~~Mr.~~ Nixon said that "disagreement with his views is no excuse for discourtesy to the office of President of the United States."

~~Mr.~~ Nixon was on his way home from the airport when he heard the President had been shot. His first thought was that some sort of rightwing kook must have been responsible for the

evil deed. But, shortly after he arrived at his Fifth Avenue apartment, J. Edgar Hoover called to tell him that the suspected assassin, one Lee Harvey Oswald, had a Communist record and had once even defected to the Soviet Union.

Despite their intense political rivalry, Mr. Nixon had a great deal of admiration for John F. Kennedy. They had been fairly good friends, having entered the House of Representatives on the same day in January 1947 and having shared a common antipathy to leftwing activities. In fact, Jack Kennedy so admired Dick Nixon's role in exposing Alger Hiss and other Communist shenanigans that in 1950 he made a contribution of \$1,000 to Nixon's Senate campaign against Helen Gahagan Douglas. Kennedy's father, former Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy, contributed even more substantially to the campaign.

In a note of condolence to Jacqueline Kennedy, which he wrote in longhand, Mr. Nixon told of his great affection for the slain President and how fate had made them political rivals but never personal enemies. Apparently touched by the heartfelt message, Mrs. Kennedy responded with a handwritten note of her own telling how much she and her late husband had admired Mr. Nixon. Somewhat cryptically, she wrote that she had not wanted her husband to travel to Dallas.

Eight years later, the President's widow, who by now had become Mrs. Aristotle Onassis, called on President and Mrs. Nixon at the White House. The occasion was a private viewing of the official paintings of her and her late husband. This was her first visit to the White House since her husband's death.

Though he was being increasingly talked about in 1963 as a compromise choice for the 1964 Presidential nomination, as between Goldwater and Rockefeller, Mr. Nixon decided to forgo the privilege. For one thing, he knew Barry had the nomination sewed up. But he also knew it wasn't going to be a very good year for Republicans. Nevertheless, he worked tirelessly for Goldwater and did all he could to try to heal party wounds after the Republicans were beaten.

Meanwhile, he did not neglect the law. Under his leadership, the firm eventually doubled in the number of lawyers and the name was changed to Nixon, Mudge, Rose, Guthrie & Alexander. In 1966, the name of Mitchell was added when Nixon, Mudge merged with a smaller firm which specialized in municipal bonds and whose chief partner was John N. Mitchell. A softspoken, pipe-smoking former Naval Commander, Mitchell had commanded a PT-boat flotilla in the South Pacific in World War II and one of his junior officers had been a young man from Massachusetts named John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

All in all, it was a good life for Richard M. Nixon. He was averaging \$200,000 a year, about three-quarters of it from the firm and the rest from royalties, investments and occasional articles. But as he said at the time he had no overwhelming desire to build up a fortune. His life in those years was centered around his twelve-room cooperative apartment at 810 Fifth Avenue and his office at 20 Broad Street.

For the most part it was a quiet existence. Except for occasional nights out at the theater, the Nixons generally avoided

New York night life and society. Occasionally they would dine out at some of the tonier restaurants, preferring those that featured live musicians. But mostly they entertained at home. Their big event was the annual Christmas party which always attracted a mixture of people from the arts, politics, law and business. The highlight usually was when Mr. Nixon played the piano.

Except when he was traveling, Mr. Nixon's routine rarely varied. Up early, he usually would breakfast by himself and be driven downtown to his office by Manolo Sanchez, a Cuban refugee who with his wife Fina ran the Fifth Avenue household. The Sanchezes had been recommended by Mr. Nixon's old friend, C.G. "Bebe" Rebozo, and had joined the Nixon family in California. When Mr. Nixon was beaten for the Governorship, the Sanchezes thought he would no longer be able to afford their services, so they decided to obtain day work elsewhere, work evenings for the Nixons and contribute part of their earnings to help support the Nixons. Genuinely moved by the generous offer, the Nixons assured them they could afford to keep them. The Sanchezes have remained with the Nixons, and are today working in the President's private quarters at the White House.

Though he was a member of several prestigious luncheon clubs, Mr. Nixon -- as he still does today in the White House -- preferred to remain at his desk for a snack usually consisting of cottage cheese and fruit. He once told me over such a lunch that he could thus get more things accomplished in a half-hour than at a two-hour lunch elsewhere.

Except when he had social obligations, Mr. Nixon usually spent his evenings in his den reading and contemplating, a yellow legal pad always at hand. He has long maintained that "people with responsibilities" should spend more time thinking. And he still feels that way. The "loneliness" of the Presidency suits him fine. It gives him time to think.

In his early days in New York, Mr. Nixon would walk his dog in Central Park. After he was advised by police it wasn't too safe at night, he walked along Fifth and Madison Avenues, occasionally dropping in at the big Doubleday book store on Fifth near 57th Street to browse among the latest offerings. His tastes ran to history and biography. He rarely read fiction. And except for sports events and an occasional documentary, Mr. Nixon rarely watched television. He considered most of it a waste of time. He particularly disliked -- as he does today -- looking at himself on the tube. If he did, as he once explained, "I'd become self-conscious and begin to worry about my smile and hair."

Mr. Nixon did join several country clubs but he was far from being a "golf nut." Time was too precious to while away on the greens. And, anyway, Richard Nixon was not one for the camaraderie of the locker room. Small talk generally bored him.

Once, driving home from the office, Mr. Nixon was deep in conversation with young Washington lawyer Charles Colson. Suddenly traffic was halted. Up ahead they could see that a minor collision had occurred between a truck and an automobile. It was in many ways a typical New York scene with both drivers shouting

at the top of their voices and about to do battle. Much to Colson's amazement, Mr. Nixon got out of the car and walked up front. There Mr. Nixon physically pulled the combatants apart, talked to them until they calmed down, and coaxed them back into their vehicles. ~~It was obvious that Nixon's presence had awed both men.~~

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When he returned to the car, Colson expressed mild amazement. ("What did I do that was so unusual?") Mr. Nixon asked.

That Richard Nixon did not conform to the Herblockian images of him ~~assiduously promoted in liberal circles over the~~ years soon became apparent to Len Garment, one of the more liberal partners at the law firm. Once Garment received a call from an old friend, film producer Jerry Hellman, who needed help. It seemed that Jack Warner was holding up production of Hellman's "A Fine Madness." Garment mentioned the fact that Nixon was close to Warner and that something might be done there. But how would Nixon take to Hellman -- hip, tough, a high school dropout with earthy ways?

?

A date was made and Hellman flew into New York from L.A. on the "red-eye special," going directly from the airport to the Nixon's Fifth Avenue apartment for breakfast. Mr. Nixon welcomed the producer and without preliminaries the two sat down and plunged into a ninety-minute ~~(rap)~~ session on the meaning and methods of communications. Then Mr. Nixon telephoned Jack Warner in California and endorsed Hellman highly. As a result, the film starring Sean Connery went forward.

"A Fine Madness" did not do too well at the box office, but a later production, "Midnight Cowboy," established Hellman's reputation as a top-notch producer.

As a lawyer, Mr. Nixon's finest moment probably came in 1966 when he argued a case against Time Inc. before the United States Supreme Court. Nixon's clients, the James Hill family, had won a case against Life (owned by Time Inc.) on the grounds that the magazine had violated the family's privacy in publishing an article. By all accounts, Nixon's oral argument was masterful, considering the complexity of the case, the maze of First Amendment doctrine he had to master, as well as the overtones and hidden pressures of the stormy relationship that existed between Mr. Nixon and Chief Justice Earl Warren through the years.

After the court session, there was much more to the day -- several Washington meetings, a ^{reception} cocktail party, the flight back to New York, and a formal dinner that night.

The next morning Garment dragged into the office at 10:00 o'clock and was astounded to discover on his desk a rigorously self-critical five-page memorandum from Mr. Nixon reviewing the oral argument he had presented to the Supreme Court. In it, Mr. Nixon probed every weakness of his position, where he might have pressed harder on a particular point or cited an additional case to strengthen his position. Garment had never known anyone who took it upon himself to prepare such an instant post mortem, particularly after the conclusion of a physically and emotionally exhausting day. The episode provided Garment with ~~still~~ additional evidence

"of the man's extraordinary intellectual discipline and more than any other one thing it locked me in as a loyal Nixon man."

Garment's involvement with Nixon's political operations "just sort of happened. I was going out to San Francisco in the summer of 1964 to check on some litigation there, and RN in his longheaded way suggested that, 'Maybe it would be good for you to start learning what goes on at a political convention.'" The Republicans were assembling at the Cow Palace and "he told me whom to look up -- a couple of guys named Haldeman and Ehrlichman."

H.R. "Bob" Haldeman, a Los Angeles advertising executive, and John Ehrlichman, a Seattle lawyer, were in San Francisco representing Mr. Nixon's interests. They were among an informal group of largely young men who were usually available for duty whenever Mr. Nixon called. Over the years these trusted part-time aides would take time off from work to travel with "the Boss" on his political forays or "advance" his trips by arranging hotel accommodations, press conferences and the like.

Among the self-styled "bag carriers" were former Congressman Patrick J. Hillings of California; Edward O. (Ned) Sullivan, Pat Nixon's cousin; Nick Ruwe, oil executive from Detroit; Cincinnati lawyer Sherman Unger; John S. Davies, a California telephone company official; Ray Arbuthnot, a Pomona Valley rancher; Jack Drown, a West Coast magazine distributor whose wife, Helene, taught school in the old days with Pat Nixon; John C. Whitaker, a Washington-based geologist; and jovial John Nidecker of New York.

Others in the entirely unstructured Nixon camp were Herb Klein, a San Diego newspaper editor who had been his press secretary; New Yorker Stephen Hess, a book writer who performed occasional editorial chores; Paul Keyes, producer of the then highly-rated Jack Paar Show; William Safire, a New York public relations man; and Charles McWhorter, an American Telephone and Telegraph Company executive who possessed an encyclopedic knowledge of political personalities and trends.

There were others who came aboard as time went on -- young men like Roy Goodearle, Ed Morgan, Dale Grubb and Dwight Chapin who "advanced" Mr. Nixon's tireless 1966 swing in behalf of GOP Congressional candidates across the country. Many of these young men were to staff key positions in the Nixon Administration later on.

MS For his first two years in New York, Mr. Nixon operated without a political staff -- except, of course, for Rose Mary Woods, who had been his secretary since 1951 when he was a United States Senator. As a result Miss Woods, who had been with "the Boss" through five of his "Six Crises," was overwhelmed by political chores as well as an unusually large correspondence.

Early in 1966 Mr. Nixon hired as his first fulltime political assistant a 27-year-old editorial writer at the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, Patrick J. Buchanan, who despite his conservative views was to become quite popular with even the most liberal Nixon-watchers in the press corps. Later on Mr. Nixon hired Raymond K. Price, 36, chief editorial writer for the now-defunct New York

Herald-Tribune. Price had come highly recommended by Walter Thayer, one-time president of the Tribune and a key member of the so-called GOP Establishment. Price's convictions generally were on the liberal side.

It was in this period that Mr. Nixon came to believe he had as good a chance for the 1968 nomination -- and even the Presidency -- as any of the other possible GOP contenders. He conceded there were some drawbacks, as for example his "last press conference" following his 1962 defeat in which he had stated, "You won't have Nixon to kick around any more..." About this he said that surely an Irishman is permitted one monumental outburst in his lifetime. And, anyway, he now was getting along well with the press.

Much more of a problem, however, was his image as a "loser" and that, in the final analysis, was what he would have to circumvent if he were to obtain support from the party faithful seeking a "winner" to head the ticket in 1968. Which is one reason why Mr. Nixon threw himself so wholeheartedly into the 1966 Congressional elections, appearing for eighty-six Republicans in thirty-five states. It felt good to be back in action unloosing verbal salvos at the Man in the White House, a testy Texan named Lyndon Baines Johnson.

President Johnson played right into his hands late in the campaign by lashing out at Mr. Nixon, calling him "a chronic campaigner [who] never did really recognize and realize what was going on when he had an official position in the Government" and who, even in private life, "doesn't serve his country well."

What had gotten the President's goat was a Nixon critique of the communique on Vietnam issued after Mr. Johnson's meeting in Manila with Asian leaders. So angry was Mr. Johnson that, at a press conference, he appeared to have lost control and at one point Mrs. Johnson was heard by reporters to urge her husband to "Stop!"

For Mr. Nixon the unexpected Johnson attack was too good to be true. He kept his cool and played the statesman. When the returns were in Mr. Nixon looked good as a prophet, too. He had predicted GOP gains in forty House seats and forty-seven were won. More importantly, however, Richard Nixon now had no doubts as to what lay ahead for him politically.

"I think I can take the big man," he told friends, meaning, of course, Lyndon Johnson, who was coming under increasingly bitter criticism particularly from within his own party -- unfairly in Mr. Nixon's opinion -- on the issue of Vietnam. 18

And then Richard Nixon went about winning the nomination in an unorthodox fashion. He shocked the political world by announcing he was taking "a holiday from politics for at least six months with no political speeches scheduled whatever." And he kept true to his word. For most of the year 1967 he practiced law, wrote articles and travelled to such places as Europe, the Soviet Union and the Far East. There was behind-the-scenes politicking, but it was done in low-key fashion.

George Romney, who had a clear track for the nomination, began to trip over his own rhetoric. The Michigan Governor's worst

blunder was an indiscreet confession that he had been "brainwashed" on Vietnam by the Johnson Administration. By the time of the New Hampshire primary, Romney dropped out of contention. Another leading prospect, Nelson A. Rockefeller, vacillated so long that he didn't have a chance when he finally decided by convention time to make a run for it. And a third major contender, Ronald Reagan, could hardly get his campaign for the nomination going.

The main reason Reagan couldn't get going was because Nixon had done effective missionary work among the conservatives. As Nixon explained the facts of political life to William F. Buckley Jr. in 1967: "Barry Goldwater found out you can't win an important election with only the right wing behind you. But I found out in 1962 that you can't win an election without the right wing."

Richard Milhous Nixon was nominated on the first ballot at the Republican Convention in Miami Beach. The tally came out pretty much the way his delegate-counting aides Richard Kleindienst and John Sears had figured that very afternoon. The candidate watched the proceedings on television in his suite at the Hilton-Plaza. The moment was one of quiet exhilaration. "It is a wonderful moment," he told newsmen that night, "but you know I am somewhat fatalistic about it. I feel the Presidency seeks the man. I was ready. I was willing. The events all fell together. About tonight, I was confident...Yes, I expected to win tonight."

Events appeared to be going Mr. Nixon's way as he opened his campaign. The national ferment and torment that had forced

Lyndon Johnson out of contention were problems the Democratic candidate, Hubert Humphrey, appeared unable to cope with. Meanwhile, Mr. Nixon had united the Republican party to a degree few observers had thought possible following the 1964 debacle.

As they jetted around the country with the candidate, Bob Haldeman and John Ehrlichman began to ponder the significance of the victory which seemed almost in their grasp. As Ehrlichman tells the story: "We decided we had better be prepared to advise Mr. Nixon the day after election on how to go about getting hold of the Government. So we began to have some research done on the problems of transition."

The candidate himself had other things on his mind. When his aides advised him of what they were doing, Mr. Nixon said: "Look, I think it's good that you're thinking about it, but I can't spend any time on that now. My job is to get elected."

The research was done in New York by several employees of the Electronic Data Systems Corporation, the Dallas-based computer firm headed by H. Ross Perot. As Ehrlichman recalls their duties: "First, we had them researching the transition statute -- what monies would be available to us to help in the changeover, problems of office space, paying personnel, mundane things like that. And then we wanted to find out about the jobs that were to be filled, which ones were Presidential appointments and which had civil service inhibitions."

Haldeman and Ehrlichman would meet with the researchers in New York usually during weekend campaign breaks. "We began to

talk about problems of organizing the White House," Ehrlichman said. "How was the White House organized in the past? How would it best be organized for Richard Nixon, knowing how he worked and so on? So we put a few things down on paper that appealed to us and we began reading books that the researchers were dredging up for us." Ironically, very little literature exists on the past transition periods. "There's one university professor out in Santa Barbara who is a kind of student on the subject, but almost no one in the country has really made a study of it."

In the final weeks of the campaign, however, there were excruciating moments in the Nixon camp. Ehrlichman began to wonder whether all the intensive researching into the transition period might wind up as a mere academic exercise.

There were several reasons for this. The Wallace movement, *on balance,* ~~was~~ *was* hurting the Republicans more than the Democrats. There was a pronounced and perceptible shift of votes from Wallace to Humphrey, particularly in the big industrial states, as the "white backlash" appeared to be losing potency.

Another reason was the calculated decision in the Humphrey camp to turn more "dovish" in handling the Vietnam question. From an all-out defender of LBJ's policies, the Democratic candidate now began to use terminology more pleasing to the vociferous followers of Eugene McCarthy, many of whom had vowed to stay home rather than vote for the "warmongers" in either party.

Even more important were the last-minute diplomatic initiatives being taken by the White House to obtain a settlement

with Hanoi. Shortly before election eve, the White House announced that President Johnson had ordered a halt to the bombing of North Vietnam.

The final public opinion polls cast further gloom in the Nixon camp. Dr. Gallup, canvassing the last weekend of the campaign, declared Nixon was ahead by only two points -- 42 to 40 percent -- in an election "too close to call." Lou Harris actually had Humphrey ahead by three points, 43 to 40 percent. And Nixon's own pollster was waffling on the ~~final~~ outcome.

Finally -- and blessedly -- it was all over. As an estimated 73,000,000 Americans went to the polls on November 5, Richard Nixon -- who had already voted by absentee ballot -- was flying across the continent from Los Angeles to New York. With him were his family and staff. Although the big jet was gaily festooned with decorations, few aboard were exactly exuberant. Robert H. Finch, one of the candidate's oldest and most trusted friends, kept walking up and down the aisle and, as he told me later, "I couldn't help but remember another long plane ride East" -- the one back to Washington after Mr. Nixon's bitter 1960 defeat.

Of all the staffers, only Haldeman was in a jovial mood. He had it all figured out that the candidate would win. And he even reeled off the states. "I even thought we would take New York," he recalled later. Significantly, while most of his fellow-staffers were brooding about a possible loss, Haldeman spent most of the trip concentrating on the problems President-elect Nixon would face during the transition period.

The candidate, himself, was not that cheerful. Shortly after takeoff, Mr. Nixon summoned his family to the privacy of his compartment up front. There he warned Mrs. Nixon, his daughters Tricia and Julie and the latter's fiance, David Eisenhower, to be prepared for the worst. He said he had done all he could to win the election, but that the outcome would be close and could go either way. Julie, more than anyone else in the family, was shocked.

After lunching with his old friend from Key Biscayne, C.G. "Bebe" Rebozo, Mr. Nixon strolled through the plane dispensing cheer to an otherwise ~~disconsolate~~ group of staffers. But Bob Finch kept pacing the aisle.

Shortly after 7:00 p.m., the Nixon party arrived at the Waldorf Towers and the candidate retired immediately to his thirty-fifth floor suite to begin what he knew would be another long vigil. Ironically, for a candidate who had put so much effort into reaching the electorate via television, Mr. Nixon rarely looked at the tube during the long night. Rather he relied on his own experts to obtain the vote from key states while he, himself, worked out projections.

"There were one or two times during the night when we thought we were beaten," recalls John Ehrlichman. But, then, in the early hours of the new day things began to topple into place. Crucial states had fallen -- or were expected to fall on the basis of projections -- into the Nixon column. Moreover, word was coming

from Humphrey headquarters at the Leamington Hotel in Minneapolis that, in talking privately with newsmen, the Democratic candidate's associates now were practically conceding defeat.

At 3:00 a.m., Mr. Nixon called in his top aides including Finch, Haldeman, Ehrlichman, John Mitchell and Murray Chotiner. After presenting a rundown of the latest vote tallies as well as his own projections, Mr. Nixon said quietly, "I believe I have won the Presidency."

Then he reminded his friends that at precisely that hour eight years ago he had walked into the press room of the Hotel Ambassador in Los Angeles to make his concession speech to John F. Kennedy.

"I just thought we should have a little toast," he suggested.

It was, according to Bob Finch, "a most moving moment." And it was a moment, too, when all the pent-up emotions and tensions of a hard fought campaign seemed to evaporate. This was indeed the moment of triumph for Richard Nixon. He began to banter with Murray Chotiner, who had been at his side during earlier controversial campaigns.

"Murray," he said, "what ever made you put out those vicious pink sheets against Helen Gahagan Douglas?"

Everyone laughed and Chotiner, ~~joining in the spirit of the occasion,~~ replied, "Mr. President, you know I had a pretty good reputation until I joined up with you."

Amid the hilarity, it did not go unnoticed that this was the first time that anyone had called Mr. Nixon by his new title. No longer would even his closest associates and friends address him as "Dick."

But for the country at large there were still long hours of waiting before the final outcome was determined. By 11:00 a.m. the last of the three networks finally announced that "Richard Nixon will be the thirty-seventh President of the United States." At that moment, the new President emerged from his bedroom to tell his aides, "Well, they've been at it so long that I'm not sure I'll accept it."

A half-hour later he received a telephone call from the man he had defeated. Mr. Humphrey said he would go on television in fifteen minutes to make his concession statement. Mr. Nixon thanked him for calling and said, "You put up a great fight, a great fight."

And it had been a great fight indeed. Despite a divided party and early polls showing him way behind, Mr. Humphrey had waged an incredibly effective campaign, assisted in no small measure by the last-minute "peace" maneuvers staged by the White House.

Nevertheless, despite George Wallace's third-party inroads, Nixon's plurality of nearly 500,000 votes was almost four times as large as the 113,000 margin by which he had lost to John F. Kennedy. In electoral votes, Nixon took 302 to Humphrey's 191 and 32 states to Humphrey's 13.

An hour after he had talked to ~~Mr.~~ Humphrey, the President-elect appeared in the Grand Ballroom of the Waldorf-Astoria where he told a cheering crowd of campaign workers that his would be an "open Administration, open to new ideas, open to men and women of both parties, open to the critics as well as those who support us. We want to bridge the generation gap. We want to bridge the gap between the races. We want to bring America together...."

Before descending to the ballroom, Mr. Nixon had decided to fly down to his Florida retreat in Key Biscayne to begin creating his new Administration. He asked Haldeman, Ehrlichman, Finch, Mitchell and Bryce Harlow to join him. Mitchell had to clean up some business before he could fly down. For Harlow, a former top Eisenhower aide, the request proved to be a problem. On leave of absence as Washington representative of Procter & Gamble, Harlow had agreed to return to his company following the election. As it turned out, he did not return for two years.

The Nixon party left the Waldorf and headed for LaGuardia Airport just at the beginning of the rush hour. "And we had our first taste of the Presidency," recalls Ehrlichman. "Man, what a mess! All highways were cleared by the police and traffic piled up for miles around. People trying to get home must have been furious. That was the time the President decided never to drive again from Manhattan to the airport. From then on he always helicoptered from the Sheep Meadow in Central Park."

At any rate, the Nixon group got to the airport in record time and was quickly airborne in a windowless government-owned

KC-135 transport which had been assigned to the President-elect.

"The footnote to this anecdote," says Ehrlichman, "is that President Johnson happened to be watching television when we got off the KC-135 in Florida -- there was lots of TV coverage -- and he upbraided his staff very vehemently for having provided the President-elect with that kind of aircraft instead of Air Force One, ~~or Air Force Two that have windows and are tricked out with all kinds of fancy accommodations. And so we received a telephoned apology from someone in the White House.~~"

As far as Mr. Nixon was concerned, ~~no apology was needed.~~ It had been a fast, comfortable trip and he had no complaints. But the episode did demonstrate the excellent relations that existed, from the very beginning, between the outgoing and incoming Administrations.

First order of business at Key Biscayne was sleep. Everyone from the President-elect down was totally exhausted. The next afternoon, however, conversations began on how the Government was to be organized.

The Florida sojourn was punctuated by a meeting with Hubert Humphrey and his runningmate Edmund S. Muskie. The President-elect had heard they were heading towards the Virgin Islands for a well earned rest and he asked them to stop off in Florida for a short meeting. Mr. Nixon was at the Opa-Locka Air Force Base when they arrived in a Convair and he took them to a nearby Coast Guard Operations office for a private talk.

~~At first nothing really profound was said.~~ Nixon and Humphrey compared notes on the heckling each had encountered during the campaign. They recounted various incidents and tried to establish who had had the rougher time. Muskie, however, said very little. ~~And then Hubert Humphrey began to cry, big tears running down his face.~~ The emotions of the moment had gotten to the ~~defeated Democratic candidate.~~ ^{tears in eyes} He told the man who had vanquished him how much he appreciated the fact that he had taken time to meet with him. ~~Mr.~~ Nixon said he understood his feelings, pointing out that in 1960 the then President-elect, John F. Kennedy, had called on him in Florida in ~~Mr. Nixon's~~ ^{his own} moment of defeat. (Several years later, ~~Mr.~~ Humphrey had come to think that his defeat in 1968 "may have been the best thing for everyone," because "the country wanted a change -- of party, of Administration, and of personality.")

~~Mr.~~ Nixon then got down to business. He asked the man he had just defeated to accept the position of chief U.S. representative at the United Nations. It was, as Mr. Humphrey later confided, an ~~extraordinarily~~ generous offer as it would have permitted him to continue to pursue his political ambitions even including the possibility of his once again running against ~~Mr.~~ Nixon. "That is a risk I am prepared to take," ~~Mr.~~ Nixon said. What the President-elect was seeking was a government of "national unity" with bipartisan participation at the Cabinet level. During the campaign he had proclaimed his intention of bringing Democrats into his Administration. Though momentarily interested, ~~Mr.~~ Humphrey

eventually turned down the offer, explaining that his own political interests would perhaps better be served outside the Administration.

Farewells were expressed and the Humphrey plane took off for the Virgin Islands. When Humphrey and Muskie arrived at their destination they were surprised to see President Johnson's Air Force II jet standing idle on the tarmac. Humphrey, who after all was still the Vice President, wondered who had outranked him sufficiently to warrant that kind of Presidential courtesy. Inquiry disclosed it was the Vice President-elect, Spiro T. Agnew.

Such are the fortunes of politics.

There was no time for relaxation back at Key Biscayne. A government had to be formed. The major immediate problem revolved around staffing the Cabinet as well as sub-cabinet positions.

The following week the Nixon party was back in New York. Quarters for Mr. Nixon were obtained at the Hotel Pierre on Fifth Avenue which was most convenient for the President-elect since he could walk over from his apartment without causing too much commotion. And there in a tower suite, overlooking a frosty Central Park, Mr. Nixon began to select the key people who would staff his Administration's top levels. It wasn't something that he particularly enjoyed doing. He confessed he was much more interested in ideas than personnel. But ideas are only ideas if they're not carried out. And to carry them out he needed good people.

Two of his more interesting appointments were those of Dr. Henry Kissinger as his national security adviser and Daniel Patrick Moynihan as his domestic affairs counselor. Both came out

of the intellectual community and neither had previously shown any particular ardor for Mr. Nixon. In fact, Dr. Kissinger had been the chief foreign policy adviser for Nelson Rockefeller and, as such, had been quite vocal in his antagonism. Though Mr. Nixon had read several of Kissinger's books, he had never met him. There was one book that he had read as Vice President which he found impressive -- Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy.

How did the appointment come about?

"In the final weeks of the campaign," the President told me, "Henry sent some memoranda through John Mitchell which were helpful. Then, during the transition period I had a meeting at the Pierre to thank him for the memoranda. And it went from there. Just like that."

There was much more to the appointment than that. Mr. Nixon saw in Dr. Kissinger the ideal person to assist him in taking hold of foreign policy operations of the Government and making them more workable than in the past. Too often in previous Administrations major decisions had been made in a chaotic, crisis atmosphere. The Cuban missile crisis under Kennedy and the Dominican intervention under Johnson were the kinds of emergencies Mr. Nixon wanted to avoid.

Mr. Nixon, of course, had been aware of Dr. Kissinger's critical views but, ~~as he told me,~~ "such things don't bother me."

Nor was he disturbed by Pat Moynihan's iconoclastic views on social affairs. He had called for "new ideas" and in Moynihan the President-elect knew he would get them by the bushel-ful.

It was Bob Finch who had first talked to Moynihan about joining the new Administration. Then Haldeman took a look at him. "We both were intrigued by his bouncy, provocative personality," says Finch. "He was the kind of refreshing catalyst we would need in the White House."

Though Moynihan wanted to serve, he wondered how long he would be able to take the heat from some of his more liberal friends who, he knew, would consider him some sort of a traitor for joining the camp of their leading bête noire, Richard Nixon. Several long talks with the President-elect convinced Moynihan to give it a try at least for six months. As it turned out, he remained two years.

The making of the Cabinet turned out to be a tedious, tiring business. Hundreds of names were considered to head the twelve departments making up the Executive branch. In fact, according to Ehrlichman, "the Cabinet must have changed its makeup at least twenty-five times between the original group the President had in mind to the one we finally wound up with."

As his Attorney General, Mr. Nixon turned to his law partner and campaign manager, John N. Mitchell. But Mitchell at first wasn't buying. All he wanted to do was return to the law firm and he just wasn't interested in going to Washington. "John really fought it," recalls Bob Finch. "He just wasn't going to be budged." The argument raged at the Nixon villa in Key Biscayne for several hours. Present were Nixon, Haldeman, Finch and Mitchell. Everyone pounded at Mitchell to take the post. What turned the argument was Mr. Nixon's plea that he needed a decisive man at

the helm of the Justice Department, one who would seek to carry out his campaign pledges on law and order. Mitchell finally buckled.

At that point, Finch announced he would like to serve as Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare. This was Finch's own idea. Mr. Nixon had originally offered him the Interior Department. But Finch had declined because "I felt I would be in an indefensible position" since as a lawyer he had represented so many oil companies in the past.

HEW was more to his liking, even though he knew it to be a "can of worms" which had driven previous Secretaries up the wall. For example, Abe Ribicoff, who had headed HEW during the Kennedy years, had dubbed it "unmanageable" and then resigned to run for the Senate. Little had improved in the intervening years. In some ways, HEW had become even more unmanageable. But this didn't faze Finch who resigned as Lieutenant Governor of California to take over the huge sprawling agency.

Another old and trusted friend, William P. Rogers, who had served as Attorney General under Eisenhower, was tapped for Secretary of State. And Maurice Stans, who had raised money for Nixon's political forays ever since the ill-fated try for the California Governship, became Secretary of Commerce. George Romney was selected as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) while another former Governor, who likewise had worked hard for Nixon during the 1968 campaign, John A. Volpe of Massachusetts took over the Transportation Department.

Others named to the Cabinet were George P. Schulz as Secretary of Labor; Clifford M. Hardin, as Secretary of Agriculture; David M. Kennedy, Secretary of the Treasury; and Walter J. Hickel, as Secretary of the Interior. Of this group only Hickel had been extremely active during the Nixon campaign. Ehrlichman recalls seeing him during a flight from Chicago to Seattle walking up and down the aisle, pinning Nixon buttons on fellow passengers and talking up the virtues of the Republican candidate.

For Postmaster General, the President-elect recruited Winton M. "Red" Blount, a self-made Alabama businessman whom he had known over the years. Blount at first was not too happy about the assignment. "Anything but the Post Office Department," he pleaded. But Mr. Nixon would not take no for an answer. He needed someone of Blount's stature -- he had headed the U.S. Chamber of Commerce -- to push through the Kappel Commission recommendations for a government-owned corporation to deliver the mail. "Red," Mr. Nixon said, "this is the biggest problem the Government has had to face since I can remember."

Finally Blount said, "Mr. President, if that's what you want me to do, I'll do it."

Finding the right man to be Secretary of Defense proved to be a more difficult problem. Mr. Nixon very much wanted a Democrat for the job. At first he considered retaining Clark Clifford, but then he decided against keeping Johnson holdovers. The man he really wanted for the job was Henry "Scoop" Jackson

because the Senator from Washington, despite his domestic liberalism, was sound on foreign policy matters, especially Vietnam. Jackson was interested, but he wanted the President-elect to agree to ask Governor Dan Evans, a Republican, to appoint a Democrat as Jackson's successor. Mr. Nixon agreed and Jackson was on the verge of accepting when the flak began coming in. His fellow Democrats warned the Senator that running the Defense Department was politically hazardous and he could conceivably become the lightning rod for criticism from within his own party. Jackson thereupon sent his regrets.

The President-elect's next choice was Melvin Laird who had just been re-elected to Congress from his Wisconsin district with a smashing majority. Laird had already turned down several other Cabinet posts including HEW. And he was reluctant to take Defense, pointing out that he was a lifelong legislator, not an administrator and that with his sixteen years of Congressional seniority he could assist in getting the Nixon program through the House. Mr. Nixon listened and then said, "Mel, I need you." And Mel finally said okay.

Another post Mr. Nixon had some difficulty in filling -- largely because he wanted a big-name Democrat, or at least a big name -- was the Ambassadorship to the United Nations. After Humphrey turned it down, Mr. Nixon approached Sargent Shriver who, after consulting with his in-laws, said no. Mr. Nixon then turned to Senator Eugene McCarthy who said he would take it if Minnesota Governor Harold LeVander could be prevailed upon to appoint Hubert

Humphrey as his successor. LeVander would not cooperate, a fact which the President-elect himself telephoned to McCarthy who was lunching at Washington's Sans Souci restaurant. The President-elect finally settled upon a little known foreign service officer, Charles W. Yost, as his Ambassador to the world organization.

And then Richard Nixon went on national television and, in one fell swoop, introduced his entire Cabinet to the American people. Early in the game he had decided against emulating the Kennedy technique of feeding out Cabinet choices one by one. It did not strike the new President as too neat or orderly a procedure. And neatness and orderliness -- as well as a passion for privacy -- were to become trademarks of the incoming Administration.

The next morning each Cabinet member received two paper-bound books of speeches and statements made by the man who chose them for their jobs. Entitled Nixon Speaks Out and Nixon On The Issues, they had been rushed to publication at the height of the campaign in order to refute Democratic charges that Mr. Nixon had said very little of a substantive nature while seeking the Presidency. Mr. Nixon had said quite a bit about many subjects and the Cabinet officers, informed that the books would serve as the starting point for the new Administration's policies, were urged to study them carefully and plan accordingly.

Meanwhile, at the Pierre most everyone continued to work sixteen-hour days. There was a daily deluge of mail, much of it dealing with job requests. The overworked switchboard operators couldn't keep up with the flood of calls. Handling calls from

Very Important People -- Senators, Congressmen, Governors and the like -- was Bryce Harlow who had to enlist his daughter and her friends to assist him.

"It was a wild, zany period," recalls Harlow, who was slated to become the White House aide for Congressional relations.

John Ehrlichman agrees. "First of all, the Pierre was a tough place to work. Space was at a premium. By now people were scattered on various floors. I shared a room with my administrative assistant, Chuck Stuart, and two secretaries. It was a lovely room with a magnificent view of the park, but for some reason the thermostat was set eternally at ninety-eight degrees. Finally we devised a method of propping the window open about two inches and keeping the door open. As a result, we had winds of gale force clearing the heat out."

But it is always calmest in the eye of a hurricane and so it was up on the thirty-ninth floor of the Pierre where the President-elect quietly conducted business in an elegantly furnished living room. An old President-watcher like Bryce Harlow could not help but marvel "at the incredible ease, calmness and confidence with which Mr. Nixon made the transition from political candidate to President-elect. It astonished me how anyone could have so quickly put on the royal robe with all that it means -- all the burdens, formalities and responsibilities. It was almost as if he were born to it."

Much of his time was devoted to world problems and he saw Bill Rogers and Henry Kissinger a good deal. There was a steady

stream of visitors -- politicians, diplomats, journalists and a few old friends. On top of everything else, his daughter Julie was getting married to David Eisenhower. And, as the day of the ceremony drew near, the Father of the Bride began to talk like one. "This is the hardest part," Mr. Nixon said, half-jokingly. "I don't think I can make it."

But he did make it, of course, even though he had to contend with a low-grade flu. The next day he flew off to Key Biscayne for his first real vacation in many months. And he began to think of the kind of speech he wanted to deliver at the Inauguration.

As that momentous day approached more and more of the transition work was being done in Washington. Harry Fleming had set up an office solely concerned with filling several thousand jobs in various Governmental agencies. And Frank Lincoln, of the Nixon, Mudge firm, was working closely with the Johnson people at the White House. Key Nixon aides began spending more time in Washington, conferring with their opposite numbers in the Johnson Administration.

Personal relations between the incoming and outgoing groups could not have been better. Ehrlichman, as counsel to the President-elect, met frequently with Harry McPherson, counsel to President Johnson. "We'd be in a meeting and President Johnson would walk in and say, 'Are you getting everything you want? If there's anything that you're not getting, you let me know!'"

Relations between Mr. Nixon and Mr. Johnson couldn't have been better either. They had a long private session together

at the White House. And, as they talked in the Oval Room, Mr. Nixon couldn't help noticing the remote-controlled three-receiver television console on which Mr. Johnson would watch news shows, as well as two wire service news tickers, which kept him instantly informed of world and domestic developments.

As Mr. Nixon was leaving, he whispered to an aide, "Get those things out of there!"

Of course, he had to wait a little while before that was done. But shortly before noon on January 20, 1969, while the eyes of the nation were trained on the Inaugural platform, a team of fifteen employees of the General Services Administration swarmed into the just-vacated Oval Room and stripped it bare. Eventually the specially constructed three-screen television console was expropriated by Herb Klein for his office as director of communications for the Nixon Administration.

The day after the Inauguration, the Nixon team moved into various offices to discover that all files had been removed from the White House. "I mean literally not one piece of paper remained," recalls Ehrlichman. "It had all been trucked off to Austin for eventual deposit in the Johnson Library. This, of course, is normal procedure. When a President leaves the White House, he is entitled to take all his papers with him."

This presented some immediate problems. For example, there was the controversial issue of trans-Pacific airline routes awarded just before President Johnson left office. "We felt there were some obvious inequities in the awards," says Ehrlichman, "but we couldn't find any of the documents. They had all been taken away."

So Peter Flanigan, who had left Dillon Read to serve Mr. Nixon, had to reconstruct the file from the ground up. He spent many weeks talking to officials at the Civilian Aeronautics Board and others involved in the awards.

"But it's a very difficult way to do business," says Ehrlichman, "and I'm inclined to think that, whatever the circumstances, the next transition will involve turning over to the incoming Administration many more documents than we received."

Another extraordinary thing the Nixon people discovered was that the President-elect had to fight for tickets to his own Inaugural. All the tickets were in the hands of the Congress and every Senator and Congressman was entitled to a batch. This left only a handful for the President-elect to distribute.

"So," says Ehrlichman, "I was soon involved in some very high level diplomatic negotiations to get us some tickets." The negotiations were largely with Senator Everett Dirksen and Mark Trice, the executive secretary of the Joint Congressional Inauguration Committee, and there were a few shouting matches in Trice's office.

"Finally, we got Murray Chotiner down to Washington to fight the ticket battle for us. It was a rough job, but Murray managed to wangle enough tickets for the President's friends and supporters."

For the most part, the President-elect remained aloof from the nitty-gritty details of the transition period. He had

assembled a topnotch staff of "generalists" who almost instinctively knew what "the Boss" wanted done -- and they did it. This was the way the new President would operate in the White House, concerned mainly with the major problems. Thus, in a way, the transition period proved most valuable for all concerned as a sort of shakedown cruise.

And, finally, at noon on January 20, 1969, Richard Milhous Nixon was sworn in as President of the United States. He had waited a long time for that moment.

CHAPTER 2

It had taken Richard Nixon a long time. And it had been a difficult journey. But now, finally, he was President of the United States and, as such, the most powerful man in the world. For better or worse, his decisions would influence the course of mankind.

~~Truly awesome~~ were his responsibilities. He had taken the oath of office at a time when, in his opinion, the nation seemed on the verge of social revolt. Bitter dissension particularly among young people had been engendered by a long, bloody war in a faraway land which few Americans could even place on a map. Across the country, campuses were seething with a discontent that often broke out into violence. The nation's cities likewise were troubled with ever-mounting crime statistics and racial disorders were commonplace. And there had been two dreadful assassinations in the year 1968 alone. Also facing the new President was an economic situation so fraught with peril that the nation's very vitality was at stake.

But, above all else, Richard Nixon's most immediate concern was an increasing lack of confidence in Government itself. Americans generally had come to believe they had been constantly misled by previous Administrations and the new President knew that sooner or later this belief, whether warranted or not, could easily rub off on his Administration.

Mr. Nixon also knew that his victory over Hubert Humphrey had not occasioned great joy among significant sections of the

communications media. He had not taken lightly the warning of a Washington newspaper columnist, wise in the ways of the Capital, that "an important segment of the press...has come to feel that it has the God-given mission to frustrate, hamstring and finally destroy the men who have been chosen to lead the nation" and if there was anything it could do to cut Nixon down "you can be quite sure that it will be done."

But the hostility of such powerful organs as The New York Times was nothing new to him. For two decades, he had felt the sting of the Times' editorial writers and he well knew that, unless he capitulated to their demands, he would -- even as President -- continue to be a major target. But capitulate he would not. Rather he would face the issues on the basis of what he considered to be in the best interests of the nation and not what would please Johnny Oakes and his fellow editorialists in their ivory tower on West 43rd Street.

Then inevitably there would be resistance from a Congress controlled by members of the opposite party. As Mr. Nixon ruefully observed during the transition the Democrats would have little difficulty becoming the party of opposition. For many of them had considerable practice during the Johnson Administration. And as a centrist Republican the new President also knew that not all his policies would be greeted rapturously by those on the right.

As a longtime student of the Presidency and its inevitable travails, Mr. Nixon came into office with the knowledge that he undoubtedly would have a breathing spell before the critics, both

political and journalistic, would begin firing away at him. How long the détente would last he did not know. But he resolved that every precious moment would be fully utilized not only to unsnarl the tangled workings of the vast federal bureaucracy but to come up with ways and means of coping with the almost disastrous conditions he had inherited in both domestic and foreign areas.

A fairly dispassionate rendering of the legacy left Mr. Nixon was provided shortly after the Inauguration by Walter Lippmann in one of his final columns. Mr. Nixon, he wrote, "inherits a situation in which there is great fiscal and moral and political inflation, where money is being spent that is not being earned, when more has been promised than can be done, when more responsibilities and commitments have been assumed than any nation, however rich and powerful, can bear."

The aging columnist, who had not always seen eye-to-eye with Mr. Nixon over the years, had lunched with the President-elect at the Pierre during the interregnum and had apparently come away with the feeling that Mr. Nixon had a sober grasp of the basic realities facing him and the nation.

"Because of the objective situation," continued Lippmann, "the task imposed on President Nixon has become one of deflating the economy, of reducing the political promises, of cutting down the commitments to the realities and the human scale.

"The role of the deflator is never glamorous. Has there ever been a 'charismatic' deflator? Sobering up the morning after is not nearly so much fun as the festivities the night before. But

it is President Nixon's fate to become President on the morning after, and the question about him is whether he will recognize and accept this destiny, or whether he will shrink from it as have all his predecessors in this century."

So, on January 20, 1969, ~~when he took the oath of office as the thirty-seventh Chief Executive of the United States,~~ Richard M. Nixon knew he had his work cut out for him and that nothing would come easy. ~~And~~ as he looked out on the vast throng gathered in the Capitol Plaza ~~that dreary, cloudy day~~ he could not help but think of the day just eight years past when John F. Kennedy had taken the same oath. Brimming with confidence, at home and abroad, we had been off to conquer New Frontiers. The white-haired poet Robert Frost had written a special poem for the occasion, one in which he had suggested that under President Kennedy we were entering a new "Augustan age."

~~But,~~ unfortunately, the "Augustan age" did not ensue. Instead the decade that had been launched with a quest for greatness appeared to be ending on the defensive, mired in desperate efforts to keep society from disintegrating.

Nevertheless, Mr. Nixon took over the reins of leadership of a troubled nation with an assurance that, no matter how difficult the problems he inherited, he personally was ~~fully~~ equipped to deal with them. ~~Rarely had any President stepped into the highest office in the land with such ease and confidence. There was no hesitancy, no awkward moment. From the moment he entered the Oval Office, which was completely stripped of everything that had belonged to his predecessor, he knew exactly what he had to do. And he began doing it.~~

This writer, who had the opportunity to view the new President in action at the White House his first day in office, found him to be smiling, thoroughly relaxed and seemingly without a care in the world. But the cares were there; and he, more than anyone else in the Republic knew it. And that mood of low-keyed self-assurance was to prove a decided contrast to the frenzy of the Johnson years; and the nation, at least at first, appeared to be enjoying a sense of decompression.

~~Mr. Nixon's ebullience was remarked on by other observers surprised by what they considered his new-found sense of humor. After taking the oath, he was wisecracking all over the place. "Hail to the Chief" was his favorite tune, he said, and he had never had choicer seats for a parade than at the Inaugural march. "Of course," he added, "I sent for my seats eight years ago." About to return to the White House for his first night in residence, he said, "They've given me the keys and I have to go home to see if they fit."~~

Even before he had been sworn in, the President made it clear to his closest associates that under his leadership there would be little of the well-publicized ballyhoo that dominated the White House years of his predecessor. And he made it clear again in his Inaugural speech: "In these difficult years, America has suffered from a fever of words; from inflated rhetoric that promises more than it can deliver; from angry rhetoric that fans discontents into hatreds; from bombastic rhetoric that postures instead of persuading."

Instead of bombast and over-inflated promises, the new Chief Executive intended to "tell it as it is" -- then one of Mr. Nixon's favorite expressions -- and the soft-spoken manner in which he delivered his Inaugural Address was the style he intended to follow. In that speech, Mr. Nixon also said: "We cannot learn from one another until we stop shouting at one another -- until we speak quietly enough so that our words can be heard as well as our voices."

Which all meant, as he explained later, that he intended to give short shrift to those who not only were demanding the millenium but were doing so in obnoxiously loud voices. Mr. Nixon was well aware of the extremist pressure groups and, as he noted, he is not the kind to be overwhelmed by their abrasive tactics.

In short, intemperance would get them nowhere.

Even before his Inauguration, as President-elect, he had sought to get a handle on the machinery of Government in order to permit his new Administration to move quickly in an orderly way on major problems. It wasn't easy. The Federal establishment consists of overswollen bureaucracies highly jealous of their prerogatives and not always responsive to the wishes of those who happen to get elected to the Presidency.

Thus, while still ensconced in the Hotel Pierre, Mr. Nixon had his first taste of battle when he made what may have been one of his more fateful decisions in terms of how he intended to operate in the making of foreign policy. He took on the State

Department in deciding to bolster the functions of the National Security Council (NSC) as "the principal forum for Presidential consideration of foreign policy issues." This triggered deep-seated resentment at State which felt that its traditional role as the President's chief adviser on foreign affairs would be undermined. And a flock of memoranda flew between Foggy Bottom and the Pierre. After considering all the pros and cons, Mr. Nixon dispatched a directive to the State Department calling a halt to the first major internal dispute of his fledgling^{new} Administration. The President-elect stipulated there would be no further appeal from his decision to revitalize the NSC, and there wasn't any. Still, feelings were hurt.

Basically what Mr. Nixon wanted from the newly-bolstered NSC, headed by Henry Kissinger, were the "real options and not simply what compromise has found bureaucratic acceptance." More than anything else, the new President dreaded being handed a single policy recommendation for either acceptance or rejection. Instead he wanted alternatives presented by the various agencies -- not a consensus -- to which he would give a "fair hearing." And then, after studying all viewpoints, he and he alone would make the big decisions. And he and he alone would take the rap if things went wrong. That's what he was hired to do.

While still at the Pierre Hotel, Kissinger ordered an "options study" on the war in Vietnam. For the first of his National Security Study Memoranda -- or "~~NSSM One~~" as the Vietnam project came to be known -- Kissinger brought together a staff of

experts to prepare questions that were to be submitted to the State and Defense Departments as well as the Central Intelligence Agency. Because he wanted to determine whether any weaknesses existed in any of the departmental positions, Kissinger brought in several critics of the war as consultants. Among them were Dan Davidson (recommended by Averell Harriman), Morton Halperin and Daniel Ellsberg. All three were to become disenchanted with the Kissinger operation early in the game and they departed the scene. Ellsberg, of course, went on to make a name for himself as the purveyor of top-secret documents which became known as the Pentagon Papers.

The new President's preoccupation with world affairs was demonstrated his first day in office when he held an NSC meeting to hear a report by CIA Director Richard Helms on the world's trouble spots. The discussion centered around Vietnam and the Middle East, but incipient crises from Berlin to Peru were also touched upon. And then there was a bitter civil war raging in Nigeria with civilian suffering widespread, particularly in the secessionist enclave called Biafra.

"Don't you have any good news at all?" Mr. Nixon asked the CIA Director.

"No, I'm afraid not," replied Helms.

(Helms was retained as Director of the CIA on the basis of a recommendation of a secret task force headed by Franklin A. Lindsay, president of Itek Corporation. The task force, appointed by President-elect Nixon, was empowered to investigate the CIA and recommend changes.)

Mr. Nixon's hunger for facts was translated into still another ^{Memorandum} NSSM calling on the CIA as well as State, Defense and Treasury to respond to questions dealing with every quarter of the globe. ~~In a covering letter,~~ Henry A. Kissinger -- or HAK in NSC jargon -- advised recipients that the purpose of the exercise was to provide the President with an "inventory" of the international situation as of the day he was inaugurated. The questions were exhaustive. ~~Does Israel possess the atom bomb?~~ What about Britain and the Common Market? Could Portugal hold on to her African colonies? The possibilities of strategic arms limitation talks? How viable is West Berlin?

A considerable number of questions concerned the Soviet Union and Communist China, their bitter rivalry and whether there was any chance of a rapprochement. Also wanted was detailed information on Soviet capabilities to deploy ground, naval and air forces in the Mediterranean as well as in Africa and Asia. Data on the Soviet economy and the possibilities of stepped-up trade with the West as a whole and the U.S. in particular was also requested.

Questions on China concerned the nature of its political makeup following the cultural revolution as well as who the future leaders of the Middle Kingdom might be following the departure of the present leadership. And what about the effect of the cultural revolution on the Chinese economy? Is China facing food shortages? What are its foreign exchange resources? What progress has China

made in its nuclear weapons program? And what will Peking's position be once it is in position to deploy nuclear-armed ballistic missiles? How strong is China in conventional military forces and in defensive air power? What are Peking's relations with Hanoi and the Vietcong? Would the Chinese seek to participate in any large Vietnam negotiations?

~~Dr. Kissinger asked that all replies including back-up materials be forwarded to the NSC by February 20. That gave the several departments and agencies ^{less than} a month to come up with hard information which, after processing in Kissinger's shop, would go to the President in abbreviated form. As a result, a lot of bureaucratic noses got out of joint. Things had rarely been done that way before or that quickly.~~

Just as vexatious for the President were problems on the home front. And to them he devoted most of his second day in office, Wednesday, January 22. The President began that day by attending 8:00 a.m. ceremonies in the East Room (covered "live" on television by NBC's Today Show) during which Chief Justice Earl Warren swore in the members of the new Cabinet -- that is all members but one, Walter Hickel, who was still unconfirmed by the Senate as Secretary of Interior. Hickel had come under heavy attack as industry oriented in his views on environment. And he had outraged the Audubon-minded by announcing he did not favor conservation for conservation's sake.

As the President called on each member of the Cabinet to be sworn in, it was apparent that there was considerable truth to

press comments that this was a conservatively attired group. All wore dark suits and quiet ties. Also striking was the fact that with the exception of Finch and possibly Transportation Secretary Volpe, President Nixon was the youngest-looking of the lot. Which struck one insider as "kind of funny" since, shortly after his election, Mr. Nixon had mused to his aides about the possibility he would appoint a Cabinet made up of men all younger than he. One quip making the rounds was that the Cabinet looked like "Horace Heidt's band twenty years later." But, as Paul Healy noted in the New York Daily News, "what was so exciting about a Kennedy Cabinet that boasted a McNamara, a Rusk, a Udall and a Celebrezze? Or a Johnson Cabinet that leaned on some of those same old faces plus Marvin Watson?"

Then the President and his "Working Cabinet," as he had referred to it, retired to the Cabinet Room. There was little sense of high historical drama at that first meeting. Getting right down to business, the President acted as if he had been through it all before which, as a matter of fact, he had -- considering the numerous times he had presided over Cabinet meetings in the absence of President Eisenhower. And it was the same Cabinet table at which he had sat so often as Vice President. There was one innovation left under the lip of the table by President Johnson -- a series of buttons which when pressed would summon such things as coffee, tea or Fresca. The buzzer panel was gone the next day.*

* In the President's living quarters upstairs was a special bathroom shower that sprayed in every direction. Mr. Nixon ordered

an ordinary nozzle. He also got rid of a bedside push-button device which his predecessor had used to raise and lower his bedroom window. "I was afraid," said Mr. Nixon, "that if I pushed the button, I'd blow up the world." The President is not gadget-minded. When aides tried to get him to use a Picturephone -- a device which would permit him to view a televised picture of staff members whom he phoned -- the President said no, saying he did not want to catch Dwight Chapin, one of his ^{most trusted} young assistants, "with a hair out of place."

Mr. Nixon quickly outlined his views on the functions of the Cabinet. Unlike President Eisenhower, he did not believe the Cabinet ought to be a forum for debating major issues. Rather, he planned to initiate various sub-Cabinet committees, one of which he would announce the next day -- the Council for Urban Affairs. Basically the President's thinking was that it was senseless to involve either the Secretaries of State or Defense in purely domestic matters; and that it was likewise time-wasting for either the Postmaster General or Secretary of Interior to involve himself in defense or foreign policy issues. This, of course, did not mean there shouldn't be communication between the Secretaries. For example, while making the social rounds at the various Embassies, the Secretaries might pick up "spot information" for transmittal to the Secretary of State.

During the meeting, Walter Hickel seemed a lonely figure. The still-unconfirmed Secretary of Interior, shaken by the controversy

surrounding his appointment, asked for advice on how to "clear" his phones because he feared wiretapping by his enemies on the Hill. Bill Rogers, a former Attorney General in the Eisenhower years, calmed him down. "Wally," he said, "you're in the big leagues now." (Two days later, following his confirmation by the Senate, Hickel finally was sworn in. In an East Room ceremony, Mr. Nixon noted that the Alaskan "already has rendered service far beyond the call of duty. In the first four days of this Administration he, rather than I, has been the subject of the Herblock cartoons. I am grateful for that.")

On that first day the new President, posing for an official photograph in the Oval Room, told reporters that he intended to establish a second office in the Executive Office Building -- the rococo pile just across the street where his speechwriters and other staffers had been assigned offices. "I like to work in a very small room," he explained. The reporters appeared incredulous. They could hardly believe that the President would foresake the magic and grandeur of his Oval office for more mundane quarters elsewhere. No President had ever done that before. But this President, as they were to learn, did not do things by the book. The fact was that Mr. Nixon liked to work in less formal surroundings, away from reminders of pomp and circumstance.

The next day Mr. Nixon announced the "major appointment" of Dr. Arthur F. Burns, "a longtime friend and trusted adviser," as Counsellor to the President with Cabinet rank. With Martin Anderson as his deputy, Dr. Burns' "prime responsibility will be

the coordination of the development of my domestic policies and programs." Dr. Burns, who had first met Mr. Nixon in 1953 when he headed President Eisenhower's Council of Economic Advisers, had remained in close touch with the young Californian over the years. And following his election, Mr. Nixon had asked him to pull together his campaign statements, the Republican platform planks, as well as the confidential reports of the twenty-two Nixon task forces set up to study specific problems, and come up with a domestic program for the new Administration. "Nixon was eager to get the machinery started so he could move ahead a little faster once he assumed the reins of government," says Burns. The first week of January Burns presented the President-elect with a blue-covered notebook containing domestic proposals which he felt deserved priority attention. The day after the Inauguration he placed additional recommendations in the notebook.

Whenever he had a chance, Mr. Nixon studied the notebook and began shooting off directives to his Cabinet officers and White House staff advisers. In all, close to one hundred memoranda were to be sent out for action. Many of the early directives were based on Mr. Nixon's campaign calls for reorganizing and reordering the Government, with a heavy emphasis on returning money and decision-making to the states and private sector. Others dealt with such complex proposals as black capitalism, welfare reform and tax sharing with the states. Some could be acted upon immediately -- the computer job bank, a student tutoring corps and legislation to prevent obscene materials from being mailed to children.

That day, too, Mr. Nixon signed his first Executive Order, one establishing the Urban Affairs Council to cope with the crisis of the cities. Besides the President, the membership included the Vice President and various Cabinet members. Named as the Executive Secretary was Daniel P. Moynihan who announced the formation of nine subcommittees, each chaired by a Cabinet officer, to deal with such problems as the future of the poverty and Model Cities programs; minority business enterprises; welfare; crime; internal migration; mass transit; and surplus food and nutrition.

At the Council's first meeting, the President noted that urban problems had begun to surface after World War II and "then exploded under the Kennedy Administration and reached an even greater crescendo during the Johnson years." He felt that his predecessors had tried to do things too fast, without much thought and perhaps too politically. So, as a result, the nation was saddled with numerous expensive social programs, some working at cross purposes, with results not overly satisfactory.

The President urged each Council member to do a "complete inventory" of the various programs that had accumulated over the years. "Be merciless!" he said. At the same time he stressed the need for innovation, observing that "the time to take the political heat is now, whether it is for stronger law enforcement, or a change in the welfare system or OEO. We must resist the natural tendency to say, 'Let's look at it a little longer.' The magic time to change is the first couple of months, for later we will have problems with the press, and with the problems themselves... The country recognizes the need for change and we don't want the record written that we were too cautious."

Arthur Burns suggested it might be a good idea if Pat Moynihan were to prepare an outline of "a national urban policy." The President agreed.

"I would be glad to undertake such a task," said Moynihan, "on the condition that -- and I realize that one does not ordinarily impose conditions on the President of the United States -- on the condition that no one takes it seriously."

At that, the room exploded into laughter. The President, momentarily taken aback, joined in.

It was Moynihan's point that the task was formidable and could only be approached -- considering the complexity of the problems involved -- with a high degree of skepticism.

The subject of hunger in America came up. Agriculture Secretary Hardin and Moynihan insisted it was a problem for millions of people. The President at first appeared skeptical about such claims. He suggested it was not constructive for leading Americans to say people were starving, especially when "our friends on the other side of the curtain" could gain a propaganda advantage. Nevertheless, after considerable probing of both Hardin and Moynihan, particularly of how their estimates were established, the President evinced concern and said, "Let's get the facts. Then we'll act appropriately."

It was at these early meetings that Pat Moynihan quickly established rapport with the President. For one thing, Moynihan always spoke his mind -- even outrageously at times -- a characteristic which Mr. Nixon found particularly refreshing in a milieu

traditionally occupied by subordinates more subdued in their comments. The President did not always agree with his iconoclastic adviser, but he always listened to him, frequently with unconcealed amusement. Moynihan had an Irish way with words which invariably intrigued the President.

Probably the toughest issue confronting the new President on the domestic front was the virulent, almost runaway inflation which had plagued the nation's economy since the United States escalation in Vietnam in the mid-sixties. As a candidate, Mr. Nixon had campaigned long and hard against interminably rising prices. Once in the White House, he immediately got to work on the issue.

On January 23, Mr. Nixon met with the Quadriad, a mini-Cabinet group then consisting of Chairman William McChesney Martin of the Federal Reserve Board, Secretary of the Treasury David M. Kennedy, Budget Director Robert P. Mayo, and Paul W. McCracken, Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers. In the free-wheeling discussion there was general agreement on the obvious; namely that the overheated economy would have to be cooled down in a careful, gradual way so as to minimize the adverse effect of such actions on unemployment.*

* The Troika, another mini-Cabinet group, is the Quadriad, minus the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, who is an independent official serving a fixed term.

The following day, Mr. Nixon convened the first meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Policy. Present in the Cabinet

Room were Chairman McCracken of the Council of Economic Advisers, Treasury Secretary Kennedy, Commerce Secretary Maurice Stans, Agriculture Secretary Hardin, Labor Secretary George Shultz, Budget Director Mayo and Counsellor Burns.

Apparently the naming of the mini-Cabinet group had presented something of a problem since the President noted that, "We felt 'board' would be wrong, and 'council' would confuse it with the Council on Economic Advisers. We originally had 'economic growth' in the title, but we don't use the word 'growth' because we may be meeting in times when growth would sound ridiculous -- let's hope not."

The President said that formation of the Cabinet Committee -- or Cabcomecopol as it soon was affectionately dubbed by its members -- had its origins in proposals of the task forces he had appointed following his election. Its purpose was "to look at economic policies long-range..."

Happening to notice William Safire busily scribbling notes, the President introduced the former New York public relations executive as a member of his writing team "who's supposed to know something about economics."

"Well," interjected Maurice Stans, "he does know something about speech writing."

The President had another sudden thought. "I think the Vice President ought to be here," he said. "I don't want the press saying we're overlooking the Vice President."

> Arthur Burns said that Spiro Agnew had been invited but that he had an engagement in Baltimore.

The President then called upon McCracken to give a general economic review. An economics professor at the University of Michigan, the cool, almost pedantic McCracken had been a member of the CEA during the Eisenhower years. Mr. Nixon had brought him back to Washington on the recommendation of Arthur Burns.

"We assume responsibility in difficult times," McCracken began, which of course was hardly news to those seated around the table. But the Chairman brought the group up short when he stated flatly: "The economy is more vulnerable to a recession now than it has been in some time."

McCracken quickly summed up the problem: "Consumer spending is flat, while new facilities by business is up ten percent.

"Do you mean that business spending is just a hedge against inflation?" asked the President.

"Yes."

"More now than ever?"

"Yes."

"Also," interrupted Secretary Kennedy, "there's the worry about tightness of money."

"What about consumer intentions?" the President asked.

"Prognosis is flat," replied McCracken.

"If consumer spending stays flat," Secretary Stans asked, "won't the investment in new facilities ultimately slow down?"

"Yes," said McCracken.

Throughout the discussion, the President listened intently. He occasionally made notes on one of those ever-present yellow pads.

And he kept asking questions. Though he never claimed the Dismal Science to be his strongest forte, he probably knew more about the subject than did most of his predecessors. Moreover, he thoroughly understood the intimate relationship between economic trends and domestic and international politics.

For example, Mr. Nixon had long been convinced that he lost the Presidency to John F. Kennedy in 1960 largely because the jobless rolls increased by over 450,000 during the election period. Along with Dr. Burns, he had desperately sought to convince President Eisenhower of the need to stimulate the economy; but Ike failed to heed their warnings and the rest is history. But it was still vivid history to Mr. Nixon and something he was to repeatedly recall in private sessions with his economic advisers.

The issue of unemployment arose at the first meeting of the Cabinet Committee. Chairman McCracken said the new Administration should not attempt "to create the impression that we can cool off the economy" without some rise in joblessness. The nation must be prepared for that possibility.

McCracken summed up by stating that what was needed was a strategy of economic policy. "Up to now, it's been too ad hoc," he added. "We haven't had a series of plays within a game plan, if I may use that metaphor."

It was a figure of speech that appealed to the nation's number one sports fan. It connoted the kind of long-range, thorough planning which the new President sought to institute in his policy-making. And it took into account the fact the President did not want to be caught short by surprises.

This the President made abundantly clear when he questioned David Kennedy about whether the Treasury Secretary had been adequately consulted on a decision to raise the interest ceiling on Federal Housing Administration and Veterans Administration mortgages. Kennedy said he had no complaints and Messrs. Mayo and Stans thought it a good decision. But the President was making the point that the decision had come up too quickly to suit him; that, in fact, he had been notified of it the very day it was to be made. From now on the President indicated he wanted to be alerted as far in advance as possible about such moves.

By this time the meeting had gone longer than had been scheduled and appointments secretary Dwight Chapin was at the doorway making faces. The President finally took the hint. Before departing, he said: "Let's think in radical terms, if I may use that word. I know there are no easy answers. But that doesn't mean there are no answers. Rather than 'running it better' or temporizing, we have to come up with those answers and in the economic area that's what this committee will have to do."

The President then lunched with several old friends from the House of Representatives -- Gerald Ford, Glenn Davis, John Byrnes and former Congressman Donald L. Jackson. The purpose of the luncheon was to discuss the future activities of the Chowder and Marching Society, a group that had its origins back in the late forties when fifteen freshmen Republican Congressmen including Dick Nixon began meeting once a week to discuss pending legislation.

Most of the original members went on to bigger and better things. Ford, of course, was now minority leader of the House while Byrnes became the ranking Republican on the powerful Ways and Means Committee. Don Jackson, who had served in a California district next door to Nixon's, had left the Congress to make a career in public relations.

Jackson's presence at the White House was a poignant reminder to those with long memories of the fickle nature of politics. Both Jackson and Nixon had arrived on the Washington scene as a result of the extraordinary 1946 Congressional election which led to Republican control of the Eightieth Congress. They became close friends. But, from the beginning, it was Don Jackson who captured the imagination of some observers as a politician who would go a long way -- even, possibly, to the White House. The best that was said of Nixon in those early days was that he would remain in Congress for a long time. More than two decades later, President Nixon appointed Don Jackson a member of the Interstate Commerce Commission.

The second Cabinet meeting was held on February 7 and again domestic problems dominated the discussion. With one exception, all again were conservatively dressed. The exception was Bob Finch, who was attired in irridescent green and a tie that one insider described as looking as if it had been designed by "deKooning in a nightmare." The mood, set by the President, was relaxed and good humored.

First to be introduced by the President was Economist McCracken with a report on the economic situation and outlook. "Well, Paul," said the President, "we're putting you on right at the beginning so we can get the good news at the start."

But the news, as everyone in the Cabinet room well knew, wasn't that good. In precise terms and with charts in front of him, McCracken quickly got to the key question: "Can we level out prices without causing unemployment?" Then the no-nonsense answer: "Looking at it realistically we can't bring down the price level without affecting unemployment, but if we are skillful we won't affect it too much."

In the ensuing discussion, it was obvious that the problem of unemployment was one that troubled the President deeply. He made the point that part of the problem was the fear on the part of the employed that they may become unemployed, and thus the heart of the matter is "talk of unemployment."

The President then introduced Dr. Lee A. DuBridge, Director of the Office of Science and Technology, to report on various matters dealing with science. Mr. Nixon asked if he would like to remain seated while making his report. "No," replied DuBridge, "teachers like to stand up." And like the teacher he was, DuBridge quickly and methodically brought up problems of concern in the scientific community. One of those problems had to do with nuclear tests. Some scientists had expressed fears that such tests might trigger earthquakes. After listening to the argument, the President asked whether the real concern of these

scientists was not the danger of earthquakes but their general objection to any kind of nuclear test. Dr. DuBridge did agree that this was the case with many scientists but added there had been a considerable amount of discussion about the issue.

The President then said he would not make any firm decisions on testing until he had studied all the relevant facts.

In another area, DuBridge proposed formation of a committee to report to the President on the future of the space program. Mr. Nixon not only thought it a good idea but he urged all possible speed in getting the report to him. What he wanted most of all was to take the initiative in planning the future of the space program. What he did not want, he added, was the kind of situation in which public opinion would "push us into, for example, a manned trip to Mars."

Public opinion, however, was playing a major role in alerting the Government to the problems of environment. And that was all to the good, the President said, referring specifically to the "tragedy" that resulted from an oil blowout at an offshore drilling site off Santa Barbara, California. Miles of shoreline and offshore islands were fouled. Beyond the immediate problem of how to restore the beaches and waters around Santa Barbara, the President proposed the formation of a Cabinet Committee on Environment and he asked DuBridge and Moynihan to determine which Cabinet members should be involved.

Attorney General Mitchell then took the floor. His subject was crime legislation and he raised the question of whether the first

message to Congress should be centered on organized crime or whether it should deal with more than that. The President said he was not very keen on a message dealing solely with organized crime. What he would like to see was a series of crime messages and not a blanket statement. He also proposed an early move in the narcotics field. Pointing out that Nelson Rockefeller had attributed his last re-election as Governor of New York State to his dealing with the narcotics issue, Mr. Nixon smiled and said, "I was going to say he went on a narcotics kick -- but I guess I'd better not say that."

The Cabinet discussion then turned to the strong link that reportedly exists between organized crime, which makes a huge profit out of narcotics, and street crime, which in large measure is committed by addicts trying to maintain their expensive habit.

Whereupon the President said he wanted to make a key point about the crime program. Suggesting that Budget Director Mayo "plug your ears here," the President asked the Attorney General to find out what was needed in the fight against crime "and we'll ask Congress for it whether it is for more narcotics agents or whatever." The President was certain that Congress would provide what was needed. In this area, he indicated, cost would not be a controlling factor.

"My ear plug fell out at just the right moment," said the Budget Director. "My plea to you is that when we are about to send a message or program, let's cost it out." He cited the President's statement of a week before on "curbing crime and improving conditions

of life in the city of Washington" as something he had first read about in the newspapers. "That was all right but we didn't cost it."

"We moved on that one pretty fast," smiled the President and then, turning to the Budget Director, he added, "From now on, we'll give you at least twenty-four hours."

The Attorney General next turned to the subject of electoral reform. The key question, he said, was whether or not any message should be sent to the Congress. The President said he felt he was committed to a change in the electoral system. This brought a comment from Mitchell that if the proportional plan which the President had espoused during the campaign had been used in the 1968 election, "you would have won by only six electoral votes." To which Arthur Burns remarked: "But he would have won."

The President said a message should be sent but it ought to be couched in as general terms as possible because "every lawyer on the Hill has ideas on" the subject. He also suggested that Mitchell send letters to the concerned Committee Chairmen advising them of his availability as an Administration spokesman on reform. "We'll just give you running room to make your own mistakes," the President grinned. Whereupon the Attorney General muttered something about how he would soon be sent back to Wall Street.

Secretary of State Rogers had a joking thought about all this. "John," he smiled, "can we abolish elections? I like things the way they are now."

More seriously, Arthur Burns volunteered his thinking that the President had actually declared for a straight popular election as a result of his challenge to Humphrey late in the campaign to agree that, if the electoral balance threw the election into the House, the candidate who obtained the most popular votes should be declared President. However, it was generally agreed that Mr. Nixon's position on this referred only to a specific situation of an election being thrown into the House. At the end of the discussion, the President told Mitchell: "Well, with all these specific instructions, you and Arthur Burns work it out."

Other problems discussed had to do with what Treasury Secretary Kennedy termed an approaching crisis in the debt ceiling and what Budget Director Mayo described as a high level of federal employment.

The President then turned to one of his favorite subjects -- press coverage. Noting that this Cabinet had more discretion in making news than any in recent history, he urged the Cabinet officers to continue to hold their own press conferences. However, if they had big news they would probably get a bigger break if they made their announcements at the White House. He pointed out that this pattern had already been tried successfully in some instances, the President having appeared with a Cabinet officer to make an announcement. Then, with a smile, he added: "Of course, all the bad news goes out at the local level!"

And so the Cabinet meeting came to an end. ~~Everyone had said what he wanted to say. Problems were faced with enthusiasm~~

and good humor. No one was taking himself too seriously and everyone was prepared to take a little kidding. And while there hadn't been too many hard decisions, this was not necessarily the time or place for hard decisions. In sum, the meeting constituted a nugget of the new Administration at work. The President clearly was in charge, advising, suggesting, asking, proposing, ordering -- but never pounding. In this approach there was an ease of tone that, even after several weeks of his exposure as President, would still continue to surprise many outside observers.

One of those most pleasantly surprised was John Gardner, Chairman of a citizens' group called the Urban Coalition which later was to develop into something called Common Cause. Gardner, who had been Secretary of HEW under Lyndon Johnson, had brought together a group of civic-minded citizens, among them Bayard Rustin, Andrew Heiskell, Max Fisher and Arthur Fleming, to meet with Mr. Nixon and the newly organized Cabinet Council on Urban Affairs. After the meeting ended, Gardner remarked to Pat Moynihan that in more than three years of such conferences he had never heard so much "open conversation" and that it was apparent that under President Nixon "an utterly different atmosphere" had been created.

CHAPTER 3

On February 22, 1969, a day before he was to leave for Europe on his first diplomatic mission abroad as President, Mr. Nixon sat in the Oval Office, pouring over briefing books and making notes on one of those ubiquitous yellow legal pads. In all there were some two thousand pages of material on European problems plus personality sketches of the many leaders he was scheduled to meet on the Continent.

The President had left orders that except for emergencies he was not to be disturbed.

The door flew open. It was Henry Kissinger bearing bad tidings. The Communist enemy had taken the offensive throughout South Vietnam, hitting about seventy target areas including Saigon and Danang. There was great concern at the Pentagon. In fact, the Defense Secretary and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff were waiting for word to rush to the White House.

"What for?" asked the President.

"To meet with you on the emergency," replied Kissinger.

"Do they want me to make a decision?"

"No."

"Is there anything they want me to do right now?"

"No."

"Then tell them I don't want to see them."

Thus, from the start, Richard Nixon made it clear to his subordinates that he does not like to "worry" a problem unless the time has come for a decision. The problems facing the President

both foreign and domestic, are so numerous and often so complicated that he prefers dealing with each of them in as orderly a way as possible. True, the enemy offensive on that February 22 looked bad, very bad. But its launching had not particularly surprised the President. At an ~~an~~ meeting some weeks before, he had referred to the possibility of some sort of major enemy action as a means of testing his steadiness of nerve. And he had resolved to play it cool, without getting frantically involved in emergency meetings with Pentagon or other officials. That was not his style.

On that particular day the President was devoting almost his full attention to his forthcoming visit to Western Europe. He had long been thinking about our European allies. As a private citizen he had observed with increasing dismay the rapid deterioration of the Atlantic Alliance under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. During the 1968 campaign Mr. Nixon demonstrated his concern by dispatching William Scranton to meet with European leaders in his behalf. The former Pennsylvania Governor had returned with a report which confirmed what Mr. Nixon already knew: America's voice in Europe, once so strong and so respected, was, according to Scranton, "now muffled in confusion -- if it is listened to at all." And Mr. Nixon was to quote that remark during the campaign.

It was to unmuffle America's voice in Europe, as well as to buck up the flagging spirits of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, that led Mr. Nixon, within days of entering the White House, to decide on a flying trip to Europe. To "advance" the

trip he sent John Ehrlichman who, with the temporary rank of Ambassador, made the arrangements in the principal capitals of Europe. Everything went well, according to Ehrlichman. In fact, his European counterparts were quite vocal in their pleasure that, finally, after so many years, an American President seemed interested in the problems of their continent. The last President to visit Europe had been John F. Kennedy, following the Bay of Pigs. That trip, frankly, had been a disaster. Nikita Khrushchev, with whom John F. Kennedy conferred in Vienna, treated him brutally and the young President returned home convinced of a possible nuclear war over Berlin that very year. And Charles de Gaulle, though far more cordial, seemed unimpressed. In fact, Franco-American relations plummeted to a new low following the much heralded Kennedy visit. And they were to remain that way all through the Johnson years.

There was nothing personal in de Gaulle's distrust of whoever happened to be occupying the White House. The French president had long suspected that Washington was trying to organize a European coalition against France and that the U.S. sought to dominate Europe forever. And Richard Nixon felt that de Gaulle had good reason to suspect the U.S. For, in his opinion, the French leader had indeed been treated shabbily by most American Presidents ever since Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

So that fruitful talks with the suspicious deGaulle became one of the principal objectives of the Nixon trip. But talks with other European leaders were planned. The President wanted to brief them about possible new approaches towards a breakthrough in the Middle East impasse. And he also wanted to assure them

that their vital interests would not be jeopardized in direct U.S.-Soviet conversations looking towards a pause in the arms race. Mr. Nixon was well aware that there was considerable fear in Europe that the two giant super-powers might be conspiring to divide the world into spheres of domination.

From the beginning, however, the President sought to underscore the fact that his trip would not produce instant miracles. As he put it in his departure remarks on February 23: "It is a trip, I wish to emphasize, which is not intended and will not settle all of the problems we have in the world. The problems we face are too complex and too difficult to be settled by what I would call the 'showboat' diplomacy."*

* Among those bidding the President bon voyage was the Congressional leadership including Senator Edward M. Kennedy, then Senate Majority Whip. Kennedy, who had turned 37 the previous day, had recently stated that his youth would have been made a campaign issue had he run against Mr. Nixon in 1968. As he shook Kennedy's hand, Mr. Nixon said, "You certainly don't look 37!" Politicians nearby roared with laughter, and the Senator from Massachusetts managed a faint smile.

Leftwing demonstrations against the new President were not as bad as had been expected. A few heads were cracked in Rome

and Berlin but the agitators never got near the President. [All of which was a pleasant surprise to Mr. Nixon since, as he had privately informed the joint leadership of the Congress before his departure, he believed there would be "substantial dissent" to his visit. "We cannot allow the threat of demonstrations to deter us from a mission designed to reduce the dangers of war," the President had told them. His policy would be to go where and when he wanted to go, knowing full well he would face demonstrators. He said he would not remain "chained" to his desk.]

In all, Mr. Nixon spent seven hours talking with Charles de Gaulle. Mr. Nixon informed the French President of his plan to wind down the war in Vietnam and of his desire to ^{break} crack through the barriers that separated the U.S. from Communist China. On the Middle East, Mr. Nixon impressed on the French leader that he felt that the threat of war did not come from a preemptive strike by Israel, since war would not be in its interest; rather it comes from a potential attack by Soviet backed Arab nations inspired by revenge. To deter such an attack and to preserve peace, the President felt the balance of power in the Mideast should be in Israel's favor.

De Gaulle said he understood.

Mr. Nixon then asked the French President to ^{about} explain the ~~background of~~ a heated diplomatic flap between Paris and London that erupted on the eve of Mr. Nixon's trip.

The dispute was over what De Gaulle had told British Ambassador Christopher Soames in a private conference. In a report to his Government, Soames, a son-in-law of Winston Churchill, said

that De Gaulle had proposed that the Common Market be replaced by a larger, more loosely organized European organization to which Britain would be admitted provided it renounced its "special relationship" with the U.S. De Gaulle was also quoted as proposing that the new organization be run by a "directorate" consisting of France, Britain, West Germany and Italy.

A confidential memorandum on the conversation was sent by the British to the State Department and, according to Bill Rogers, the De Gaulle remarks appeared to be anti-American and undercutting NATO.

Charles de Gaulle told Mr. Nixon that the British had over-reacted. He had been thinking aloud, as was his wont, and his musings were of a "metaphysical-historical" nature and had not been meant as an immediate proposal. For example, he had not suggested that the four largest nations in Western Europe would inevitably dominate any European grouping.

For forty-five minutes, De Gaulle explained his position and, according to Mr. Nixon, there was nothing anti-American about anything he said. As Mr. Nixon later observed, such consultations as he had with De Gaulle were most valuable if only to clear up misunderstandings.

After Mr. Nixon's visit was over, the French President made it clear that he could get along very well with the American President, as evidenced by a promise to visit Washington formally early in 1970 -- a coup that had eluded John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson.*

* The De Gaulle visit was never to take place. On April 27, 1969, De Gaulle, having been repudiated during a referendum on Governmental reforms, resigned. He was succeeded as President of France by Georges Pompidou, who the following year came to the U.S. on an official state visit. De Gaulle died in November 1970 and President Nixon cut short a post-election holiday to fly to France for the funeral services.

The general French attitude toward the talks was perhaps best expressed by a huge headline in France's largest newspaper France-Soir. It read TOUT VA TRES BIEN -- which is, roughly, the French equivalent of "All is A-OK." And other newspapers in Britain, West Germany, Italy and smaller European states also described the Nixon trip as most successful. Some editorial writers even described it as "triumphant."

The brief visit to London was a triumph if only for one small incident. For it demonstrated what Henry Kissinger described as the kind of Presidential gesture which "does not change foreign policy, but helps enormously to change a climate." The incident occurred at a small private dinner held at Ten Downing Street. The atmosphere was tense and awkward, since one of the guests was the British Ambassador to the United States, John Freeman. As editor of the New Statesman, Freeman had criticized Mr. Nixon so severely that some Britons felt his usefulness in Washington definitely impaired. The appointment was made by Harold Wilson long before the Prime Minister ever considered the possibility of Mr. Nixon's becoming President.

In proposing a toast, the President stepped up to the problem and resolved it with a nice turn of phrase. Noting Freeman's past and his own, and suggesting that they both might have changed, the President added: "We can let bygones be bygones. After all, now he's the new diplomat -- and I'm the 'new statesman.'" This was greeted with smiles, stomping of feet, "hear-hears" and a sense of relief. Prime Minister Wilson scribbled a note to the President on the back of a menu which reflected both astonishment and delight. And the way was opened for Freeman to become an effective envoy.

Most significantly the Russians made no waves. Prior to his departure, a new crisis over Berlin had been building up. The East Germans had banned travel to Berlin for all West Germans involved in electing a new federal President. The three Western allies -- France, England and the U.S. -- immediately rejected the East German travel restrictions, reminding the Soviet Union of its responsibility to maintain free access to Berlin.

The President and Secretary Rogers had talked with Soviet Ambassador Anatoly F. Dobrynin, who took great pains to assure the American leaders that it was the East Germans, and not the Russians, who were responsible for rising tensions in Berlin and that, in fact, the Russians had urged the East Germans to (in the Ambassador's phrase) "cool it." Moreover, Dobrynin assured the President that the Soviets would do nothing to embarrass him on his forthcoming visit to the city.

Of necessity, the Soviets figured prominently in the President's thinking in those early days at the White House. Wherever

he looked on the map the Russians appeared to be up to no good -- particularly in Southeast Asia and the Middle East. And the President believed quite strongly that if Soviet aid to North Vietnam were curtailed, or if Soviet assistance to the "more aggressive neighbors" of Israel were halted, then the major world problems would be reduced to a level where there would be no necessity of thinking in terms of American intervention. Thus, in his opinion, the Soviets did have the "big stroke" in helping resolve these problems. The President, however, realized that getting the Soviets to cooperate would be no easy matter. For example, while it was obviously in the Soviet interest as a nation-state to resolve the potentially dangerous Vietnam conflict, it would not do them much good as a competitor for the leadership of the world communist movement to collaborate with the U.S. in removing a source of tension -- at least too publicly. But the Russians had cooperated behind-the-scenes by helping get the Vietnam peace talks going in Paris. For example, they were instrumental in settling the "table crisis" so that talks could proceed.

And true to Ambassador Dobrynin's word, the Soviets did succeed in cooling down the East Germans and the threatened crisis over Berlin evaporated.

On March 4, at 8:30 a.m., less than two days after he had returned, the President, looking surprisingly rested and even tanned, sat down with the leaders of both parties of the Congress to provide a firsthand account of his journey to the Continent. Asked how he managed the arduous tour, the President replied it was just

like campaigning -- "you can do anything for a week." Then, without any notes, he began a monologue which lasted for nearly fifty minutes, moving from topic to topic with a well trained lawyer's precision.

The President noted first that his conversations on the Continent covered not only European, but extra-European problems as well. His purpose was to obtain support where possible for U.S. policy around the world and, by prior consultation, to reduce criticism if we could not get that support.

Secondly, Mr. Nixon iterated a point he had made repeatedly in the past: we should have no illusions that a trip of this nature can necessarily resolve basic disagreements between nations. However, on this journey we "did set a climate which can settle the close ones" and help us toward settlement of the more difficult problems.

Third, we must remember that while the alliance was brought together out of fear, that fear no longer exists to the extent it once did. True, some observers felt the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in the summer of 1968 might have reawakened the fear which kept the alliance together, but even "the fear quotient" resulting from Czechoslovakia was receding and we must "find a new cement" for the West.

Fourth, the President had discovered a considerable amount of dissatisfaction with the failure of the U.S. to consult with our European allies on discussions with the Soviets, as for example on the subject of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Fifth, as we move toward strategic arms talks with the Russians, we must keep in mind the imperative that we consult with our allies along the way.

Sixth, even leaving De Gaulle out of the picture, the forces for European unity are not as strong as they once were. "The dream of European unity is not dead," said the President, "but the steam has gone out of it." As the European nations have become economically self-sufficient, they have become more politically independent.

Seventh, the President found that European leaders were becoming increasingly concerned about their young people. This was not only true in France, where student revolts the previous year had threatened the stability of the nation, but also in Italy and even in Germany and Great Britain. In these countries, as in the United States, the problem lies with largely affluent young men and women, for whom Western "materialism" not only had become "irrelevant" but was to be condemned. The search for a "purpose" was perhaps the common denominator of all these disaffected youths -- in Europe as well as the U.S.

Turning to the problem of NATO on the eve of its twentieth anniversary, Mr. Nixon outlined the U.S. position as he gave it to the European leaders. The U.S. presence in Europe in a "solely symbolic" fashion was not enough, he said. Nevertheless, had he as a candidate last year proposed withdrawal of two or three divisions from Europe, he would have scored heavily among the electorate.

The President pointed out to the Europeans that they needed NATO more than we do. The European concern about beefing up contributions to NATO, the President continued, was based on the fear "that if they did more, we would do less." But the President told them that "the reverse is true. As others helped themselves, we would be willing to help them more." The President emphasized that it was simply a hard fact that the heavy American commitment could not continue indefinitely. We did not threaten the Europeans with any withdrawal, but we did make clear the above fact. All this presented some sort of dilemma because, as the President warned the Europeans, the Soviets had not only made great strides in closing the strategic gap since the Cuban confrontation of 1962, but they had "widened the gap" in conventional weapons.

On the other hand, the President was convinced that the Soviets were interested in moving soon on arms control talks. And he felt the European attitude was surprisingly realistic and hard-headed. One leader, for example, told the President that the major factor that has kept the peace is the strength of the United States and that if he made an error with this key element of peace, then everything else "goes out the window." On any arms control agreement, the President went on, a basic ingredient is some assurance that the other side can be trusted. If the other side shows no inclination to resolve the outstanding political divisions between us, like the Middle East and Vietnam, or in reducing tensions, then that would most certainly raise a question of trust that would in turn call for caution in arms control talks.

The bubbling Middle East caldron continued to cause the President grave concern. In his first press conference on January 27, the President had declared the Middle East to be "a powder keg, one that could involve "a confrontation between the nuclear powers. And when he took off for Europe, the President feared that the proposed four-power talks would wind up in a three-to-one situation with the British, French and the Russians in general agreement on a settlement while the United States would be assigned to "deliver" the Israelis, "dragging them into an untenable solution." Now, however, in the wake of the President's trip, the British, French and Americans were in closer accord.

The American position was that anything decided at the four-power talks could not be "imposed." Any settlement must be based on acceptance by the parties themselves. Otherwise it would never work. What kind of settlement did the U.S. have in mind? Basically, three points: (1) Israel should withdraw from the occupied territories and "some sort of belt" should be established in these areas to insure they not be used as a jumping-off point for an assault on Israel; (2) the Arab powers should finally recognize the existence of Israel; and (3) the four major powers would guarantee the settlement. The important element here, of course, was the Soviets' guarantee.

On Vietnam, the President said the problem was trying to find a settlement with the North that would not be interpreted as dishonoring our commitments to South Vietnam, a settlement that would provide some opportunity for South Vietnam to exist as a

nation. The Europeans understood this and were quite aware that we are acting with restraint.

According to the President, the bombing halt of the North had removed a lot of the pressures -- particularly from the street -- that had weighed so heavily on our European friends. The Prime Minister of a small nation had told the President that the U.S. was wrong in going into Vietnam, wrong to fight the war the way we did, wrong to bomb the North, but that it would be equally wrong for the U.S. to now agree to a settlement where it was clear that we did not get what we went in there for.

The President concluded his report by saying he had returned from Europe convinced that "diplomacy cannot be conducted in a goldfish bowl," that there was a need for private meetings, and he hoped the Congressional leaders would understand the need. We can "move ahead with De Gaulle," said the President, but not "if we are going to fight out our differences in the newspapers."

Likewise, in the Paris talks seeking a Vietnam settlement, the President felt that progress would come in private meetings, not public ones, and our men in Paris, experienced negotiators all, had some running room of their own. But "Bill Rogers will be quarterbacking these talks" from Washington.

Under questioning, the President returned to the subject of the Soviets. Their objectives, he said, remain the disintegration of NATO and a stronger hold on Eastern Europe. But because the Soviets do not feel a confrontation would be wise, and because our interests sometimes intersect, we may get an assist from them

in cooling off hotspots. Majority opinion in Europe on why the Soviets want to talk at this time is (in this order): (1) their concern with China; (2) their need for time for a cooling off in Eastern Europe, particularly after Czechoslovakia; and (3) the possibility of a nuclear confrontation had induced a measure of concern on their part.

Even before he left for Europe, Mr. Nixon had come to feel that the disarray in the Communist world was far greater than in the West. And he knew of the deep fears the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia had aroused in Eastern Europe and the Communist parties in Western Europe. Most bitterly resented was Moscow's pronouncement of limited sovereignty among Communist states and this only served to fuel anti-Soviet antagonisms which he noted were being openly expressed in Rumania and Yugoslavia.

Continuing his remarks on our relations with the Soviets, the President observed that it was the "law of life" for great nations to compete and disagree, that this situation would continue with the Russians for our lifetime, that we had to make certain, however, that the time never came when in terms of power "they were looking down our throats."

Asked whether the time hadn't come for the U.S. to make some economic overtures to the Chinese Communists, Mr. Nixon stated that he did not feel that now was the time to trade with them or bring them into the United Nations.

Then, how about siding with the Russians against the Chinese? The President was opposed to that, too. It might be good short-range policy, but from the long range, it would be suicidal.

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There were some people, the President said, who felt that the Sino-Soviet split was not deep or lasting, but he felt that fights between exponents of the same ideologies were usually more severe than fights between those of differing ideologies and, even, religions. Prime Minister Harold Wilson had told the President and the Secretary of State about how he had heard horrible insults passed between quarrelling Arabs and Jews, but they were nothing compared to what the British leader had heard Soviet Premier Kosygin say about his Chinese "allies."

The President then recounted what Andre Malraux had told him in Paris. An old friend of Mao Tse-tung from the twenties when the French writer had spent considerable time in China, Malraux had recently visited the Chinese Chairman in Peking. The United States can never destroy us, Mao had told him, but as Malraux informed the President, it had never occurred to Mao that the United States did not want to destroy China. As for the Soviets and the Americans, Mao said there was only one difference. The Russians "are barbarians who come by land" to invade us and the Americans "are barbarians who come by sea." Malraux felt it was one of history's greatest tragedies that "the richest and most productive people in the world" (the Americans) were at odds with the Chinese, "the poorest and most populous nation in the world."

It was obvious to those present that Andre Malraux had given the American President food for thought. But what they did not know was that Richard M. Nixon had already set into motion a series of steps that would eventually take him to Peking.

At the time the President was not overly optimistic about any great "breakthroughs" in U.S. relations with Communist China, but, as he told a televised press conference that very night, "Looking further down the road, we could think in terms of a better understanding with Red China."

The press conference was the second he had held since taking office. An hour-long session, it was devoted almost entirely to the President's just concluded European trip. With only a microphone in the East Room -- Lyndon Johnson's multigadged lectern nicknamed "Mother" had been stowed away -- Mr. Nixon also skillfully answered a wide range of questions on subjects from Vietnam to Peru.

That it was a bravura performance was conceded by even the most pronounced anti-Nixonites in the press corps. The columnist who signs himself TRB in the New Republic was almost lyrical in his commentary: "Dazzling...death-defying tightrope act....He talked swiftly, deftly....It was a brilliant performance." A more sober account was provided by Max Frankel, Washington bureau chief of The New York Times: "The President has handled a great deal of complicated and even tricky diplomatic material with great skill. He's addressed himself to some very subtle policy questions with an amazing sense of balance and awareness of the underlying facts." ~~The not unfriendly~~ Richard Wilson, Washington bureau chief of the Cowles publications, wrote: "His discussion...was the most complete and open that I had heard from a President in thirty-five years."

Another accomplishment of the President in those early weeks was to demonstrate to the American people as well as to

Europeans that he did not have horns and a tail. Two decades of virulent anti-Nixon propaganda had taken their inevitable toll. To a great many people, particularly in opinion-making circles in Washington and New York, it had become an article of faith that Richard Nixon was some sort of ~~human~~ monster. Now they began to discover that he wasn't. The man in the White House was not the Richard Nixon they had loved to hate.

For the President this was no minor satisfaction. It was absolutely essential, if he were to conduct the affairs of state properly, that the prestige of the Presidency -- tarnished in recent years -- be restored. Thus, the "demonsterization of Nixon," as Stewart Alsop put it, was an essential first step.

CHAPTER 4

Awaiting President Nixon, on his return from Europe, were the final results of an exhaustive survey of the problems facing the United States in Vietnam. This was the first National Security Study Memorandum, or "NSSM One," which the Kissinger staff had prepared on the basis of responses from the State and Defense Departments as well as the CIA.

Vietnam, of course, was the major foreign problem immediately facing the new President. American boys had been dying in that faraway land ever since President Kennedy had begun to send in "military advisers" and now the American people clearly wanted out of the conflict that had been sharply escalated under Lyndon Johnson. Richard Nixon himself had shifted his thinking about Vietnam. He had given full support to two Democratic Presidents in their conduct of the war. By 1967, however, he began to have his doubts, which he voiced to this reporter. In early 1968, during the New Hampshire primary, those doubts coagulated into a "pledge [to] end the war and win the peace in the Pacific." The "pledge" was misconstrued by the press as meaning a "plan" to end the war. Though Mr. Nixon had never used the word "plan," that word continued to haunt him throughout the campaign. He tried repeatedly to get off the hook by saying there were "no magic formulas or push-button solutions" to peace in Vietnam.

And indeed there weren't.

From the start of his Administration, Mr. Nixon rejected counsel that he immediately disengage from Vietnam by ordering all

American forces to withdraw as quickly as possible. He did not have to be reminded that such an announcement could prove most popular with an electorate weary of a seemingly interminable war. But he also believed that such a move would spell disaster to the Saigon Government, completely demoralize our friends throughout Asia and give aid and comfort to the "hawks" in the Communist world who might be encouraged to try aggression some place else.

On the other hand the President rejected outright proposals for new air strikes on a wide range of carefully selected military targets in North Vietnam, an exercise conducted "in such a manner as to be free of the militarily confining constraints which have characterized the conduct of the war in the past." The President was told that "an interdiction campaign, when employed in conjunction with denial of sea imports, would in large part isolate Hanoi and Haiphong from each other and from the rest of the country. Isolation of Hanoi, the focal point of the road and rail system, would be highly effective in reducing North Vietnam's capability to reinforce aggression in South Vietnam."

In the President's view, a swift, overwhelming blow might have been decisive two or three years before. But now it was too late for a military solution. The time had come to ease out of the war as gracefully and honorably as possible. That's what he, in effect, had pledged during the campaign and that's what he believed most Americans wanted. And that's what he intended to do. First, he hoped to get the stalled Paris peace talks off the ground, aiming

at a negotiated settlement. Failing that, he was thinking in terms of "de-Americanizing" the war. Meanwhile, he publicly warned the enemy not to underestimate America's capacity to retaliate.

What the President wanted most of all was information about Vietnam and, as a result, scads came pouring into the basements of the White House where Dr. Kissinger was then ensconced in tiny, cramped quarters. Working almost around the clock, the NSC staff processed an avalanche of reports triggered by Kissinger's original memorandum of January 21, 1969 and subsequent inquiries.

The preparation of "NSSM One" probably constituted the most soul-searching debate on Vietnam ever conducted within Governmental confines. No effort was made to cover up or sugarcoat differences between the agencies. In fact, differences were encouraged. An estimated one million words were channelled through the Kissinger operation on the pros and cons of such questions as the capabilities of the growing South Vietnamese forces, the effectiveness of B-52 strikes, the tortuous Vietnamese political scene and possible U.S. force reductions.

The report to the President showed that there was general agreement among the various Government agencies on these propositions: the South Vietnamese and allied positions had improved considerably of late, but the South Vietnamese, by themselves, would be incapable of coping with the Vietcong and sizable North Vietnamese units. Though Saigon had improved its political position in certain respects, the Government remained weakest (and the Communists strongest) in rural areas. Still unclear was the

question of whether the non-Communist groups would be able to survive a peaceful competition for political power in South Vietnam. And while the Communists had suffered some reverses, they had not shifted from their ultimate objective of gobbling up South Vietnam. Meanwhile, all evidence indicated that enemy casualties were being replenished by stepped-up recruiting and infiltration. And despite allied operations, the enemy was kept going by major infusions of Soviet and Chinese supplies and could still launch major offensives, though not at 1968 Tet levels.

The concensus also was that Hanoi was participating in the Paris talks for a variety of reasons, not excluding a desire to pursue his objectives at lower costs. But he most definitely was not there out of any sense of weakness. Moreover, Hanoi was pursuing a policy independent of Moscow, which favored negotiations, and of Peking, which opposed them. In competing for influence with Hanoi, Peking and Moscow, in effect, tended to cancel each other out.

There were widespread differences of opinion within the U.S. Government. They were generally reflected in two schools of thought. The first school, called Group A, included MACV (Military Assistance Command, Vietnam), CINCPAC (Commander in Chief, Pacific), JCS (Joint Chiefs of Staff) and the United States Embassy in Saigon. Group A took a more optimistic view of current and future prospects in Vietnam.

Group B, including OSD (Office of the Secretary of Defense) CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) and (to a lesser extent) the State Department, was decidedly more skeptical about the present

and pessimistic about the future. Within the agencies themselves in both groups there were substantial disagreements.

The basic thrust of Group A's thinking was that an overall allied momentum on various fronts had been largely responsible for Hanoi's sitting down at Paris. Group A, therefore, while not forecasting victory, urged that our negotiators proceed on the basis that the tides are favorable.

While acknowledging improvements in the allied position, Group B nevertheless was not as sanguine about South Vietnamese prospects and suggested that, while our negotiators were in a stronger position, they should seek a compromise settlement.

One of the major problems confronting the President was trying to figure what was in the mind of the enemy. Despite all the appropriations expended on intelligence, less hard information was coming out of Hanoi than he had expected. There was a lot of guesswork about the existence and significance of possible factions within the North Vietnamese leadership, much of it based on what the intelligence community described as "open sources."

These "open sources," however, did give some sort of feel about what was happening inside North Vietnam. Such sources included the observations of travelers as well as members of the foreign diplomatic community, North Vietnamese public radio broadcasts, the interrogations of prisoners of war as well as captured North Vietnamese fishermen.

Then there was a group of Spanish citizens and their dependents who returned to Spain after living for many years in

North Vietnam. Without exception, they described how the aerial bombings (called off by President Johnson the previous fall) had made life miserable for the North Vietnamese. One repatriate told of a talk he had in Hanoi with a lieutenant colonel who said, prior to the bombing halt, how difficult it would be to continue fighting because of widespread demoralization and bomb damage.

Other evidence of internal difficulties could be found in a decree published in Hanoi, the subject of which was "the punishment of counter-revolutionary crimes." Covering a wide range of activities harmful to state security and the war effort, the decree prescribed a variety of punishments ranging from a few years' imprisonment to the sentence of death. In addition, foreign travelers reported an enormous increase in black market activities as well as corruption in the ranks of low-level officials.

All these facts, coupled with personal observations, led one Ambassador to Hanoi to conclude in June 1968 that the main reason behind Hanoi's agreement to talk with the U.S. was the need for a breather because of a deteriorating economic situation. In his opinion, peace negotiations were essential to the North Vietnamese at least for a "pause of calm," if not a permanent peace settlement.

On the other hand, as the State Department observed, the North Vietnamese had confounded many predictions by managing to hold their country together and simultaneously send ever increasing amounts of supplies and personnel into the South during the three and a half years of heavy aerial bombings. According to this analysis

it was clear that the bombing campaign, as conducted, had not lived up to the expectations of its proponents. Therefore, there was little reason to believe that any new bombing would accomplish what previous bombings had failed to do, unless it was conducted with much greater intensity and readiness to defy criticism and risk of escalation.

Aware that among the agencies there was a battle for his mind, the President kept his own counsel, saying very little that would give the slightest inkling of what he intended to do about Vietnam. About the only men privy to his innermost thoughts were Bill Rogers and Henry Kissinger and even they, at this time, did not really know which way he would go.

The Secretary of State was somewhat encouraged in those early days by signals that Hanoi was getting ready for peace. For example, word had been relayed by diplomatic sources that the North Vietnamese had made contacts with such neutral states as Sweden, asking what kind of commercial agreements could be arranged once the war was over.

Meanwhile the President made a secret offer to Hanoi for a settlement which was quickly rejected by the Communist side. And his chief negotiator at the Paris talks, Henry Cabot Lodge, was not reporting any great success in getting the Communists to engage in substantive discussions, even privately, and it was Lodge's feeling that the enemy was playing for time, hoping that the American peace movement would force the President's hand with the kind of pressures, including street demonstrations, that had so terribly frustrated and embarrassed his predecessor.

Despite all this, an air of expectancy was abroad in the land. Pressures for some kind of solution were beginning to build.

Powerful newspapers like The New York Times, which had done so much to get the U.S. into Vietnam in the first place, had made a 180-degree switch and were now demanding we get out. The President knew he did not have much time.

Nor did he have much time when it came to the growing tensions of the Middle East. This was an even bigger "can of worms" than Vietnam because it was less controllable. As the President viewed the situation, the harsh but simple fact was that the all-controlling, all-consuming aim of the Arabs was to destroy Israel. But the Israelis, whose guts and patriotism the President plainly admired, refused to be pushed into the sea. They served notice that they would not only protect themselves but mete out punishment for every attack launched against them. So, when the Egyptians sank an Israeli warship, the Israelis responded by knocking out Gamel Abdel Nasser's largest oil refinery. When commandos staged hit and run raids, Israeli forces destroyed their base deep inside Jordan. And when Arab terrorists shot up an El Al plane in Athens, Israeli paratroops helicoptered to the Beirut airport where they blew up thirteen Arab aircraft. According to the Israelis, this was the only kind of language their enemies understood.

But it was a language which could conceivably involve the United States in a direct confrontation with the Soviet Union. The Russians, of course, were doing everything to heat up the

situation, pandering to Arab war fever. All that was needed, as Mr. Nixon put it, was "a single chance spark" to trigger World War III.

And he frequently recalled the history of World War I when the Great Powers had been dragged into a conflict not by the own choice but because of (in Bismarck's phrase) "some damned foolish thing in the Balkans" -- an assassination over which the Balkan nations themselves had no control.* This was one thing

* Like John F. Kennedy, Richard Nixon had been vastly impressed by Barbara Tuchman's The Guns of August, an account of the origin of World War I.

Mr. Nixon wanted to avoid in the Mideast squabble. The Russians and the Americans must seek to avoid letting the fedayeen or ^{anyone} "other crazy people" drag us into a confrontation.

So concerned was Mr. Nixon that, during the transition period, he dispatched former Governor William Scranton to meet with Israeli and Arab officials. On his return, Scranton made a comment that was to prove most embarrassing to the incoming Nixon Administration. He said that, in his opinion, the United States should exercise "a more even-handed policy" toward all countries in the Middle East. The implication, of course, was that much of the crisis stemmed from an uneven U.S. policy of the past, which favored Israel. What troubled Mr. Nixon about the remark was that it could lead the Russians and the Arabs to believe that the U.S.

under his leadership, might be considering a "hands off" policy - a belief which, in itself, could encourage Soviet "adventurism."

To assure the Israelis that American policy had not shifted against them, President-elect Nixon conferred with Defense Minister Moshe Dayan and Ambassador Yitzhak Rabin while still at the Pierre Hotel in New York. The hour-long session was a friendly one, with Mr. Nixon asserting his belief in a policy that would provide Israel with a technological military margin that would more than offset her hostile neighbors' numerical superiority. But this did not mean, Mr. Nixon emphasized, that under his guidance the U.S. would not seek to restore lines of communication with America's friends in the Arab world which had been broken off following the Six-Day War.

Once in the White House, the Nixon Administration made known its position to a bipartisan group of Congressmen who came armed with a pro-Israel statement which they said represented the sense of the majority of their colleagues. The Congressmen included Democrats Manny Celler, John Rooney, Leonard Farbstein and Republicans Jerry Ford, H.R. Gross and Seymour Halpern. First they spoke with Kissinger and then with the President.* What they were

* After this meeting, Dr. Kissinger was to deliberately absent himself from most major discussions on the Middle East. Though he kept himself fully informed, he felt that his Jewish background could conceivably make him appear a partisan.

most concerned about, the Congressmen said, was that the four-power talks sought by the President might lead to an imposed settlement that was closer to the Arab-Soviet-French line than to ours and Israel's. They insisted that the terms of any proposed settlement should include boundaries which would provide security for Israel.

The White House position was this: We would not impose a settlement on anyone. No such settlement could possibly work. But the President was interested in an agreement acceptable to all parties concerned. Meanwhile, what the Administration was trying to do was to "position" the issue so that the American people could understand it. In Vietnam we found ourselves in a situation where our involvement was explained in terms which the American people did not support. In the Middle East, if it ever came to involvement, we should be able to explain that involvement in terms of what the American people would support. For example, the U.S. could not be placed in the position of justifying intervention in order to preserve Israel's conquests. Our policy would have to be explained solely in terms of preserving peace.

Then the Congressmen moved into the Oval Office where the President greeted them as old friends, having known most of them when he himself was serving on the Hill. The President explained that his approach to a Middle East settlement was a measured one; that he had authorized exploratory talks and no more for the time being. When one Congressman spoke of Soviet objectives as "keeping the pot boiling," the President agreed, pointing out that this was

the reason why he keeps talking about relating all major issues to each other in our talks with the Soviet Union. For instance, he saw no reason why the Soviets should be able to keep the pot boiling in the Middle East and at the same time get something that it wants for itself such as a strategic arms freeze. Asked whether Israel would receive the Phantom F-4 jets she had requested, the President quickly replied that he assumed from what he had been told that preparations for delivery were proceeding on schedule. The President then asked the Congressmen not to believe everything they read in the press about U.S. policy. If they were puzzled about something they read, would they please call Dr. Kissinger? The Congressmen, saying that they were fully reassured by the President's remarks, then departed.

There were pressures from the other side, too, from those who sympathized with the Arab position. They could be found in Government circles, international business and even in the churches. They, too, had their say. In March 1969, three distinguished Protestant clergymen told the President of a recent visit to the Middle East where they had had a chance not only to talk with co-religionists but with Arab leaders. Without exception, they said, the Arabs were troubled about the U.S. position, feeling there was "very little present hope" of an equitable solution for their troubles with Israel. Nasser, for example, had phrased it to them quite succinctly: "Israel is illegal, not Egypt."

Responding, the President emphasized that he was hoping to find a position or a posture which would be attractive to both

the Israelis and their neighbors, something that the four powers including, of course, the Soviet Union, could stand behind. It was not an easy task, he went on, but the alternative -- another war -- could be catastrophe. As for Nasser, the President indicated it was a grave error to "leave him out there -- completely controlled by the Soviets."

In the final analysis, peace in the Middle East -- as elsewhere -- depended a great deal on the cooperation of the Soviet Union. Could Richard Nixon get that cooperation? The new President thought it was worth a try. All his instincts told him that behind the grim fastness of the Kremlin were men as concerned about the possibility of a nuclear war as he was. And he knew that just as he faced seemingly insoluble problems the Soviet leaders had more than their share and might be seeking a lessening of tensions with the West.

Thus, the new President started the machinery rolling for eventual talks with the Soviet Union on taking some of the heat out of the arms race. And he quickly gave a go-ahead to the Senate to ratify the treaty on non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, stating that such a move "at this time would advance this Administration's policy of negotiation rather than confrontation with the U.S.S.R." But, in his message to the Senate, he observed that while he had always supported the goal of halting the spread of nuclear weapons, he had "opposed ratification of the Treaty last fall in the immediate aftermath of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. My request at this time in no sense alters my condemnation of that Soviet action."

Facing the new President was the problem of whether to continue work on the Sentinel anti-ballistic missile system. As espoused by President Johnson and as initially approved by Congress, Sentinel was supposed to be a "thin" ABM system geared toward protection of a dozen or so major cities. The reaction to Sentinel was decidedly unfavorable. Spokesmen for several of the cities denounced the program, contending in somewhat alarmist fashion that those great metropolitan centers would be endangered by possible nuclear accidents. Congressional voices also argued vehemently that escalation of the arms race with the Soviets would result.

The opposition was building when Mr. Nixon entered the White House. Among the first things he did was to instruct Defense Secretary Laird to review the Sentinel program and to come up with "alternatives." On March 14, the President first revealed his decision to a White House gathering of the bipartisan Congressional leadership.

The President began by noting that he was on record as supporting the Sentinel program as devised by his predecessor but, now that he was in office, he had wanted to hear all the objections and possible other alternatives. He had come to the conclusion that a "modified Sentinel System" would serve the purpose. Instead of installing ABMs close to cities, he now favored protection of some of our own Minuteman intercontinental missile sites.

The President conceded that when all the arguments were put on the table, people could reach other conclusions. He would

frankly have preferred to have put off the whole problem for another year. Yet the experts he trusted most had informed him quite candidly that further delay might jeopardize the entire defense of the nation. The way things stood the U.S. would not, even with a go-ahead signal, be able to have an ABM operationally deployed until 1973. Of this he was fully convinced, and being convinced, he did his duty as President, adding: "I do not believe a President of the United States can do less; I do not believe a President of the United States can run the risk of leaving us naked" to a Soviet missile attack.

The President said he favored a modified Sentinel system because of our changed estimate of what the Russians were doing. When we see where the Soviets will be not only in 1973, but 1976 and 1977 and 1978, we feel this is the right decision. This is not 1962 when we had a five to one advantage over the Soviets in missiles. Though we are strong today, the situation has changed; not because of anything we did, but because of what the Soviets have done. In 1962, they determined to close the strategic gap and they have come very far along that road. They have widened their lead over us in conventional arms; they have developed and deployed the world's only ABM system while we have none; they have increased their submarine force in quantity and quality; and their plans for the future are very significant.

Of special concern was the Soviet development and deployment of the SS-9, a very heavy intercontinental ballistic missile which carries a warhead in the range of 20-25 megatons, far larger

than anything in the U.S. inventory. Because of its size and its accuracy, the SS-9 was regarded as a weapon designed to knock out our Minuteman ICBMs. According to the President, the SS-9 missile force, in which the Soviets had made tremendous strides, presented a major hazard to our deterrent force.

As for the argument that any kind of AEM system would provoke the Soviets, the President took pains to point out that the Russians -- apparently unconcerned about provoking the United States -- had already provided for their own AEM system which we could not overtake for several years. And that included a city defense for Moscow.

Another argument against deploying Sentinel was the fear it might prejudice the opportunity for meaningful negotiations with the Russians. To the President this was a dubious argument. He noted that it was the Russians who had asked for arms talks after the Sentinel program was announced; that the Russians themselves had dubbed the AEM "a defensive weapon"; and that the construction of more Polaris missiles -- as advocated by an anti-AEM Senator present -- would immediately be taken as a provocation by the Russians since they might believe we were thinking in terms of a first strike. The AEM has "no first strike capability" and there could be no such implications.

It was obvious that the modified Sentinel System would need a change in name and the President asked speechwriter Pat Buchanan to quickly come up with some suggestions. Leaving the

in 1969

meeting in the White House, Buchanan trotted across the street to his office in the Executive Office Building and there he came up with the following names: Watchman, Sentry, Gendarme, Shield, Custodian, Scabbard, Deterrent Sentinel, Deterrent Defense, Caretaker, Safeguard, Screen, Shelter, Safeguard Sentinel, Safeguard System.

At his noon press conference that day, the President used "Safeguard System," emphasizing "it safeguards our deterrent."

Essentially, Safeguard was a compromise between violently opposing views. But Mr. Nixon, as an old hand at the art of the possible, obviously realized that this modified "half-loaf" was all that he could expect to obtain from Congress.

For Congress was deeply divided on the issue. Needless to say, there were those legislators including members of the President's own party who were opposed to any kind of AEM for sincere reasons. But, at the same time, it could be said that the hard core of the opposition consisted of tough Democratic politicians seeking to inflict a smashing defeat on a Republican President and the AEM was the most convenient issue at hand. Otherwise how could one explain the anti-AEM position announced by Hubert Humphrey, then a private citizen dreaming of a political comeback, when not too many months before he had supported the much more complex and expensive Sentinel program proposed by Lyndon Johnson?

This was the nature of American politics and the President fully understood the necessity of the "outs" to tweak the noses of

the "ins." He had done quite a bit of it himself when the Democrats were in power. But, and this was a big but, he had rarely criticized Democratic Administrations for doing what was necessary in the area of national security.

The anti-ABM campaign did stir up quite a fury and was capably led by Senator Edward M. Kennedy, who at the time was considered the leading contender for the Democratic Presidential nomination in 1972. It seemed as if much of the liberal community had been mobilized to defeat the Safeguard program. One of the more temperate opponents, Theodore C. Sorensen of Camelot fame, had this to say in the pages of the Saturday Review:

"John F. Kennedy's hundred days of glory were ruined when he yielded to those cold warriors urging the Bay of Pigs invasion. The ABM-defense budget decision, urged upon President Nixon by much the same kind of military minds, may prove over a much longer run to have been his Bay of Pigs. If, as a result, the Soviet-American arms race is heated up again, carrying the buildup on both sides past the point where effective limitations on strategic and defensive missiles can be negotiated, Mr. Nixon's flexibility, in both foreign and domestic affairs, as well as his hopes for serious accomplishment in either, will be drastically curtailed."

Equating Safeguard with the Bay of Pigs was rather far-fetched. If anything, Mr. Nixon's decision demonstrated his independence of those who argued for a more complex ABM system. Moreover, future events even then shaping up were to more than adequately demonstrate the groundlessness of Ted Sorensen's other fears.

Safeguard was discussed thoroughly at a Cabinet meeting on March 20. The opposition was building up and the President thought it would be useful if the Cabinet members would make themselves more knowledgeable on the issue.

Secretary Laird said he was going to the Hill that very day to testify on the program and that, in the process, he would disclose information never before made public about the Soviet escalation of the arms race. He aimed to make the case that Safeguard was "a people protection program" and "one of the most important tools for peace" as well as an important part of U.S. leverage in talks with the U.S.S.R.

Then Secretary Rogers said it should be stressed that Safeguard would not have any negative effects on arms limitation talks. He thought that most well informed people now understood that point. In fact, he had come to the conclusion that "opponents are really quite disappointed that this program was presented so ably." Even Senator Edward Kennedy said he was "disarmed."

Postmaster General Blount wanted to know why we kept information on Soviet military installations classified. He felt by making such data public the U.S. might be enhancing the approach to more open societies. "Don't the Russians know what we know about them?" he asked.

It was a good question and the President asked Lee DuBridge to respond. The Science Advisor replied simply that the Soviets did not know how good U.S. intelligence was.

About the question of open societies, the President said that the Russians were not overly concerned that the Americans would

get to know too much about their military capability. What they were afraid of, he said, was that their people would develop a greater understanding of the American system.

Bill Rogers then recalled that when Nikita Khrushchev visited the United States, the Soviet Premier said during one conversation at Camp David: "We know everything you are doing in a military way and you know everything we are doing. Why don't we just agree to trade information and stop spending all this money on intelligence?"

The President laughed at the story and suggested it might not be a bad idea. The Government had to start saving money somewhere.

The President then turned again to the general outlook for public discussion of national security problems. He said that in the coming weeks Laird would be taking a strong and, at times, pessimistic position about the military situation. The purpose was not to scare anyone, but to be truthful. Previous Administrations, he implied, had not always been candid. "Secretary Laird could go up there to the Hill and be as popular as McNamara." But this Administration will not play that game. Talking straight was "the best way to get our negotiating position firmed up."

Taking a hard, realistic line will bring criticism. "The hawks won't like us and the doves won't like us." While we may sound pessimistic, the President added, there were some optimistic aspects. Progress was being made at the disarmament talks in Geneva. As for Vietnam, every diplomatic channel was being explored.

When we look back a year or so from now, said the President, we may ask and we may be asked why we were so pessimistic. But for the next four or five months we are going to have to stand up and take the criticism even though we will be making progress.

Rogers observed that every time he made the point that progress could come only through secret talks, members of the press would ask: "Are you having those secret talks and what progress is being made?"

As the President had expected, the Congressional battle over Safeguard was so tight that in the end the proposal was carried in the Senate by one vote. That was too close for comfort and there were some observers, particularly on the right, who believed the President should have argued his case more aggressively and personally. But that just wasn't the President's style.

In the words of Plutarch, "Temperance is the greatest of all the virtues." And Richard Nixon, despite his critics, is a man of temperance -- a trait nowhere better seen than in his handling of the first major crisis of his Administration.

That crisis began when the Pentagon received word at 12:55 a.m., Tuesday, April 15, that a U.S. intelligence-gathering plane was missing over the Sea of Japan.

Ten minutes later, after the news was flashed into the Situation Room -- the NSC communications center in the basement of the White House -- the duty officer immediately notified Henry Kissinger's military aide, Colonel Alexander Haig.* In turn, Haig

* The little known Haig was no stranger to crises. A West Point graduate, he had served as deputy special assistant to Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and as a military assistant to the Secretary of the Army Cyrus Vance when Vance's office was named by President Kennedy to handle a study during the Cuban missile crisis. Haig, who had spent more time in South Vietnam than any other official in the Nixon Administration, having served there as a commanding officer in the First Infantry Division, had received the Distinguished Service Medal for leading an isolated company back to friendly territory during one of the most savage battles of the war, shortly before the Tet offensive. When it later became apparent he was handling far more responsibilities than normally dealt with by White House military assistants, Haig was given the title of Deputy Assistant to the President and upgraded to Brigadier General.

telephoned Kissinger, who was asleep in his apartment overlooking Rock Creek Park.

Kissinger asked the colonel to check into the plane's mission and to keep him informed. And instead of heading for the White House to begin an all-night vigil, as his predecessors had so frequently done in past years, the Presidential adviser remained in his apartment, making himself a fresh pot of coffee. He soon learned, however, that the missing plane was an unarmed U.S. Navy EC-121 spy plane whose primary mission was to monitor North Korean military communications. The crew consisted of thirty-one men.

At 2:30 a.m., Haig called again, this time to report that a just-monitored North Korean broadcast had boasted that its MIGs had shot down the U.S. plane off its coastline.

At 4:00 a.m., after receiving confirmation of the incident, Kissinger decided to notify the President. Awakened from a deep sleep, the President listened quietly as his aide outlined the basic facts. As of that moment, the key fact was that the episode apparently was over.

The President then made his first decision in the crisis -- to wait until all the facts were in before making a reasoned decision. After telling Kissinger to meet him in his office the first thing in the morning, the President went back to sleep. He knew he would have a rough day ahead of him.

Over at the State Department, an emergency operation had already been launched, as prescribed in long-standing crisis procedures. In charge was Win Brown, a former Ambassador to South Korea and, since the Pueblo incident of the previous year, the head of a special inter-agency Korean task force. Among his first moves, after consulting with Secretary Rogers and coordinating with Kissinger, was to arrange for other nations in the area -- Japan, South Korea and the Soviet Union -- to assist in the search for the missing plane and possible survivors.

As it turned out, Soviet ships in the area made a substantial contribution to the recovery of debris. But this didn't occur until Wednesday, at least twenty-four hours after the incident.

It was shortly before 7:00 a.m. on Tuesday when Kissinger arrived at the White House and within the hour he was closeted with the President. Not much new information had come in but the President wanted Kissinger to get from the Pentagon and State a full outline of possible military and diplomatic responses. By chance an NSC meeting had previously been scheduled for the next morning. Did the President want it moved up to today? No, he replied emphatically. There would be little point to it since not all the facts were in.

How Mr. Nixon acted in the first major crisis of his Administration was in startling contrast to the way Presidents Kennedy and Johnson had responded in similar circumstances. Seasoned reporters who had lived through the Bay of Pigs, the Cuban missile confrontation, the Dominican revolution and a dozen other tension-packed situations marveled at the President's calmness in the midst of a gathering storm. During the Kennedy and Johnson years, crises of this magnitude would have involved a sleepy-eyed Chief Executive conferring with the Secretaries of State and Defense in pre-dawn meetings, the frantic comings and going of big, black limousines carrying lesser officials, and the inevitable mobile TV trucks with dozens of technicians preparing for the live Presidential statements of alarm.

Instead, President Nixon carried on as if nothing untoward had occurred. Needless to say, a larger turnout of newsmen than usual crowded into the press area, anxiously awaiting some official

word as to what had happened in the Sea of Japan and what the White House planned to do about it. Finally, when Ron Ziegler did appear, the press secretary asked with a grin, "What's everybody here for?" Briefed personally by the President, Ziegler had been instructed to say as little as possible for the time being. And as the newsmen had already learned, Ziegler was expert in carrying out the President's wishes.

By conducting himself as usual, the President deliberately low-keyed the crisis. The first official function on his agenda that day was a Cabinet meeting which, for the first time ever, included the wives. With Mrs. Nixon sitting to his right and Mrs. Laird to his left, the President jovially recalled that when he had met with his Cabinet members and their wives during the transition period he had promised that they would all get together again after the Inauguration. "And we thought this would be a good time to do it," he went on. "We had the bad news about the budget last time, and we wanted something to cheer us up today."

First to report was HEW Secretary Finch on the subject of the Administration's "First Five Years of Life" program designed to give underprivileged children a better start. The subject of a new Westinghouse study, which placed serious doubt about the effectiveness of the Head Start program for assisting culturally deprived children, was brought up. Under questioning by the President, Finch said he was not entirely satisfied with the depth of the study. A point that troubled him was the fact that the children show a

drop-off in motivation and achievement when they enter school. This could be as much an indictment of the public education system as it was of Head Start.

In the course of his response, Finch referred to another controversial study then in the news, the so-called Jensen Report, which had been widely interpreted as showing that black people are genetically inferior to whites. The study had led some analysts to conclude that special learning programs such as Head Start would never be of much value for Negro children.

Asked by the President if he would discuss that interpretation, "Pat" Moynihan said, "I'd rather not, because no sane man would." But then Moynihan had this to say: "No confident knowledge exists on genetic differences in intelligence. What is known is that IQ is not fixed at birth. What is fixed is a range. A child can develop anywhere within that range."

Scheduled to discuss the purposes of the still unannounced Council on Environmental Quality, Science Advisor Lee DuBridge began with a slight diversion. He passed around a slide, two by one-and-one-half inches in size, which he said contained the entire Bible. With the proper projector, obtainable from the National Cash Register Company, each line of type could be shown at reading size. To place this new film process in perspective, DuBridge said that the entire contents of the Library of Congress could be reduced to the space within the Cabinet Room.

During the discussion on the Environmental Quality Council, the President noted suggestions that the Administration begin

attacking pollution by working on the problem of the Potomac. "We have always heard it's a beautiful river," he said, "and as you know, it stinks."

At this point a number of press photographers and reporters were shepherded into the Cabinet Room for a photo session. After they had spent a few minutes shooting pictures, the President remarked: "It's only coincidental that we were discussing pollution when the press came into the room." When the laughter subsided, the President remarked to Ron Ziegler: "You might tell them we were discussing how to attack pollution in the Potomac. But tell them not to drink the water until we let them know."

Transportation Secretary Volpe then brought up the subject of equal opportunity responsibilities within the Executive Branch. He said that, contrary to press reports, the Nixon Administration had appointed more black people to high level positions than any previous administration. The press reports, he went on, "were erroneous. We are performing and we must let the country know that we are."

"Here's what our standard must be," the President said. "Let's do the right thing. Wherever the federal government is involved, we must be sure that we are absolutely fair and absolutely equal. But let's have no illusion about the reaction to our efforts. The professional protestors -- and the press as well -- will never be satisfied. The protestors need this issue and so they will do everything they can to keep it alive. For the press, progress is not news. Trouble is news. They don't win Pulitzer prizes for



being for something. So don't get too excited when you read criticism in the papers. We have to do the right thing and then be strong enough and decent enough to take the criticism and not be bitter about it. You have to learn to laugh it off."

~~Then Mr. Nixon turned to his communications director, Herb Klein, a newspaper editor in private life, and asked: "Herb, do you want to defend the newsmen a little?" Replied Klein: "I don't think I'm in the proper environment."~~

~~Next to speak was Budget Director Mayo who pointed out that the item on the typewritten agenda listed his subject as "The Budget's Roll in Controlling Inflation." This wasn't necessarily a mistake, Mayo said, because he looked up the definition of "roll" in the dictionary and found it meant: "to press, spread or level; make smooth, even, or compact." And so he thought the word had been used properly.~~

~~Just that week the President had announced a prospective budget surplus of \$5.8 billion for the coming year and as he now explained: "The point I hope all of us could make is that in this budget the Administration faced up to the necessity of stopping inflation. In fact, there was no choice. Unless we cut the budget the cost of living could rise five or even six or seven percent this year. We have to try to develop an anti-inflation psychology. Cautiously optimistic, the President looked to "two most important possibilities" in the following year: growth in the economy and progress toward peace in Vietnam.~~

On the latter possibility, Mr. Nixon spoke particularly to the wives, saying it will be necessary for them to simply have confidence in his efforts to wind down the war. He could say very little about those efforts, but there was a very substantial chance for progress. "Nothing has a higher priority than bringing the war to a close," he went on. "We hope this is an area of policy that we will be proud of next year."

As the Cabinet meeting was about to end, Herb Klein suggested that since the ladies would probably be questioned by the press about what had taken place it might be a good idea if they agreed on the general pattern of their statements.

The President disagreed. He could see no reason why the ladies could not discuss with the press the subjects that were covered. With a smile, he said, "Talk as much as you want." And the session ended with a chorus from the ladies of, "Welllll---"

The significant thing about the Cabinet session, which lasted from 10:47 a.m. until 12:40 p.m., was that not once was there any mention of the fact that the nation faced a serious crisis as a result of the shooting down of an American plane over the Sea of Japan.

Following the meeting, the President conferred briefly with Bill Rogers and Henry Kissinger. There was still nothing definite about the fate of those aboard the EC-121. The shadow of the Pueblo incident, in which eighty-one American hostages held captive were forced to "confess" violation of Korean waters, was

on everyone's mind. Obviously, survivors could change the whole picture of what would be a proper response.

In view of the limited facts available, the President deliberately maintained a posture of coolness in the face of the crisis which was making big headlines around the world. He released a statement praising the life insurance industry's pledge to provide a second billion dollars in investment capital for urban core areas. And he met on the South Lawn with a group of youngsters from Brooklyn and actress Eva Gabor. Meanwhile, the White House was overrun by Republican ladies from all over the country. They were in town for the seventeenth annual Republican Women's Conference and, according to the President, "there were 4,762 women who consumed 24,500 cookies, 235 gallons of punch, and came over in forty-four buses."

The President made that statistical evaluation at a meeting of several thousand of the ladies at the Sheraton Park Hotel the following night. Earlier he had saluted the League of Women Voters on its fiftieth anniversary, forecasting the election of a woman as President "in the next fifty years -- maybe sooner than you think." And he also found time in that crisis-laden week to stroll with Mrs. Nixon under Washington's pink and white cherry blossoms. It was their first stroll there together since 1947.

~~But there was a lot of action behind the scenes.~~

At 2:00 p.m. Tuesday, the Korean task force headed by Win Brown met at the State Department to begin preparation of a list of options for possible action. ~~Besides Brown, the force~~

~~consisted of his assistant, James Leonard; G. Warren Nutter, newly appointed Assistant Defense Secretary for International Security Affairs; Richard L. Sneider, an East Asian expert from the Kissinger staff; and Richard F. Pederson, Counselor to the State Department. The Pentagon, meanwhile, was preparing its own proposals.~~

At 6:00 p.m. came the next step in the President's new lineup of emergency procedures -- a White House meeting of the National Security Council Review Group headed by Kissinger. Purpose of the meeting was to go over all the proposed options, analyzing them thoroughly one by one for transmittal to the NSC the following morning. The Review group concluded its deliberations nine hours later, at 3:00 a.m. The participants were exhausted. Win Brown, who had been up for twenty-four hours, "looked like walking death," in the words of a colleague.

The President, meanwhile, had retired. He had spent a long evening working on other matters. But he had been kept informed about all developments including the rumblings of discontent up on the Hill over this latest act of Communist piracy, already being described as the "flying Pueblo."

Well in advance of the 10:00 a.m. NSC meeting, each Council member had received a document containing the options open to the President in confronting the Korean challenge. With the finding of shrapnel-marked debris, the range of options had been narrowed. Two bodies had been fished out of the water and the evidence now indicated there were no survivors.

Not lost on the NSC or, for that matter, the President was the fact that Russian destroyers had assisted in the search for the plane which had been shot out of the skies by Soviet-supplied aircraft. The Soviets thus let it be known they had had no part in the episode.

The President, who presided over the meeting in the Cabinet Room, listened attentively as the pros and cons of each possible course of action were debated. The alternatives ranged across the board from proposals to do nothing at all to retaliatory non-nuclear attacks on major North Korean industrial and military facilities.

After exactly sixty-one minutes, the President concluded the meeting. Which was unusual, for such sessions generally last longer. But it was apparent that this one was deliberately kept short so that the nation and the world would appreciate the collective calm with which the Nixon Administration was confronting its first major crisis.

However, later that day, the President met privately with Kissinger, Laird, Rogers and General Earle Wheeler of the Joint Chiefs. And it was obvious the President had not made up his mind. He still wasn't satisfied with the proposed responses. He now called for another contingency planning group to prepare two highly detailed "scenarios" of both a military and non-military response. The group, consisting of Kissinger and officials from State, Defense, CIA and Joint Chiefs, began work immediately.

It happened that the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) was meeting in Washington and that afternoon Bill Rogers was scheduled to put in an appearance. The Secretary of State, genial as always and seemingly more relaxed than usual, was to discuss the first ninety days of the Nixon Administration.

But on the minds of the nation's top editors was the question of what the President intended to do about the "flying Pueblo."

All Rogers would say was that the President would reply to questions about the episode at his press conference on Friday, two days hence. But he did give a hint about Administration thinking in his remarks: "One lesson is quite clear. Great power does not mean great freedom of action and decision. On the contrary, it often means very narrow choices of action, and what we can do to influence events in a given case may well be marginal."

That pretty much summed up the President's thinking. Above all else, the President was deliberately seeking to avoid the enormous mistakes made by his predecessor in dealing with the Pueblo crisis of over a year before. When the U.S. intelligence ship and its crew of eighty-three were seized by the North Koreans, President Johnson immediately ordered the nuclear aircraft carrier Enterprise and two destroyers to steam towards the Korean coast. Then he rushed interceptors and fighter-bombers to South Korea. Within two days, he had ordered up nearly 15,000 Air Force and naval air reservists for possible duty against North Korea. After

six emotion packed war-or-peace days, Mr. Johnson, in a televised report to the nation, warned the North Koreans that seizure of the Pueblo "cannot be accepted" and the United States was mobilizing its military forces "for any contingency."

It was all a gigantic bluff. The U.S., pinned down with over half-a-million men in South Vietnam, was powerless to act. Instead the crisis was taken to the United Nations where it was quickly buried. Eleven months later and only after an abject double-talking apology from the U.S. did the North Koreans release the Pueblo's crew. The release was announced the day Julie Nixon married Dwight David Eisenhower. I happened to be standing close to the President-elect when he made the announcement at the wedding reception at the Plaza Hotel. It was obvious that Mr. Nixon was pleased that at least one thorny problem had been resolved prior to his Inauguration.

During the 1968 campaign Richard Nixon had scored points by saying it was time for new leadership in Washington when a "fourth-rate military power" could get away with seizing a U.S. ship on the high seas. Now these remarks were being dredged up and at least one newspaper, the usually friendly Chicago Tribune, demanded to know whether they were just "campaign oratory." But, actually, Mr. Nixon had always carefully refrained from recommending military action. Moreover, there was a major difference between the two episodes. In the case of the "flying Pueblo" there had been no survivors and, therefore, no hostages in North Korean hands.

Not once did Mr. Nixon give the slightest clue as to what course of action he intended to pursue. As a consequence, statements were being prepared to cover all contingencies. One, in fact, would have been an announcement that the President had authorized the bombing of military and industrial installations in North Korea. But it was never used.

Actually, from the beginning the President had pretty much ruled out military action. Bombing the daylights out of enemy targets could well have made him momentarily popular. But the risk involved was not worth taking. North Korea was ruled by real thugs who, for the sake of "face-saving," could well have sent their armies into South Korea. This of course would have triggered another land war at a time when one war in Asia was more than enough for the U.S. to handle. Also there was always the somber possibility of a confrontation with China and/or Russia.

The President, however, did not come to a final decision until Thursday night after he had poured over the two "scenarios" which had been prepared for him on the possible results of both a military and non-military response. Then, in the privacy of the Lincoln Study on the second floor of the White House, he began to study a briefing book prepared by Pat Buchanan on other possible questions that might be asked of him at the next morning's press conference.

The first question ^{at a press conf} as expected was about the Korean crisis. Asked by Frank Cormier of the Associated Press, it was to the point

what further action, diplomatic and military, was the President contemplating?

First the President went into the background. He stressed that the unarmed EC-121 was on a normal reconnaissance mission that never took it nearer than forty miles to North Korea and the North Koreans knew all this from their radar. "Therefore, this attack was unprovoked. It was deliberate. It was without warning." And he noted that a protest had been filed at Panmunjom, without response.

Disclosing that the intelligence-gathering flights had been discontinued right after the incident, Nixon added: "I have today ordered that these flights be continued. They will be protected. This is not a threat; it is simply a statement of fact."

Actually the President knew that he had little real alternative. But even such critics as Hubert Humphrey conceded he had "kept his cool" in a very difficult situation. And The New York Times which rarely had a good word for the new Administration, editorially complimented the President for giving "a reasonable and responsible answer to the shameful North Korean attack....His low-key but persuasive statement of the American case is welcome as evidence of a new sobriety in the management of world affairs..."

In less than a week the case of the "flying Pueblo" was forgotten.

But the President knew that the plane episode could be the first of many. And he knew his critics and political antagonists were waiting to see how he would perform in future crises, domestic

and foreign. That performance would determine whether he could make good on his confident prediction that his record in the coming years would win him reelection in 1972.

CHAPTER 5

Slowly, cautiously, and very methodically, the shape of the Nixon Administration began to emerge. In many ways, it brought back memories of the eight years of Dwight David Eisenhower, who believed firmly that a Chief Executive should reserve himself almost entirely for basic problems, eschewing whenever possible the minute-to-minute involvement with the excitement, emotionalism and drama that invariably accompany momentous Presidential decisions.

Richard Nixon will concede that a lot of Eisenhower has rubbed off on him. There is a formality about him quite similar to the late General. At the same time, his style has very little in common with that of his predecessor, of whom it had been said that he could work at a desk right in the middle of Grand Central Station. Unlike Lyndon Johnson, Mr. Nixon does not involve himself in everything, day and night and around the clock. For that purpose he deliberately developed a tightly organized staff headed by H.R. "Bob" Haldeman whose chief aim is to keep the President from getting immersed in anything other than the big problems.

But there the resemblance with General Eisenhower ends. For, unlike Ike, Richard Nixon clearly believes in the exercise of Presidential power -- as his first three years in office copiously illustrates. There were several occasions when, as Ike's Vice President, Richard Nixon had urged upon the President a more activist role in certain areas -- only to be overruled. Whatever differences developed between the two men were kept behind the scenes and the

public rarely learned of them. However, there were one or two times during the first Eisenhower Administration when Nixon did seriously consider returning to private life. But the misunderstandings were cleared up and, towards the end of his second term, the General happily looked forward to the possibility of being succeeded by his protégé.

But that was not to be and in the eight years that followed the two men kept in close touch. But then in May 1968 General Eisenhower was struck down by still another heart attack and was taken to Walter Reed Army Hospital. The General's remarkable vigor kept him alive through the Republican convention and the election. And, needless to say, he was overjoyed by the outcome. He was just as pleased to learn that his grandson, David, the apple of his eye, intended to marry Julie Nixon. Unable to leave the hospital, the old soldier viewed the wedding ceremony on a private television circuit, his wife Mamie by his side.

After taking office, President Nixon occasionally dropped in to visit with the General, who cheerfully asked about the progress of the new Administration. At one Cabinet meeting, the President asked the Secretaries to go out and call on him. And most of them did. But then in the last week of March 1969 the old soldier's heart progressively weakened. The President was informed and he immediately drove out to Walter Reed.

The next morning Mr. Nixon told visitors that he had found the General heavily sedated and surrounded by intravenous and oxygen tubes. Despite his being in semi-conscious condition, the General

grinned broadly and said, "Oh, Dick, how are you? Good to see you! How's the Administration going?"

"We're going to do all right, the President replied.

"You bet we are," the General said, slumping back into unconsciousness.

That was the last time the President ever talked to the General. The following day, Dwight David Eisenhower died at the age of 78. And two days later the President delivered the eulogy in the Rotunda of the Capitol where the 34th President of the United States lay in state. It was a heartfelt tribute which he had written ~~himself~~ in the privacy of Camp David.

In Richard Nixon's view, the Eisenhower years were years of comparative tranquility. He kept us out of war and "he restored calm to a divided nation. He gave Americans a new measure of self-respect. He made Americans proud of their President, proud of their country, proud of themselves...."

They had indeed been good years. A lot of what had been taken as clumsy bumbling on Ike's part was, in retrospect, neither clumsy nor bumbling. "He knew when not to do something," commented Professor Harvey Wheeler, of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions. One thing he knew not to do was to get this country involved in a land war in Asia.

Shortly before Eisenhower died, the first large-scale demonstration against the war in Vietnam since Mr. Nixon became President was staged outside the White House as several thousand women, many wearing black clothes and waving black balloons, urged the President to end the "immoral war" and "bring the boys home."

Oh, wouldn't the President have loved to do that. No doubt if he had announced a complete withdrawal of our forces from Vietnam his popularity would have soared -- until the consequences had become manifest. Among other things, he was convinced, a precipitous withdrawal would mean the fall of South Vietnam and a "blood bath" of gigantic proportions as the Communists went about liquidating their opponents. And he wondered how Americans would react to that sort of spectacle, particularly after thirty thousand American lives had been expended to prevent a Communist takeover. Of one thing he was convinced: a rightwing backlash would result which would make the who-lost-China debate of two decades ago resemble a tea party.

Meanwhile, the names of those thirty thousand war dead had been entered into the Congressional Record by a Republican Congressman from Illinois, Paul Findley, who observed that the honor roll "presents the precise width, breadth and depth of the war Mr. Nixon has inherited."

The President did not have to be reminded of the tragic costs of war. Every time he signed a letter to the wife or parents of a dead soldier he was made aware of American boys dying in an unpopular war. And he was reminded every time he presented a posthumous Medal of Honor to the bereaved families of servicemen who had died heroic deaths. These were ceremonies he could easily have foregone. In the past such posthumous presentations were usually the lot of some assistant Secretary at the Pentagon.

When his military aide, Don Hughes, pointed this out, the President agreed that those who had given loved ones to their

country were fully as deserving of a Presidential ceremony as those who had earned the Medal and lived. His first presentation was to Mr. and Mrs. Joseph L. Newlin of Wellsville, Ohio, whose Marine Corps son, Melvin, had been mortally wounded two years before while holding off an entire Vietcong unit. During the ceremony, Mrs. Newlin began to sob uncontrollably and the President took her in his arms to comfort her. The President found it difficult to keep his composure as he signalled for the lights to be turned off, thus stopping the picture taking.

"Only a few people knew the anguish the President felt at that moment," says his secretary Rose Mary Woods. From then on the President ordered that the ceremonies be held in private.

One of the byproducts of Vietnam was the unrest that gripped the nation's campuses. Richard Nixon could sympathize with the feeling of frustration that afflicted many young people when it came to the war. Prior to World War II, he himself had entertained pacifist ideas which perhaps was only natural considering his Quaker heritage. And the President can still remember the keep-America-out-of-war movements which swept the campuses of his day until the Japanese struck at Pearl Harbor.

The big difference was that the so-called peace movement of more recent years has been accompanied by a mounting wave of lawlessness which threatened the very stability of America's colleges and universities, the training grounds of the nation's future leaders. At times it did appear as if an entire generation was in danger of running amok.

From the beginning, the President was under great pressure "to do something" about campus violence and vandalism. But with his customary caution he decided to handle the youth mess he had inherited in gingerly fashion. On February 22, 1969, he sent a letter to the Reverend Theodore M. Hesburgh, President of the University of Notre Dame, praising his efforts to thwart a handful of radicals from closing down that venerable institution. And then he conferred with numerous experts. Among the more knowledgeable on the subject was S.I. Hayakawa, President of San Francisco State College, who had almost singlehandedly saved that school from destruction at the hands of black militants and white radicals. And one way he did it was by keeping the groups divided.

The President listened intently as Hayakawa expounded some of his theories. For one thing, he said there were many faculty members and teaching assistants who were themselves alienated or semi-alienated from society and who therefore graded their students on the basis of how strongly they expressed their alienation. Another point that interested the President was Hayakawa's contention that many faculty members and to a lesser degree, administrators, were reluctant to suspend or dismiss unruly students because that would make them likely to be drafted. In turn, this was viewed as being tantamount to a death sentence since the draftee in all likelihood would be sent to Vietnam. This kind of thinking, said Hayakawa, was very prevalent on the campus and was a major reason for the prevalent reluctance to take positive action against student trouble-makers.

In the final analysis, Hayakawa emphasized that the lawless challenge must be confronted by the university and college administrators themselves rather than by Government agencies. However, this did not preclude moral support from the outside.

The next day, March 18, 1969, the President met with six top officials to discuss the problem of campus disorders. They were Attorney General Mitchell, Secretary Finch, Pat Moynihan, Ray Price, John Ehrlichman and Charles B. (Bud) Wilkinson of football fame.

~~Eloquent as usual~~ was Moynihan ~~who~~ argued that the universities, as liberal bastions, must be defended from leftwing totalitarians whom he described as "Fascists." No one disputed that premise, but the question was how. The Attorney General, for example, pointed out that while persons who cross state lines to incite riots could be prosecuted under the 1968 civil rights act, it was extremely difficult to prove intent and gain convictions under this piece of legislation.

Citing Hayakawa, the President said it was essential to firm up the backbones of administrators of institutions of higher learning. It was agreed that Secretary Finch would write a letter to the presidents of all colleges and universities calling their attention to legislation which provided for the withdrawal of various forms of federal support to students found guilty of violating criminal statutes in connection with campus disputes.

Then the President said he would follow up with his own statement, one that was not opposed to dissent as such but rather to

its expression in the form of mindless lawlessness. In his statement, the President intended to emphasize that basically it was up to the schools themselves to keep the peace on the campuses.

Four days later, the President did issue a statement in which he warned that intellectual freedom was in danger in America. "Violence -- physical violence, physical intimidation -- is seeming on its way to becoming an accepted or, at all events, a normal and to be avoided element in the clash of opinion within university confines. Increasingly it is clear that this violence is directed to a clearly perceived and altogether too conceivable objective: not only to politicize the student bodies of our educational institutions but to politicize the institutions as well. Anyone with the least understanding of the history of freedom will know that this has invariably meant not only political disaster to those nations that have submitted to such forces of obfuscation and repression, but cultural calamity as well. It is not too strong a statement to declare that this is the way civilizations begin to die."

But it was up to the educational communities themselves to clean up the problem, the President added, for the federal Government could not and should not intrude into educational processes.

The problem of disaffected youth continued to trouble the President. It came up in a private discussion which he had with Senator Eugene McCarthy, who had done so well attracting young people to his banner as a "peace" candidate for the Democratic Presidential nomination the previous year. McCarthy and Nixon had known each other for many years and, despite obvious political differences, the

respected each other.* In fact, as President-elect, Mr. Nixon had

* There may have been another bond between them. Both Nixon and McCarthy over the years had run afoul of the ambitions of the Kennedy dynasty. McCarthy, himself, never made any secret of his anti-Kennedy sentiments. Prior to his meeting with the President, he had supported Russell Long against Ted Kennedy for the bitterly contested post of Senate Whip. And at this moment in history, the President believed that Kennedy would most likely be his 1972 opponent.

unsuccessfully sought to enlist the Minnesota legislator in his new Administration as the U.S. Representative to the United Nations.

The discussion between the two men was informal and relaxed. The President remarked on the "magnificent job" that Jacqueline Kennedy had done with the Rose Garden and he took the Senator outside to gaze upon it. McCarthy agreed it was most lovely. Then they returned to the Oval Room where the President briefed the Senator on the status of the Paris talks, his efforts to bring peace to Vietnam and the Korean crisis. The conversation then moved to the subject of student unrest and the Senator suggested the need for closer relations between faculty and students in running universities. The Senator also expressed concern over the apparent negativism of student attitudes. But he appeared hesitant about giving the President any advice.

Previously the President had met with a West European leader and again the subject of rebellious youth was discussed. The President observed it was a worldwide problem, recalling that Italian leaders had mentioned the possibility of youth-led riots in their country on the occasion of NATO's twentieth anniversary meeting later in the month. Obviously there was a serious disillusionment with the policies and organizations which have worked so successfully since the end of World War II. Part of the feeling, the President thought, derived from the young peoples' belief that there no longer was any serious threat from the East.

The European leader noted that even his small country, one that was comparatively peaceful, had been having its problems with young people. He told of his own recent experience in addressing some fifteen hundred university students. The authorities had taken the precaution of pointing out an escape door through which he could make a hasty exit if things got rough. But he did manage to get his say. For example, he had asked the students, most of whose education expenses were paid for by the state, to explain why they were demanding a greater political role than other young people who were either serving in their nation's armed forces or were gainfully employed as civilians. Then he told them that, despite all the incredible means of communication available to them, they obviously knew less and less about what was really happening. In this regard, he told the President that television programming in his country lacked objectivity and was playing a role in stirring up the student.

Also causing great concern were propaganda campaigns directed from the East. In fact, there was hard evidence that the Communist Chinese were subsidizing leftwing activities.

The role of the intellectuals in all this came up for examination. The President observed that the worst arrogance was the arrogance of some intellectuals. Generally elitist, they believe that only they know what's best for humanity. Although they claim to be liberal, they're generally intolerant of other points of view. As far as the President could determine, their views and reactions are of a kneejerk variety and are rarely the product of real thinking. Unfortunately this type of negative intellectual has had a pernicious effect on young people. The irony is that these so-called intellectuals themselves have become horrified by what they helped create, for the youth, whom they have so decidedly influenced, have been turning on them as well, as witness recent events on the campuses. It all goes back to pride and arrogance, the most grievous of the seven deadly sins.

The President then cited the case of a leading American newspaper which prides itself on publishing only news that's fit to print. Though it has a great reputation around the world, the fact is that it has been wrong in its editorial policy towards most of the major world issues of the past generation, beginning with its vehement criticism of the late Winston Churchill for his opposition to the Munich Pact. One exception was its support of NATO. The problem here is that the people who decide on the paper's editorial policy are intellectuals who are insufficiently concerned with the realities of the issues on which they so freely express their opinions

The European leader agreed with the President's remarks and quoted an old French proverb: "Les gens qui pensent sont la perte d'un pays." (Or freely translated: "Intellectuals are the ruination of a country.")

Laughing, the President said he wouldn't go that far. He pointed out there were quite a number of intellectuals in his Administration.

One of those intellectuals -- unmistakably and unabashedly -- was Henry A. Kissinger who by now had moved from an initial skepticism to a genuine respect for his new boss. And without trying to seem like a sycophant, Kissinger was so advising his many friends in the academic community to whom, at the very best, the President was an enigma.

~~Seeking to demonstrate how things really were at the~~ White House -- and not as variously imagined in the pages of the Nation or New York Review of Books -- Kissinger invited some forty academicians to a day of conferences with his NSC staff. As the pièce de résistance, he brought in the President himself for a brief speech.

The President was in fine form. He made it clear from the outset that he did not expect the academicians to endorse his policies. Neither were they going to be used as a sounding board. Rather they had been invited to the White House as a source of new approaches and new perspectives. He had high hopes that "by tradin and testing your thoughts and opinions with those of our own NSC staff you can help us come up with decisions..." As for the NSC

staff, the President thought that the academicians would be "surprised to see how many different views are held on the various issues...Normally decision makers are given only two options by their staff members -- a recommended course of action and an alternate plan. But Henry's memoranda to me always lay out four or five options."

The President concluded with what he termed "a humorous item -- at least I thought it was humorous." It happened at a reception for NATO Ministers the other night. "The point was made by someone that many of the world's best known statesmen are 'look-alikes.' For instance, someone said that Anthony Eden looked much like Dean Acheson. Then Henri Spaak said he was always told that he talked like Charles Boyer and looked like Winston Churchill, but that he would have much preferred to look like Charles Boyer and to be able to talk like Churchill. Of course, my 'look-alike' has always been Andrei Gromyko and I have often thought if we could only change places perhaps most of the world's problems would be solved overnight."

Meanwhile, seven campus leaders, who had vowed to refuse military induction as long as "the immoral and unjust" war in Vietnam continued, asked for a meeting with the President. The President decided they should talk with Dr. Kissinger and White House special counsel John Ehrlichman.

The meeting, which lasted ninety minutes, took place April 29, 1969 in the Situation Room. The room was unlike what

the students had imagined. Popular imagination as fed by Hollywood had pictured it as consisting of a Strangelovian complex of gadgets. Instead the room was fairly nondescript, containing Teletype machines connecting with the Pentagon, various clocks giving the different times around the world, a large globe which was more picturesque than utilitarian and a table around which they were seated.

Kissinger, talking like the professor he recently was, pointed out that the Nixon Administration had inherited a war from which it was seeking to disengage in an "honorable" fashion. With over 550,000 Americans serving in Vietnam, it would be immoral to withdraw precipitously. But unlike the Johnson days, when the talk was of winning the war, the Nixon Administration "is talking about achieving peace." And added Kissinger: "There will be some things over the next six months which will indicate we are not following the Johnson policy."

One of the students put it bluntly: "We can't believe what you say. The Johnson Administration used up all the government's credibility."

At one point, Kissinger observed: "Society is not healthy when a group of idealists come to say to the nation's policymakers what you have said today."

Pleading for patience, Ehrlichman noted that the Nixon Administration, which had been in office less than four months, was seeking to solve a problem which had begun twenty years ago.

The students said they had run out of patience. They predicted that campus unrest would once again begin to focus on

Vietnam. And later a full report of the meeting was presented to the President.

Earlier in the day, in a twenty-minute impromptu speech to a meeting of the United States Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Nixon had drawn frequent applause as he upheld what he called the principle of responsible, creative dissent while denouncing those who went beyond dissent to disruption.

"When we find situations in numbers of colleges and universities," he said, "which reach the point where students in the name of dissent and in the name of change, terrorize other students and faculty members, when they rifle files, when they engage in violence, when they carry guns and knives in the classrooms, then I say it is time for the faculties, boards of trustees and school administrators to have the backbone to stand up against this kind of situation."

His remarks, though consistent with his statement of March 22, were sharper in tone, obviously reflecting the rapid rise in the number of college demonstrations that had occurred in the interim.

On May 1, Attorney General Mitchell picked up the President's theme in a Law Day speech in Detroit. Emphasizing that the federal criminal jurisdiction was quite limited, he demanded action by university officials, local law enforcement agencies and the courts to put an end to "minority tyranny on the nation's campuses."

Whereupon the annual convention of the American Association of University Professors adopted a resolution condemning the Nixon

Administration's policy on campus violence as "a direct threat to academic freedom and autonomy."

The President told a visitor that the professorial statement was predictable. And he called attention to recent articles that pointed up the fact that faculties generally had defaulted in their responsibility to defend academic freedom.

One of the articles, published in the Wall Street Journal was by J.C. Helms, a Harvard graduate student and teaching fellow in the classics department. "The problem at Harvard," he wrote, "is not the SDS (Students for a Democratic Society). The problem is not the use of police, nor is it the student strike. The problem is the Harvard faculty: its leniency, its blindness, and its cowardice."

Then there was the Saturday Review article by Sidney Hook of New York University which the President found so enlightening that he ordered it reproduced and circulated to key members of his staff. Professor Hook, whose credentials as a liberal were impeccable, made the point that the SDS could not be considered a Trojan horse in higher education for the obvious reason that it never concealed its desire to destroy American democracy through force and violence. "No," wrote Hook, "the Trojan horse...is the rickety structure of doctrinaire thought that shelters the SDS even when it takes official responsibility for violent actions, gives it a free field for operation, retreats before the politics of confrontation, and either shrinks from applying fairly and firmly the rules of reason that should bind the academic community,

or interprets them as if they had no more restraining force in times of crisis than ropes of sand."

Administration statements notwithstanding, the nation's campuses continued to seethe in turmoil. At Harvard, SDSers seized University Hall and battled the police summoned to expel them. At Dartmouth, rebels began a sit-in at the administration building with a demand that the ROTC unit be abolished. City College of New York was shut down because of disorders by Negro and Puerto Rican students; and Brooklyn College was disrupted by fires and vandalism. But, probably the most shocking episode occurred at Cornell, where black students armed with rifles, shotguns and bandoliers, seized control of a student union building. Photographs of these self-styled revolutionaries sent shock waves of angry reaction across the country.

"America Under Siege" was the title of an editorial published by The Richmond News Leader. "A new and sinister barbarism, not unlike that which has brought down other civilizations" was the way this leading Virginia newspaper described the violence gripping educational institutions. "Since college administrators have generally proved themselves to be pitifully incapable of dealing with the rising menace, the American people must look to their Government for suppression of this revolution and a restoration of law and order. President Nixon is now summoned to exercise his authority and his leadership in putting down the gravest peril to confront the country since 1860; he alone can provide for the nation's security and survival."

These tough words, and others like them, were brought to the President's attention by the Daily News Summary prepared under the direction of Pat Buchanan.irate demands for action were being voiced in the Congress, too. His own Administration was divided on how to handle the campus situation.

President Nixon knew that things would get worse before they got better. But he also believed that what the revolutionaries wanted most was for the Government to crack down in more repressive fashion, thus proving their thesis that underneath its democratic veneer the U.S. was basically a fascist society. The President did not intend to play into the hands of the radicals. For it was his contention that the majority of American students opposed the violence and vandalism perpetrated by a tiny minority. In the long run, he believed, the good sense of most students and, hopefully, increasing numbers of faculty members would gain the upperhand.

Much more troubling to the President was the state of race relations. Despite all the years of legislative programs designed to assist minority people in moving up the ladder, there was more evident discontent than ever in black communities. The assassination of Martin Luther King in the Spring of 1968 had touched off bloody riots across the nation. The nation's capital, itself, had come under siege as angry blacks pillaged and plundered within sight of the White House. To Richard Nixon, as to most Americans, it had been a "frightening spectacle."

Less than ten percent of the Negro vote went to Mr. Nixon in 1968, about half of what he received eight years earlier running against John F. Kennedy. He wasn't disappointed because, in fact, he hadn't expected to do better. He was aware of the deep feeling of distrust towards him within the black community. The word was widespread that he was anti-Negro. Which, of course, was nonsense. All through his years in Congress and the Vice Presidency, he had fought hard for civil rights. In 1957, it was his key ruling as Vice President which paved the way for passage of the Civil Rights Act. Ironically, it was Jack Kennedy who voted with the South on this issue.

And for seven years as Vice President, Mr. Nixon headed the Committee on Government Contracts which aimed at ending discrimination in the hiring practices of companies doing business with the Government. That he did a "very good job" was even conceded by one of his arch foes, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, in her column of August 11, 1960.

Following the Nixon victory in 1968, Negro leaders wondered how the new President would handle racial issues. One hint came from Bob Finch in an interview some weeks before the Inauguration. He said that because no political debts were owed to the "black establishment" -- which invariably supports Democrats -- the new Administration hoped to bring "a new kind of candor and realism" to the drive for racial equality. He added that practical programs would be designed to give both black and white youths "the same chance at the starting line" and that guaranteeing Negroes equal

opportunities with whites was "chiefly a matter of education." Militants would have very little influence. "I find," said Finch, "that many of these so-called militants have a very narrow constituency. I hope that our programs can be geared to the responsible members of these minority communities."

Shortly after this interview and a week before the Inauguration, Mr. Nixon invited six black leaders to meet with him at the Pierre. They included Reverend Ralph Abernathy, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC); John H. Johnson, publisher of Ebony; John Murphy, publisher of the Afro-American; Reverend Sandy Ray, Vice President of the National Baptist Convention; Hobson Reynolds, black Elks Grand Exalted Ruler and Dr. Nathan Wright, Chairman of the Black Power Conference. The meeting went well. Mr. Nixon said he hoped to establish communication between the incoming Administration and black Americans. He said he was seeking advice from black leaders to give him "direct advice and criticism" in affairs that affect black citizens. And declaring he wanted to put qualified blacks in responsible positions serving the needs of all Americans, he hinted at meaningful appointments.

What he didn't tell them was that he was finding it difficult to interest Negroes of stature and ability in Cabinet positions. Among those who rejected his offers were Whitney Young Jr., executive director of the National Urban League, and Senator Edward Brooke of Massachusetts.

Nixon scouts didn't have too much luck hunting for black officials at the sub-Cabinet level. In several instances, they were rebuffed by people who frankly turned down important posts because they said they did not want to be labeled "Uncle Tom" by other, more militant blacks.

The President's first breakthrough to a nationally known black leader came when James Farmer agreed to join HEW as an Assistant Secretary for Administration. Farmer, former national director of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), said there was "a great need for some people to get on the inside and try to have some influence."

The top Negro on the White House staff itself is Robert J. Brown, whose office is across the hall from Mr. Nixon's hideaway quarters in the Executive Office Building. A former public relations man from High Point, North Carolina, Brown's bailiwick is minority problems with emphasis on "black capitalism." Formerly a member of the board of directors of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Brown traveled with the late Martin Luther King raising money for the cause. He, himself, was twice arrested in High Point for "sitting in" in restaurants which refused to serve black people. Eventually the charges were dropped. The irony is that a year after his second arrest, the High Point Junior Chamber of Commerce named him "outstanding young man of the year."

As ^{Special} Assistant to the President, Brown serves as liaison between Mr. Nixon and Negro leaders. He helped arrange the sessio

at the Pierre and on February 7, 1969 he set up a meeting between the President and Roy Wilkins, president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. As a Congressman, Mr. Nixon had contributed to the NAACP -- a fact which Southern Democrats had used against him during the 1960 campaign. And the President had known Roy Wilkins, an indefatigable lobbyist for his people, for nearly two decades.

A wide range of racial subjects was discussed, including the need to include more black people in high-level Government positions. Wilkins made clear his disapproval of HEW's decision to grant five southern school districts an additional sixty days to present acceptable desegregation guide lines. He feared it might represent an Administration concession to Southern pressures. But Wilkins did approve of the President's press conference statement of the day before on "freedom of choice" plans. The President had stated that such plans would not be satisfactory if they tend to perpetuate segregation in the schools.

The President, who had just talked to Mrs. Martin Luther King about a Memorial Park for her late husband in Atlanta, wanted to know Wilkins' feeling about it. The NAACP leader said it would be very well received in the Negro community.

Talking to reporters after the hour-long meeting, Wilkins said he was "gratified by the President's grasp of individual problems and of the urgency of the crisis situation. He is determined to be President of all of the people which means black as well as white. He intends to address himself to all of the problems."

Wilkins also had been impressed by the President's forthright response at his news conference to a question regarding the distrust toward him felt by black Americans. Mr. Nixon could easily have passed it off as a political slur. But he met it head-on by acknowledging the distrust was real and disturbing to him, adding that "those who have raised this question are not simply those who are political opponents. My Task Force on Education pointed up that I was not considered -- I think the words they used -- as a friend by many of our black citizens in America."

"I can only say," he went on, "that by my actions as President, I hope to rectify that." Then he observed that the President of the United States "does not represent any special group. He represents all the people. He is the friend of all the people." And he made it clear it would be lamentable if any part of the American public felt excluded from that friendship. "Putting it another way," he said, "the President is the counsel for all the people of this country, and I hope that I can gain the respect and I hope eventually the friendship of black citizens and other Americans."

To help gain that respect, the President put on Arthur A. Fletcher as an Assistant Secretary of Labor. A former professional football player (he broke the color bar on the Baltimore Colts), Fletcher in 1968 ran on the Republican ticket for Lieutenant Governor of Washington -- the first black to run for major office in that state. Though he didn't win, he obtained forty-nine percent of the vote.

Big, tough and street-wise, Fletcher has little difficulty communicating with "the brothers on the sidewalk." And his major function within the Nixon Administration is to get those "brothers" into jobs. He helped devise the Philadelphia Plan, a pilot program which sets goals for the employment of non-whites in federally subsidized construction. From the start the Plan ran into vocal opposition. Members of the construction workers union felt they would be pushed out of well paying jobs by blacks, which wasn't so. And some civil rights advocates immediately labeled it "tokenism." But, fully backed by the President, Fletcher began getting an increasing number of brothers on construction payrolls. As for "tokenism," Fletcher says: "You put one hundred and fifty people to work and twenty percent of them are non-white. That's hardly a landslide, to be sure, but it doesn't mean the program failed. The year before only four percent of them were non-white."

Fletcher freely concedes the great credibility gap between the ghetto and the Government. "A great deal of legislation was passed in the fifties and the sixties, but very little of it has been felt by the black guy. He asks what bearing all this has had on his status in society, and the answer is none. He's still in the ghetto, still in a lousy school, still looking for a decent job."

He frankly blames the Democrats for "making too many promises, building up too many hopes and then not following up."

Then, he points out, in came Richard Nixon "with no black support, a President with no sympathy in the black community. There

is suspicion. I don't like that. But I'll tell you one thing. It gives us a chance. The black community expects so little from this Administration we got a chance to go a long way."

Another Negro leader with whom the President conferred was the Reverend Leon Sullivan, pastor of Zion Baptist Church in Philadelphia, who founded the Opportunities Industrialization Centers (OIC), a very successful self-help project, in 1964. Sullivan had recently returned from Africa and he wanted to inform the President of his findings. Also present were Bob Brown and Dr. John Hannah, head of the Agency for International Development (AID).

With Sullivan seated beside him in the Oval Room, the President picked up a large blue notebook, entitled Catalog of Federal Programs for Assistance to Minority Entrepreneurs, and handed it to the minister. The President thought it might come in handy as a reference. Sullivan, who seemed momentarily overwhelmed, asked the President if he would sign it.

As an inscription, the President wrote: "To Dr. Leon Sullivan -- a shining example of minority entrepreneurship at work. Richard M. Nixon."

Then Sullivan produced a book which he himself had authored -- "the first copy off the press." It was entitled Build Brothers Build. Sullivan asked the President if he would accept it. "Only if you autograph it first," the President said. With that, the minister opened the book and wrote hastily, "To my President, who will become one of the great examples of leadership in America -- Leon Sullivan."

With the pleasantries out of the way, Sullivan talked about his OIC program which, in part, was financed by the Department of Labor. The emphasis was on self-help through savings and investment. "I encouraged members of my congregation to save ten dollars a week for thirty-six weeks," he said. There were now some ten thousand members.

Job training programs were instituted by OIC for hard-core unemployed and low-paid underemployed. Community-owned businesses were launched. Successful efforts were a shopping center, a garment company and an aerospace enterprise. The Reverend Sullivan had also established management training institutes, designed to train community leaders so that they could themselves operate community oriented businesses. In all there were some seventy OICs throughout the country, directed by community leaders mostly from the religious sector.

Sullivan then told of his "fantastic receptions and subsequent successes" in Ethiopia, Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria, where much interest was shown in developing the OIC job-training concept for Africa. What he now needed was help from AID, whose staff he had already briefed. The President was definitely interested. He suggested that Sullivan and Hannah work out the details for a "pilot project."

As Bob Brown puts it, "From the beginning, the President has been result-oriented. He wants results to take precedence over rhetoric. Some people don't seem to want to look at results."

They're more interested in how many speeches he made and how many ghettos he visited. The President has a great sensitivity and feel for the poor. After all, he was poor himself."

What the President most definitely was not interested in was confrontation politics in the name of the poor. And that was what was practiced on him when Reverend Ralph Abernathy of the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC) appeared before the Urban Affairs Council along with a delegation from his Poor People's Campaign.

It was quite a show and, unfortunately, did very little good for the poor people Abernathy claimed to represent. Whether it did Abernathy any good personally in terms of the internal politics of black militancy was also questionable.

The year before Abernathy had staged a Poor People's March on Washington as well as an encampment of what was called Resurrection City on federal property near the Lincoln Memorial. It had not been an edifying spectacle, as Everett Dirksen reminded Mr. Nixon at a Republican leadership meeting at the White House on April 29. The Senator from Illinois had had two hours of conversation with Abernathy at that time and, as far as he was concerned, he had "more than enough" of the good Reverend.

The President then analyzed the issue in some detail. The SCLC, he said, was in deep trouble. There was a power struggle going on within the movement and it was too early to determine exactly who would wind up as the anointed heir of Dr. Martin Luther

King, assassinated the year before. We don't propose to get into that kind of internal argument, the President said. Like Dirksen, the President wasn't overly impressed with Abernathy, whom he thought was kind of limited. According to reliable information, Dr. King's widow, Coretta, was no great admirer of Abernathy either.

However, the President said he didn't propose to shut people like Abernathy out so tightly that they would appear as martyrs, thus enhancing their stature. At the same time, he did not intend to give in to every one of their demands.

Eventually a White House meeting was arranged for Dr. Abernathy and his associates to present their views. The meeting had been scheduled for 10:15 a.m., May 13, but the group arrived late. They were greeted individually by Vice President Agnew and by various members of the Cabinet and then, when they had taken their places around the Cabinet table, by the President.

After the initial words of greeting, Abernathy took over. Slowly and ponderously, he read every word of a nine-page statement which had already been distributed to every member of the Council. In an apparent effort to evoke echoes of Martin Luther King ("I Have A Dream..."), Abernathy launched paragraph after paragraph with "I am concerned..." Concerned about the war, about the ABM, about military spending, about jobs, about hunger, about school desegregation, about Title I school funds, about equal employment opportunities, about the Administration's "inadequate response" to the SCLC-backed hospital workers' organizing drive in Charleston, South Carolina. He also expressed "concern" at the refusal of the

individual Cabinet members to schedule individual meetings with his delegation as part of that week's "second chapter" in his Poor People's Campaign.

Conceding that the recently announced hunger program was "better than anything the previous Administration did," Abernathy still branded it as "inadequate." He presented a "demand" for an expanded food program costing an additional \$2.5 billion a year, which he characterized as "modest," and argued it could be financed by scrapping such things as the ABM or eliminating the farm subsidies.

Characterizing "the right to work at a decent wage and the right to collective bargaining" as the "most fundamental human rights," Abernathy urged the President to intervene in the Charleston hospital situation with "all the prestige of your great office." He asked for immediate action on welfare reform, including a federal standard to guarantee an income above the poverty line for all.

Raising what he called "perhaps the most fundamental issue which I can place before you today," Abernathy asked for a re-examination of national priorities that would cut the military budget -- "a noose which is gradually strangling our country."

Then Abernathy declared that "one of your (Cabinet) members was quoted as saying that this Administration owed nothing to the black citizens of America," arguing that "this Administration, this Government, this nation owe justice to every American." He concluded with this plea: "Let history record that this Administration, of

which little was expected, was the one which made America truly keep its long-deferred promise to all of its citizens."

The President then responded.

Referring to the post-election remark about the new Administration "owing nothing" to the blacks, the President said to Abernathy: "You are right; any Administration owes justice to every American." And he emphasized the determination of his Administration to do right, without regard to what groups voted predominantly for what candidate.

Then he pointed out that in addressing the Urban Affairs Council, the Poor People's leaders were "speaking to a group of men that has spent more time than any other Cabinet group in history" on problems of the poor, the cities and so forth. This Administration, he added, wants to rid the country of its blemishes and to devote its wealth to meeting its "terrible problems."

Since the Reverend Abernathy had expressed concern about the war, Mr. Nixon proceeded to discuss the considerations a President must face in the making of foreign policy.

He pointed out that on taking office he could have ordered all American troops home from Vietnam; and that, for the most part, his action would have been applauded. He had been to Vietnam many times and he had seen the wounded and "what I want most is to stop the killing." Of course, he wanted to get our boys out -- but not in a way that would have their younger brothers fighting another war in three or four or five years. He referred to a comment by a

recent visitor, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore, a Socialist from a poor Chinese family, who had said that the effect of a unilateral American withdrawal would be "peace now," but a devastating increase in aggression two or three or four years from now.

In Europe, the President went on, we have six divisions, black men, white men, and they cost a lot of money. If he ordered them home -- which he has the power to do -- there would be cheering. But, as President, he has to look at what might happen if he did this without any reciprocal action by those who threaten a free Europe.

With regard to Vietnam, he said, "You want peace. I want peace. We're going to get it. We're making progress. But I have to take the responsibility for the kind of peace it is. I have to think of the next man who sits in this chair. I have to think about peace for the balance of this century."

The President said he appreciated the fact that Dr. Abernathy and his colleagues had come to Washington to petition Congress as well as the Administration, and that this was a right which ought to be exercised. He also expressed appreciation for the fact that while Dr. Abernathy had criticized the Administration for what he thought was wrong he nevertheless had been "objective" in noting, for example, that this Administration had done more on hunger than anyone before.

"I don't go to bed each night feeling good about hunger, or poverty, or Vietnam," he said. "But we are developing policies to deal with each of these."

The President then pointed out that while the men around the table now wore fine suits, drew good salaries and had attained a comfortable station in life, most of them also had known poverty and want in their earlier years. "What I am trying to say," he added, "is that you have here a group of men who are really trying to find answers. Most of us haven't known the kind of poverty you have seen. And we don't want others to know it."

Explaining that he had to deal with an urgent message from the Secretary of State who was then in Saigon, the President rose to leave.* But he said the meeting would continue under the chairmanship of the Vice President.

* The President was then in the midst of composing his first major -- and long awaited -- address to the nation on the subject of Vietnam. Time had been obtained for broadcasting the statement on all television networks the following night.

However, Dr. Abernathy asked the President to remain and listen to his reply. The President sat down.

Abernathy expressed to the President "our profound thanks for turning aside from a very heavy schedule. I know you have the problems of the world resting on your shoulders." Then, ~~continuing for several minutes in the same ponderously affected cadence in which he had read his original statement,~~ he went on to say that "we have always moved in the American tradition of orderly petitioning of government," but he contended "our job is made difficult

when we make such little progress." The hungry complain that non-violence does not work, that it is the way of the weak, and call people like Abernathy "Uncle Toms." Though people in his delegation were not dressed in fine suits, they truly loved America. Then he quoted Lincoln, "a house divided cannot stand." And though it was true that a majority of the blacks and the poor did not vote for Mr. Nixon, "you are our President, and you will have our support. We want to help you lead," and to help make America what its founding fathers had intended.

Abernathy then launched into another ^{speech} pitch for individual meetings with the various Cabinet secretaries, adding that the rest of the Poor People's delegation were then waiting in the Indian Treaty Room. He asked that the President take the time to stop by and greet "these poor people, who have never had the opportunity to see a President," and further, that he urge the Cabinet members to set up individual appointments.

Noting that the Cabinet members would remain, the President finally made good his exit. "You have an hour, so have at them," he said as he headed through the door.

The Vice President took over the meeting and Abernathy introduced an Indian woman from Oklahoma. "We're common, grass-roots poor people," she said. "We're the poor-poor. This is my fourth trip to Washington, D.C., to get this problem licked." She deplored the plight of the Indians, saying they had been put on reservations and told to wait. "We waited five hundred years. From now on, I don't intend to go to bed hungry, and to get up

hungry. I'm the mother of eleven children." She declared that "we're not going to let you decide for us any more. All you want is to terminate. You're going to exterminate us." She described in detail her troubles with a local school official, who refused to provide Indian children with hot lunches, referred to her four trips to Washington and said, "I'm so in debt now, I'll probably have to go to work to pay these expenses I've been running up."

Secretary Finch noted that the new Administration, for the first time, was asking full funding of the school lunch program.

Abernathy then introduced a black lady from Birmingham, Alabama, who declared that "I am here to speak for every poor black and white in Birmingham." And she spoke in a full, powerful, angry voice, declaring she had a swollen heart but couldn't get a doctor or medicines.

Among her other complaints, demands and observations:

"I'm tired of living in three rooms with ten children."

"You can't get food if you got no money for stamps. I have to feed my kids leftover peas for breakfast. You can't live like that."

"Mr. Nixon left to avoid hearing our statements."

"American black and white will come to Washington and wait till Mr. Nixon give us food and clothing."

"Mr. Nixon said we should go back to Africa. We gonna come here to Washington instead."

"President Kennedy died for the Poor People's Campaign."

"God ain't never told nobody to come and live on the moon....Those people (who say men have been to the moon) are telling lies. If you come up there God gonna destroy you. If God don't destroy you, we gonna destroy you. I better stop now before I say too much."

The Cabinet members fidgeted as Abernathy introduced a heavyset, frazzled white woman from Chicago. Saying there was little she could add to the eloquence that had preceded, the lady did tick off a few complaints:

"Nixon wants the rich to get richer and the poor to get poorer."

"We're gonna stay here till something gets done. We want it now."

Next it was the turn of a burly, middle-aged white man, who described himself as representing the poor of Appalachia. He was brief, saying that "I believe brother Abernathy's demands are reasonable. We'll back him till Hell freezes over." He expressed regret that the President had left, because "I wanted to congratulate Mr. Nixon on being the only Republican ever elected at a Democratic convention." But unless the President shaped up, he'll be the last Republican ever elected. "I'm tired of coming here and getting nothing."

The Reverend Joseph Lowery of the United Methodist Church of Atlanta then said: "We are desperately hopeful that this Administration will be sensitive and responsive to the crisis of misery that come out of the poor. I think you may have sensed some of

the urgency in the voices, the emotions, of those who spoke here today."

Taking the floor, Abernathy proceeded to make another extended speech, in which he made another ^{call} pitch for separate appointments with the Cabinet members. "Last year," he said, "we came one hundred thousand strong, and we were permitted to see the Cabinet officials. I have prepared papers for each Secretary....I can't believe Secretary Finch won't see us....I don't believe Secretary Hardin would be so hard. I just shook hands with him. He impresses me as being a fine, concerned person, a Baptist Christian person.... I don't see how you could send the poor people away, and then see the stark segregationists from Arkansas. I don't see how the party of Lincoln could turn its back on us."

And on and on he went along these lines, making still another plea for those waiting in the Indian Treaty Room. He assumed, he said, the President had not gone to see them, so he hoped that some members of the Cabinet would -- "and please don't send your aides.

The Vice President ~~then~~ spoke briefly. He said he thought everyone in the room had been moved by the eloquence of Dr. Abernathy and his group in detailing the problems of the poor; and that the President had been equally eloquent in describing some of the problems he faced, including ones not of his own making. And since Dr. Abernathy said he had detailed statements prepared for each Cabinet department, he could be assured that they would be carefully considered, and suggested that the best way to proceed for the

balance of the meeting would be for each Cabinet official to address himself to the points involving his department.

Secretary Finch, who took the floor, noted that the Poor People's demand for an end to the freeze on ADC (Aid to Dependent Children) payments was also Administration policy. Genuinely surprised, Abernathy asked: "Are you saying that it's your policy to end the freeze?" Finch: "Yes. We've asked that it be ended, and we've budgeted for it." On desegregation guidelines, Finch explained that these were simply an explanation of what the Supreme Court says; and that as the Court refined its interpretations the guidelines change.

Finch then suggested that groups such as Dr. Abernathy's and the Administration should "work together day by day," instead of having the Poor People come marching to Washington once a year, get a lot of promises, and then return disappointed the following year.

The Reverend Lowery said he wanted an answer from Finch on whether he would meet with the group. Finch held his ground, noting that he and his department had been meeting with representatives of various groups on a continuing, working basis and not just once a year for show.

Then came Cliff Hardin's turn. The Secretary of Agriculture said he agreed with Dr. Abernathy's "philosophical statements" but not with his arithmetic. In preparation for this meeting, he had researched the demands made by the Poor People's campaign a year ago.

Point by point, he ticked off what the Poor People had asked, and then analyzed what the Nixon Administration had done. He pointed out that the value of food stamps had been increased, that a pilot program had been launched to get some experience with free food stamps, and that "the President has recommended a move across the board in this direction." Dr. Abernathy "may not have understood," but while free food stamps would be cut off at a given income level, the cost would be adjusted substantially for those above that level, with the whole concentration of the program on moving it "more and more to fit the needs of those in the lowest income groups, which is what it should have been in the first place."

As for school lunches, Hardin noted the increase in the program, doubling by 1970 the number of children involved.

On direct distribution, there were now twenty-two foods included in the package, which makes it a pretty good deal. Of course, there were problems in local distribution which thus far had made it impossible to get all the foods into all areas. For example, some places do not have refrigerated storage. But these problems were being worked out.

Of the 256 counties cited by the Poor People last year as being without food programs, 253 now have them; and the one thousand poorest counties in the nation all have food programs.

A special program for pregnant women has now been launched in fifty-three counties. However, again there were distribution problems because of special foods. The Administration places a

high priority on this program, recognizing that human life is especially vulnerable during pregnancy and the first five years.

At this point, the Vice President excused himself, observing he was already half an hour late in the Senate. He said he felt Secretary Finch had made one of the outstanding points of the session -- namely, that a single meeting was not enough, that we should instead look toward continuing meetings, not just for show purposes, but for the exchange of information.

He turned the chair over to Transportation Secretary Volpe.

Volpe observed that as a member of a minority group himself -- he is of Italian origin -- he had some understanding of the problems under discussion. He, too, had come up the hard way; as a child, he had lived next door to a Negro family, with a Negro Baptist Church across the street. Yet there had been no racial dissension. On coming to Washington, however, he was "shocked" to discover that of the two hundred and sixty supergrade jobs in the Department of Transportation, not a single one was held by a Negro. This, despite the fact that the Democrats, who had written much of the equal employment legislation, had been in power twenty-eight of the past thirty-six years. Now, with the Republicans in control, eight blacks had been assigned to topgrade jobs in his department -- not enough to be sure, but at least a start.

Volpe also discussed the urgency of providing adequate public transportation to ghetto areas -- for access not only to jobs but also to hospitals, colleges, etc.

"I hope you will have a little patience," he said. "We won't make big promises, but we will make promises we're going to keep."

~~At this point,~~ Pat Moynihan interrupted the meeting with an urgent report from the Indian Treaty Room. The Poor People who had been assembled there at 10:00 a.m. had been led to believe that Dr. Abernathy would be returning within the hour. By now it was 1:00 p.m. and the Poor People, restive and impatient, were threatening a demonstration inside the White House. Some subcabinet personnel had gone over to talk with them, only to be greeted with catcalls.

We'd be delighted to continue with this meeting, Moynihan said; we have no particular concern with the prospect of a demonstration; but since it was Dr. Abernathy's problem and since their ire was directed at him, perhaps he might prefer to end the meeting and to visit his troops.

Professing dismay at this turn of events, Abernathy insisted that they hadn't come with any intention of staging a demonstration; and he hoped that some of the Cabinet would accompany him, to give evidence to the Poor of the Administration's concern. Volpe immediately said that, although he was long overdue for another appointment, he would be glad to do so. After a brief report from Secretary of Labor Shultz, the meeting adjourned. Secretaries Volpe and Romney accompanied Rev. Abernathy to the Indian Treaty Room.

Then Dr. Abernathy went before the television cameras to denounce the President and his Administration, calling the session with the Urban Affairs Council "the most disappointing and the most fruitless of all the meetings we have had up to this time." And that's what got on the national news shows that night.

Thus ended what could have been a productive day for America's economically disadvantaged. It was anything but. Abernathy's principal interest quite obviously was in managing somehow, by implied threat or otherwise, to demonstrate he could deliver a President on demand to his assemblage in the Indian Treaty Room. He failed. More importantly, he failed to make a case before a key Cabinet group whose busy members had literally wasted three hours listening to witnesses who offered little more than invective. ~~Abernathy himself had come across as a pompous, tiresome charlatan.~~

The poor of America deserved better.

CHAPTER 6

Just before going to the meeting with Ralph Abernathy and the Poor People delegation, the President of the United States had briefed a breakfast session of the Republican leadership on the speech he was to make the following night.

It was, he said, going to be the most important speech thus far in his Administration. It would be about Vietnam. And it would be the first time that a President would go on national television to explain and clearly outline what our objectives were in that country, what we were trying to accomplish and where we were headed.

The President told the GOP leaders that he had brought General Creighton Abrams, the U.S. military commander in Vietnam, home from Saigon to report to him firsthand. Abrams, who had spent considerable time with the President the day before, had told him that the Nixon Administration had gone a good deal further than the Johnson Administration ever had in winning the confidence of the South Vietnamese Government, and establishing a basis of trust with President Nguyen Van Thieu. Prior Administrations hadn't done this. One result of the failure to take the South Vietnamese into confidence was that it had taken two or three months to get them to the conference table in Paris after the bombing halt was called just before the American election in November 1968.

As evidence of the new spirit, the President said that his speech was at that very moment being cleared with the South Vietnamese to make certain they were aware of everything it contained.

One thing the President was seeking to avoid was the kind of situation which developed during the Korean war, when the majority of casualties occurred after peace talks began at Panmunjon. Right now, the President added, we have been talking in Paris with the North Vietnamese for twelve months, the war is still going on and casualties are still running at an unacceptable level. Obviously, we don't want to continue this sort of thing indefinitely. That is why the U.S. will take new steps in an effort to get the Paris negotiations off dead center.

The President then disclosed that General Abrams had informed him that the then largely terrorist attacks of the enemy might well be the prelude to a full-scale offensive that would occur either later that month or in early June. The purpose of the offensive was purely propaganda. For, according to Abrams, the enemy could hardly hope to achieve anything of a really significant military value.

Then the President observed that if Hanoi felt that combining a military offensive with a peace offensive was the way to negotiate with him, they would be sadly mistaken.

Though it was a brief and somber dissertation, the President seemed to have about him an air of confidence that he was making progress. He indicated that he realized there were people in his own party who, critical of the Administration on Vietnam, were equating his actions with those of his predecessor. To which the President suggested that these people were making a serious mistake.

Then he left for his meeting with Ralph Abernathy. Once it was out of the way, he got back to making last-minute revisions on his Vietnam speech.

The document had been in the works for several weeks. Separate drafts had been prepared by Ray Price and Bill Safire. The President had taken them down to Key Biscayne, and had worked on them in the sun. Kissinger, who flew down for consultations, returned with a half-dozen pages of scribbled instructions for revisions.

In the interim -- on May 8 -- the Vietcong had proposed a ten-point plan to end the war. It was based mainly on previously rejected proposals.

In his televised speech to the nation, the President responded with his own eight-point proposal including a plan for a mutual pull-out of major forces over a twelve-month span, supervised by an international body acceptable to both sides. Because of the importance of every word and shade of meaning, the President -- in uncharacteristic fashion -- read the speech before the cameras. As a result, he raced and fumbled a bit.

In his concluding remarks, he said: "In my campaign for the Presidency, I pledged to end this war in a way that would increase our chances to win true and lasting peace in Vietnam, in the Pacific, and in the world. I am determined to keep that pledge. If I fail to do so, I expect the American people to hold me accountable for that failure."

The following morning there was ~~a joint meeting of the~~ Cabinet and the National Security Council, the purpose of which the President said was to brief everyone on the proposals he had made in his televised speech of the night before.

First up was Henry Kissinger who began his remarks by saying, "I will not summarize the speech." With slightly raised brows, the President replied: "Please don't."

When the laughter subsided, Kissinger proceeded to summarize the speech, calling it the most comprehensive statement made by an American President about Vietnam. He said the President's presentation could be summarized in two broad, basic principles: (1) we will not collapse our effort; and (2) we will be extremely flexible in trying to make a settlement, not quibbling about language or form.

Kissinger said the speech went as far as it was possible to go in testing the willingness of the other side to have serious negotiations. Remarking on just one new element, he pointed out that "we no longer will expect the North Vietnamese to admit their troops are there so long as they stop being there."

The President then said that one of the significant aspects of his speech was that the South Vietnamese Government had agreed to its content. Six months ago, he observed, no one would have predicted that President Thieu would have approved the substance of the speech. The cooperation of the South Vietnamese was extremely important because while some say it will be impossible to make a peace with them, it will surely be impossible to make a peace without them.

Commenting on the attitude of other nations in Southeast Asia, the President said their reactions were most important. "They are like rice in the wind," he said. "If they think we are going to lose, they will go the other way." And this suggests, the President added, that while some people scoff at the domino theory, the dominoes make it a reality because they seem to accept it as fact.

It had been a most difficult speech to prepare, the President went on. Before it was in final form, it was necessary to get agreement among the various areas of the U.S. Government that were involved as well as the approval of the Saigon regime. "And if any of you think that writing your speeches is tough," the President grinned, "you should try to write one involving State, Defense and Henry Kissinger."

Undersecretary of State Elliot L. Richardson suggested that President Thieu be added to the "list of speech writers" since he had been consulted and had made suggestions that were included. Richardson reported that the State Department had transmitted the basic elements of the speech through our Ambassadors to the Governments of Australia, Thailand, New Zealand, South Korea and the Philippines. Such advance notice, he said, was most important in "keeping our friends with us."

In his analysis, Secretary of Defense Laird emphasized there was nothing inconsistent in the mutual withdrawal plan proposed by the President and the Vietnamization of the war. He also noted that the speech contained a veiled reference to the reduction

of U.S. forces in Vietnam. The question of whether some of our troops would be withdrawn would be discussed when Secretary of State Rogers returned from Vietnam.

The President then explained that "apart from any progress in Paris, we are considering withdrawals based upon the strengthening of the Vietnam forces."

Postmaster General Blount then asked whether the South Vietnamese have the will to "stay the course if we Vietnamize the war." To which the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Earle G. Wheeler, gave a guarded "yes." He quoted General Abrams as saying he "sees no problem in that." However, Wheeler added that "we must move gradually so that we don't shake the confidence of the South Vietnamese. So far they are willing and pleased to take on more of the responsibility." And the President noted that General Abrams aimed to give South Vietnam air and artillery support while letting them do the infantry work. This, he said, was a very important aspect of the shifting roles.

The President asked Richard Helms to discuss the possible reaction of North Vietnam to his speech. The CIA Director said that as far as Hanoi was concerned the most effective point was the commitment that we wouldn't "chicken out." Their whole policy, he went on, has been based on the theory that domestic dissent will force the U.S. to pull out. According to Helms, the North Vietnamese had lost half a million men and want to terminate the war as much as we do but they think time is on their side. The President's speech has told them that we will stick to our basic principles and will not run out.

In the course of his remarks, Helms mentioned Pham Van Dong and the President interjected: When you use names like that, you ought to give some identification so everyone knows whom you are talking about. Helms said that Pham Van Dong was Prime Minister of North Vietnam, adding, "You might say he's the young Ho Chi Minh of the Hanoi Government."

"Oh," said the President, "you mean he's their Finch."

As the room rocked with laughter, HEW Secretary Finch mopped his brow.

Then the President introduced our man at the United Nations, Ambassador Yost, with the comment that the U.N. post was "one of the most difficult jobs in the Cabinet because he has to try to explain U.S. positions to the representatives of all those nations. And besides that, he has to go to all those luncheons, teas, cocktail parties and dinners -- and that I think is about the most boring work I can imagine."

"How do you keep your weight down?" he asked Yost.

"By running from one cocktail party to another," the Ambassador replied.

Yost said he found a growing sympathy for the U.S. at the United Nations because of the feeling that we are really seeking peace. The President's speech will accentuate that feeling. When Yost asked whether there might be a U.N. role in Vietnam, the President said he had purposely used extremely general language about the proposed international supervisory group.

Henry Cabot Lodge, our chief negotiator in Paris who had been summoned back to Washington in connection with the speech, then discussed the possible effects of the President's speech on the negotiations. He began by observing that for seventeen weeks he had heard nothing from the North Vietnamese except: (1) the U.S. should get out; and (2) South Vietnam should be under the control of the National Liberation Front. These things were always said in a tone which he could only describe as "nasty." The North Vietnamese constantly referred to the South Vietnamese as "puppets and lackeys of the imperialist United States" while he was always described as an "odious neo-colonialist."

"Well, Cabot," the President interjected, "you may be a neo-colonialist, but you are not odious."

Lodge explained that in the week before the President's speech the North Vietnamese brought up their new package of ten points which in his judgement contained some new approaches. Significantly, too, they had made their presentation "with no epithets." Lodge's immediate reaction was "now we need a comprehensive position statement of our own." And almost in the next mail, he said, he received a draft of the President's forthcoming speech and "it was like manna from heaven for me." From the standpoint of the Paris negotiations, "it was the best thing that could have happened to us."

Why did the North Vietnamese come forward with their ten points? Lodge thought they did so because President Thieu had indicated a new flexibility and a willingness to consider new approaches.

Was it not true, asked the President, that the first North Vietnamese reaction to his speech was negative? Yes, replied Lodge, but that should not be taken as a significant response; it was just the first automatic reaction.

The President introduced Lawrence Walsh, a member of Lodge's team who had just returned from his first visit to South Vietnam. Walsh had found the Vietnamese to be vital, energetic and "a great people." In the course of Walsh's discussion, it came out that he was an old friend of the Attorney General, and John Mitchell commented that they used to see one another at the Wall Street Club. This brought from the President a somewhat arch question addressed to the Attorney General: "You didn't say that with any nostalgia, did you?" And the reply from Mitchell: "It varies."

Lodge then went into the subject of secret talks, saying "it is very important that secret talks be kept secret." Whenever the press asks about them, he always says simply that "we don't discuss the subject." The North Vietnamese approach the question differently. "Fifteen minutes after I have left a secret talk, they are saying there are no secret talks."

Summing up, the President ~~began by noting~~^{ed} that the end of World War II was definitely delayed by the Allied insistence on unconditional surrender. ~~If~~^{he pointed out} the enemy knows there is no way out but military defeat, he has nothing to gain by offering a settlement. What we have provided is a way out. On the other side of the coin, some people feel that it is only necessary to put out a

proposal to get peace. What must be realized is that we are talking to an enemy whose first objective is not peace. They want South Vietnam. ✓

The President listed four principal points in the U.S. position. One, we are for peace; we are reasonable. Two, we aim to convince the enemy that if there is no settlement, we have an option which is military action. Three, we want to make it clear they can't win by sitting us out. And four, we want to convince them they aren't going to get what they want by erosion of the U.S. will.

So, the President continued, we have offered the North Vietnamese a way out. We have tried to indicate that we will not tolerate a continuation of their fight-talk strategy. We have tried to convince them that the time is coming when South Vietnam will be strong enough to handle a major part of the load. Beyond all this, said the President, it was necessary to give the impression to the enemy that the American people were going to support a sound peace proposal and not accept peace at any price. Then and only then will the enemy realize that the war must be ended.

The President expressed the hope that members of the Cabinet in their television appearances and speeches would explain that the Administration had presented a sound, reasonable, coordinated plan for peace. How the war would end, the President said, was not clear. It may not be by formal agreement; it may simply be by negotiations leading to gradual understanding.

"What is on the line is more than South Vietnam," the President concluded. "It's a question of what happens to the balance of Asia and to the rest of the world. If we fail to end the war in a way that will not be an American defeat, and in a way that will deny the aggressor his goal, the hawks in Communist nations will push for even more and broader aggression. What concerns me more than anything else is what happens to the United States. If a great power fails to meet its aims, it ceases to be a great power. When a great power looks inward, when it fails to live up to its commitment, then the greatness fades away. The road to peace will be difficult but we aim to get there."

When the Cabinet members applauded his remarks, the President said, "I really didn't mean to make a speech to the Cabinet."

Following the meeting, Ambassador Lodge flew back to Paris, expressing hope that the Nixon peace plan would lead to "solid meat and potatoes" discussions with the Communists. The next day North Vietnam and the Vietcong attacked the plan, but agreed to study it further.

And on May 20, at a meeting of the Republican Congressional leadership, the President, who was in a buoyant mood, disclosed that he would meet with General Thieu on June 8 on Midway Island to discuss common policy.

Henry Kissinger then reported that, despite what the leaders may have read in the press, the South Vietnamese were

pleased with the President's speech and were behind us. In fact, the speech contained some specific phraseology which had been dictated by Thieu.

The President, interrupting, said that one of the problems with the previous Administration had been a basic split between Washington and Saigon. He noted that some members of the past Administration as well as some highly placed members of Congress were urging the President to "dump" Thieu and not be concerned about his views. In the long run, this would be suicidal, for while it was difficult to make peace with Saigon, it was impossible to make a genuine peace without them. The President said that we had established a degree of cooperation with the South Vietnamese which would have been considered unimaginable not too long ago.

Kissinger, going into the background of the speech, said it had been in the oven a good while before it was finally delivered. In no sense was it a response to the Vietcong's ten-point proposal. The President had been thinking about addressing the nation on the subject for some months. Finally, on March 28, he had ordered his NSC staff to prepare his proposals for presentation some time in the middle of May.

There were two reasons for the delay: first, we did not want to announce our proposals in the face of a military attack by the enemy; and secondly, we wanted to restore a good working relationship with Saigon.

According to Kissinger, the enemy had been counting on the pressure of world public opinion to affect U.S. actions in

Vietnam. Since January, Hanoi had been repeating the same slogans and tactics they had used against the Johnson Administration, blaming the U.S. for every deadlock in the Paris talks. Our objective was to counter those tactics.

The far-ranging effects of the President's speech were significant. Kissinger noted that in the Senate John C. Stennis was joined by the more doveish Charles Percy in supporting the President's position. In his opinion, most of whatever criticism there was in the U.S. press really amounted to nit-picking. The foreign press generally was favorable. Outside of the Soviet orbit, the only critical comments Kissinger had noted thus far had come from Sweden, which was sort of anti-American anyhow.

Particularly heartening to Kissinger was an extraordinarily positive report on the speech published in Le Monde in Paris. This was crucially important since the newspaper is read by the negotiators at the peace talks. Japanese press reaction was favorable, and the Foreign Ministry in Tokyo had endorsed the speech.

In the Communist world, criticism was generally muted. Moscow had published a partial text using some of the more conciliatory extracts. The satellites gave the speech amore positive appraisal. Yugoslavia's reaction was particularly positive.

As for the peace-keeping body proposed by the President, it originally was conceived in terms of consisting solely of Asians. But the President decided against calling for Asian participation as such, simply because if one or two of the countries in the area

decided against getting involved, that fact would become the big news. Thus, it was left an open-ended thing. However, since the speech Japan and Indonesia had expressed interest in participating.

One of the great effects of the speech, Kissinger went on, was to dramatize to Hanoi the failure of its efforts to affect us psychologically. Though there was a long list of nit-picks in Hanoi's detailed reaction, the basic facts were not rejected out of hand, and that could be construed as somewhat hopeful.

The President here interrupted again, pointing out that in the wake of his speech we were getting not only private support abroad which we had never had before, but public support of the U.S. position as well. Of course, he pointed out, he realized that we had taken more casualties in the past twelve months than in the previous two years, adding: "The United States cannot settle for a traditional talk-fight strategy." Because it takes the other side two to three months to move, we will need that much time to discover the real reaction to the speech.

The President then said that if and when a withdrawal of U.S. forces began, it would come from a position of strength, not weakness. It would come because the relative strength of the South Vietnamese forces had increased to a level making it possible for them to replace U.S. troops. "We are now in a better position to control events rather than reacting to them," he said.

The President described American policy in terms of playing a violin and playing it well. The previous Administration,

he said, would play one string -- the military string -- and then another string -- the peace and propaganda string. The enemy, meanwhile, played the violin the way it should be played, using all strings at once. And that is what we are going to do from now on, he said.

On June 3 another joint meeting of the Cabinet and the National Security Council was convened at the White House -- this time to hear Secretary of State Rogers report on his around-the-world trip.

The first point of interest, naturally, was Vietnam. The Secretary said he had listened to the President's May 14 speech at the American Embassy in Saigon. "Contrary to what you might have read in the papers," Rogers said, "there are no differences between the U.S. and South Vietnam about what the President said." Thieu had gone over the speech in advance, made some suggestions that were accepted, and approved the final draft.

"As a matter of fact," the President interjected, "you were there when he made some changes."

Rogers had found Thieu to be mature and intelligent and the one man in the Saigon Government who has potential for national leadership. The Secretary said that the South Vietnamese were ready to take over a major part of the burden of the war, although they were fearful that if their casualty rate increased substantially, they might be in difficulty. But they fully realized the problems that the war was creating in the United States, he said.

One thing the South Vietnamese do not understand, said the Secretary, is freedom of the press. "They lock people up for printing something they don't want printed and then later think perhaps they made a mistake."

The Secretary flatly denied speculation in the American press that the President's forthcoming trip to Midway to meet Thieu had been arranged hurriedly because the South Vietnamese President had demanded it. Absolutely wrong, Rogers said. The fact was that the meeting had been suggested by President Nixon and it was he, Rogers, who had proposed the timing.

Relations between the U.S. and the South Vietnamese were very good, the Secretary reported, although the Saigon leaders "had some questions" about the U.S. position on elections in their country. They found it difficult to comprehend that all the U.S. was suggesting was an election that would permit the people of South Vietnam to express their views. Nevertheless, they have agreed there should be such an election but were uncertain about how it should be conducted.

The critical political problem in South Vietnam, said Rogers, is that there is no cohesiveness, no real national interest even in such things as national sports or national radio programs. And President Thieu, himself, was having difficulty establishing a national image.

President Nixon noted that criticism of South Vietnam, particularly with regard to the condition of its democracy, had become terribly distorted. Complaints that the South Vietnamese

have defective elections and a partially controlled press are leveled without regard to the fact that North Vietnam has no free elections and a completely controlled press. There are really serious questions, the President went on, as to whether a country like South Vietnam is really ready for a democratic system, and whether it is possible to have complete freedom of the press in a country engaged in full scale war. "Lincoln didn't allow much freedom of the press in the Civil War," he pointed out. And in World War I and World War II the American press operated with some forms of censorship.

Vice President Agnew raised the question of whether statements attacking the United States role in Vietnam -- particularly when made by eminent persons -- had an effect on the South Vietnamese. Secretary Rogers said there was no doubt that all such statements were followed closely and studied for their possible effects on U.S. policy.

Moving on to other countries he visited, the Secretary of State said that at a meeting of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization he found that representatives of the nations which were contributing troops to the Vietnam war thought the U.S. should begin to reduce its forces there.

In India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran, Rogers discovered "the feeling that the Soviet Union is not a threat." What the leaders of all these nations feared, however, was internal subversion. And most of them wanted the U.S. to have more "presence" in their countries.

One of the more interesting leaders on Rogers' calling list was General Yahya Khan of Pakistan. He is, said Rogers, a "reluctant dictator," who got into that position after the former President, Ayub Khan, unable to maintain power, turned the country over to Yahya, who had headed the army. Now, reported Rogers, Yahya wanted elections as soon as possible so he could get out.

The President was particularly interested in how Pakistan was faring. He had been there five times, twice as Vice President and three times as a private citizen. And he had many friends there, particularly Yahya's predecessor, Ayub Khan, with whom he had kept in touch over the years.

As Rogers kept referring to the Pakistani leader as Yahya, the President broke in: "I think we have a secret weapon here. If we ever get into trouble with Pakistan, we'll send Zsa Zsa to see Yahya."

As for Iran, Secretary Rogers said it was evident that the country was doing tremendously well under the strong leadership of Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlevi. "The Shah feels very close to you, Mr. President," Rogers said.

Nowhere he went, Rogers continued, did he find any hostility to the United States. "No one said, 'Yankee, go home' or take your troops out or anything like that." On the contrary, he felt that leaders of most of the countries he had visited wanted the United States to be more active in their areas. But Rogers said he promised only that the U.S. would keep its commitments, citing domestic problems as putting limitations on what this country

could do. Everywhere he went, however, he urged more regional organizations so that countries in various parts of the world could do more for themselves. On the whole, he felt that he had quite a successful trip.

The President asked Rogers to say a word about the mood he found in Great Britain because "this could be an indication of what might happen to us." The Secretary said that he found the British in a very defensive mood because everyone was scolding them for reducing their commitments around the world.

Then, at the President's request, Secretary of Defense Laird reported briefly on the NATO planning meeting he had just attended. First, Laird said that U.S. credibility had been completely restored by Mr. Nixon's European trip early in his Administration. Our allies now understand that we intend to consult with them on European policy. And, with a knowing sidelong glance at Secretary Rogers, Laird said he found the NATO military people "far more realistic about the threat from Russia than the Foreign Ministers." The military people, for example, were disturbed by the Soviet operation in Czechoslovakia while the Foreign Ministers seemed to take the view that détente was just around the corner. However, even the Defense Ministers were under pressure to reduce their military commitments. Asked by the President whether the European leaders had confidence in the credibility of the U.S. deterrent, Laird said, "They do."

According to Laird, Canada had come in for some sharp criticism for its rather negative position on NATO. One European

leader, in fact, had referred to Canada's Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau as "a combination of Frank Sinatra and Hamlet."

Laird also reported that British Prime Minister Harold Wilson was anxious to visit the United States, particularly since Conservative Party leader Edward Heath, on a private visit, had been entertained by the President. "We'll give him equal time," the President said with a smile.

Commenting on the trips taken by the Secretaries of State and Defense, the President suggested that other members of the Cabinet should and would soon have occasion to travel abroad. It was the general feeling, he went on, that such trips were very much in the nation's interest. He urged the Secretaries to get good briefings in advance and, particularly in the case of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, to coordinate their trips through Cabinet Secretary John Whitaker so that there would be no conflict with this country's best interests.

Such a check, he said, had prevented a situation which could have found Secretary of the Interior Walter Hickel in the Soviet Union on the first anniversary of the Soviet's military action in Czechoslovakia. "We didn't want Wally drinking vodka in Moscow on the anniversary of the day when Russian troops went stomping over the Czechs," said the President.

Secretary Rogers said that, taking a lesson from Nelson Rockefeller's unfortunate experiences in Latin America, Cabinet officers should avoid trips to places where major demonstrations

might occur. The New York Governor, on a Presidential mission beginning in mid-May, had been greeted by anti-American, mostly leftwing, student demonstrations in several countries.

"The place where you will be safest," the President said, "will be in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. You can bet there won't be any demonstrations there." He went on to say that if any Cabinet members were going to Latin America, it would be best if they went on a low-key basis. Even then, he added, they should expect demonstrations, particularly from students.

"Summer is not a bad time to go to Europe," the President smiled, "unless they have summer school."

But, the President said, in the final analysis the Cabinet members should not fail to make trips just because they might encounter a few people along the way demonstrating against the United States. This was a fact of political life we will have to live with. The thing to remember, however, is that these demonstrators, violent as they may be, very rarely reflect majority sentiment -- just as a handful of Black Panthers don't represent the many millions of law-abiding black citizens in this country.

The President then urged travel to Africa and Asia as well as the other areas that had been mentioned.

"But wherever you go," the President cautioned his Cabinet officers, "please remember one thing: Don't promise anything.

The President, of course, had his own travel plans in mind.

First, of course, was his trip to Midway to size up President Thieu, upon whom his still unpublicized plans

for disengagement from South Vietnam would depend. And, as the President later told me, he liked what he saw -- a softspoken man with the potential for leadership which his nation sorely needed.

It was during a two-hour meeting in the freshly repainted home of Captain Albert S. Yesensky, Commanding Officer of the U.S. Naval Station on Midway Island, that the two men ironed out details for the first withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam.

Thieu made it clear he had no objections. "After all," he said, "we have been saying for years we were getting stronger. And if that is the case, then we have to be willing to see some Americans leave."

"I would not like to be breaking the umbilical cord to your people," Mr. Nixon responded.

"No, you will not."

Thus assured, the President asked Thieu to read a statement he planned to read to the newsmen assembled outside. "Is it agreeable to you?" the President asked. It was. After which the President read ^{and approved} a draft statement which Thieu intended to read. Then both leaders emerged into the bright sunlight to meet the press.

"I have decided," Mr. Nixon said, "to order the immediate redeployment from Vietnam of a division equivalent of approximately 25,000 men. This troop replacement will begin within the next thirty days and it will be completed by the end of August. During the month of August and at regular intervals thereafter, we shall review the situation, having in mind three criteria...."

"First, the progress insofar as the training and equipping of South Vietnamese forces; second, progress in the Paris peace talks; and third, the level of enemy activity.

"I will announce plans for further replacements as decisions are made. As replacement of U.S. forces begins, I want to emphasize two fundamental principles: No actions will be taken which threaten the safety of our troops and the troops of our allies; and second, no action will be taken which endangers the attainment of our objective, the right of self-determination for the people of South Vietnam."

As Mr. Nixon has more recently recalled, he took this first guarded step towards disengagement despite fears of senior military men who frankly felt the South Vietnamese were not yet ready to take over the burdens of fighting the war. No doubt, it was a gamble. But the President felt he had to move in that direction if only to cope with dissatisfaction at home. And, of course, there was always the hope that Ho Chi Minh and his associates might begin to negotiate more seriously.

Would the South Vietnamese really be able to ^{''}hack it on ^{''}their own? No one really knew. As a top Saigon official told Secretary of State Rogers: "It's like a man learning to ride a bicycle. We think we can do it, but you never know until the man running alongside takes his hand away."

The American hand would be gradually taken away in a program which already had been dubbed by Secretary of Defense Laird as "Project Vietnamization."

North Vietnam's immediate response was hardly encouraging. For the first time in three months, there was sharp fighting in the demilitarized zone. Even more depressing, from the viewpoint of the White House, was the fact that, if anything, the Communists had become more intransigent in Paris.

Again there was a deep-seated division within the United States Government on the meaning of it all. There were those who continued to feel that North Vietnam, unable to sustain its present level of combat losses, would be forced to bite the bullet and negotiate seriously. Another group of advisers felt, however, that Hanoi was counting on anti-war sentiment in this country to force a panicky withdrawal of American troops. Hanoi's leaders, it was said, had long memories. Just fifteen years ago the Vietminh, led by Ho Chi Minh, had beaten the more powerful French forces largely because the French home front had caved in.

The President well knew what he was facing at home. He felt at this time that the war could ~~not~~ be lost in the crumbling of support, not on the battlefield, but within the country itself. He was aware that a sector of the American people had become so alienated that no appeal or summons in the nation's interest could possibly reach it.

And, sure enough, the Midway meeting was not enough to pacify the more virulent critics either in Washington or among the peace-at-any-price clique. Senator George McGovern, speaking for many critics of the war, asserted: "I don't see that as anything more than token action."

But at least McGovern had the virtue of consistency on his side. He had long been opposed to the war and had made no secret of it. But what about an establishment Democrat such as W. Averell Harriman? Here was a gentleman who had long supported the war and was one of the most ardent apologists for Lyndon Johnson's policies. And, as chief negotiator in Paris during the Johnson Administration, he had gotten nowhere dealing with the Communists. Now, with a Republican in the White House, Harriman within a matter of several months was loudly impatient to terminate an involvement for which he bore a large share of responsibility.

Another establishment Democrat who piqued the President was Clark Clifford, Secretary of Defense in the previous Administration, who in an article published in Foreign Affairs recommended removing one hundred thousand troops from Vietnam by the end of 1969, and the rest by the end of 1970.*

* A half-year earlier, during the 1968 Presidential campaign, Hubert Humphrey, seeking to break out of the stranglehold of LBJ's hardnosed Vietnam policy, floated a timid balloon proposing a modest withdrawal of U.S. troops. Clark Clifford, at LBJ's behest, took to television to knock down the balloon.

Asked about this piece of gratuitous advice at his June 19 press conference, the President appeared to depart from the cool composure which had marked his previous appearances and delivered an acid recapitulation of Democratic failures to end the

war. He pointed out that "for five years in the Administration in which [Clifford] was Secretary of Defense in the last part, we had a continued escalation of the war; we had 500,000 Americans in Vietnam; we had 35,000 killed; we had over 200,000 injured.

"And, in addition to that, we found that in the year, the full year, in which he was Secretary of Defense, our casualties were the highest of the whole five-year period and, as far as negotiations were concerned, all that had been accomplished, as I indicated earlier, was that we had agreed on the shape of the table.

"This is not to say that Mr. Clifford's present judgement is not to be considered because of the past record. It does indicate, however, that he did have a chance in this particular respect, and did not move on it then.

"I believe that we have changed that policy. We have started to withdraw forces. We will withdraw more. Another decision will be made in August. I will not indicate the number, because the number will depend upon the extent of training of the South Vietnamese, as well as developments in Paris, and the other factors I have mentioned previously.

"As far as how many will be withdrawn by the end of this year, or the end of next year, I would hope that we could beat Mr. Clifford's timetable, just as I think we have done a little better than he did when he was in charge of our national defense."

The President's statement that he hoped to better the schedule suggested by Clark Clifford produced headlines and created

high expectations around the world. And all that weekend Administration personnel busily explained that Mr. Nixon's expression of hope that he could withdraw all combat troops by the end of 1970 was just that -- a "hope" and not, as some would have it, a timetable or schedule. It was quite obvious that his spokesmen wanted to extricate the President from the trap of making frivolous promises or of indulging in the language of "turning corners" and "bringing the boys home by Christmas" -- the sort of jargon that destroyed the credibility on Vietnam of previous Administrations.

That the President indeed had had an off day at the press conference was demonstrated by other slips of the tongue. Thus, he referred to "President Rockefeller" and chided himself for the "Freudian" slip; and he casually cut the nation's Negro population approximately in half, referring to eleven million law-abiding black citizens. But these were of more minor consequence.

On June 28, 1969 while he was in New York for a dental appointment, it was announced that the President would go behind the Iron Curtain in August for an unprecedented official visit to Rumania, the first American President to visit a Communist country since Franklin Delano Roosevelt did so during World War II. The visit would follow a tour that would take the President to the planned splashdown of the Apollo 11 moon vehicle on July 24 and then to five Asian nations -- the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, India and Pakistan -- in less than a week.

The journey to Rumania had been proposed by President Nicolae Ceausescu a month after Mr. Nixon had come into office.

And Mr. Nixon liked the idea very much. So much so he assigned Kissinger to quietly make the arrangements.

As a private citizen, Richard Nixon had been treated royally -- if that is the word -- by the Rumanians when he visited Bucharest in March 1967. This, in fact, had been the high point of his trip behind the Iron Curtain. Poland had refused him a visa to stop over in Warsaw. Soviet leaders had declined to see him. And Czechoslovakia had given him third-class treatment.

Mr. Nixon had had a two-hour talk with Ceausescu and not long afterward the Rumanian President told a visiting newspaperman: "Nixon is a practical man. He wants peace and so do we. I think we can do business with him."

But the President had other reasons, besides saying hello once again to a gracious host, in returning to Bucharest. Probably the most important was to get word through to the Communist rulers in Peking that he seriously desired a break with the past.

Under the leadership of Ceausescu, Rumania had established excellent relations with Peking. For one thing, Rumania had refused to go along with Moscow's criticisms of China, seeking instead to mediate the Sino-Soviet dispute. And although his country was a member of the Warsaw Pact, Ceausescu termed the invasion of Czechoslovakia by other pact members as "an infamous moment in the history of the revolutionary movement...a flagrant violation of the national sovereignty of a free and independent state."

Ceausescu had done more than that to antagonize the men in the Kremlin. He established diplomatic relations with West

Germany and sought greater diplomatic and trade ties with the West generally. And Rumania maintained neutrality in the Arab-Israeli dispute. In a very real sense, therefore, Rumania was a bridge between the East and the West.

As President Nixon had expected, there were those "Kremlinologists" in the State Department who immediately raised objections to the forthcoming trip. They declared it to be a diplomatic gamble -- for Rumania in a tense period of its relations with the Soviet Union, and for the U.S. as we moved gingerly towards arms limitation talks with our most powerful ideological opponent.

Sure enough, the Russians quickly registered their anger with the White House.

And Richard Nixon told his aides there would be no turning back. He would visit Bucharest, no matter what the Russians or the State Department thought. It would not be the last time that the President would ignore such counsels.

Before leaving on the round-the-world trip that would take him to Rumania, the President played host at a baseball reception at the White House. He was in rare form, disclosing that "if I had to live my life over again, I would have liked to have ended up as a sports writer." He had planned to attend the All-Star game at RFK Stadium that night but, because of heavy rains, it was cancelled.

And then, in a whisk of a jet across a continent and half an ocean, the President was on board the U.S.S. Hornet greeting Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Mike Collins on their return from

the moon. The President had gambled on the successful completion of their Apollo 11 mission.

The following day the President arrived in Guam where, before newsmen, he spelled out what has become known as the Nixon Doctrine: We should help countries fight internal subversion but not fight for them. In other words, hopefully, no more Vietnams.

And in the various nations of Asia that he visited his message was essentially the same: the U.S. intended to keep a lower silhouette in that part of the world once the Vietnam war was over. In other words, our friends abroad were given notice that U.S. ties would be loosened, although not cut entirely.

From Bangkok, Mr. Nixon flew secretly to Saigon, the first American President ever to visit the capital of South Vietnam. Aboard Air Force One, the President was in a relaxed mood, reminiscing about his previous trips to Southeast Asia, ^{including Hawaii} Suddenly, he asked: "How would you like to go to Hanoi?" His listeners were startled. But then the President smiled, recalling a visit he had made there in 1953.

After meeting with President Thieu at Independence Palace, Mr. Nixon helicoptered to Di An, the 1st Infantry Division base about thirteen miles from Saigon, where he spoke to troops preparing to go on night patrol.

"This war," he said, "is the most difficult war any army has ever fought. Certainly, it is the most difficult war any army of the United States of America has fought. Because this is

the first time in our history when we have had a lack of understanding of why we are here, what this war is all about, where we have had real division at home...But also out here in this dreary, difficult war, I think history will record that this may have been one of America's finest hours, because we took a difficult task and we succeeded.

"You are doing your job. I can assure you we are going to try to do ours to see that you didn't fight in vain."

And then as he stepped into the jeep that would take him back to his helicopter, he had a sudden thought. He turned and said: "I'll see you all back home."

CHAPTER 7

Exactly two years after the President's two-day visit to Rumania, the Village Voice in New York, one of the more Nixon-phobic of leftwing weeklies, published a dispatch from Bucharest, which came to Mr. Nixon's attention through his Daily News Summary.

Written by Elliot Brewster, the dispatch began: "Richard Nixon is very popular here, particularly among intellectuals. I was astonished when I heard a young professor at the University of Jassy tell me, 'How lucky you are to have so well educated a President, so humane a man, so good a speaker, a man of such depth, and even a handsome man.' I tried to explain that, as a matter of fact, Nixon was quite unpopular among young academics in the U.S., but after being told the same thing over and over again, I stopped protesting.

"Vietnam? No one cares very much, even though the party newspaper loyally devotes a few column inches every other day to the triumphs of the popular forces of resistance in Indochina. The talk about the evil imperialist dogs of Wall Street is gone from Rumanian newspapers -- a bad memory of the days of Stalinism -- and everyone sees the U.S. as a golden land of kindly rich people. Old peasant women in villages would come up to me to see an American who actually spoke Rumanian, and say, 'God bless you and your country.' In a far northern village...an old woman showed me a U.S. flag she had made. She cried while talking to me. A noted art critic in Bucharest told me he cried when Nixon visited

Bucharest in 1969, and said that never in its history had Bucharest been so full of enthusiasm as during that visit."

Just hours after his return from that trip to Asia and Rumania, the President briefed the bipartisan legislative leadership in the White House. Despite his exhausting trip, the President was unusually buoyant, obviously feeling enthusiastic about his accomplishments.

The President, who was greeted with warm applause by the Congressional leaders of both parties, said that his visits with Nicolae Ceausescu in Rumania and Yahya Khan in Pakistan were valuable. The two leaders had been particularly illuminating on the status of the Sino-Soviet conflict and provided information that the President could not obtain from his own intelligence sources.

And then the President spoke of the changing U.S. policy in Asia, noting he would not be particularly surprised if some people in the room had been somewhat confused by seeming contradictions in his statements in various Asian nations.* They were

* In Thailand, for example, the President assured that Asian ally that the U.S. would stand by it in the face of a Communist threat. Some correspondents cabled back dispatches that the pledge seemed to conflict with the low silhouette doctrine enunciated in Guam a few days earlier.

indeed contradictions, the President said, and they were quite deliberate. Our policy in Asia is in a transition stage and differs

countries require different approaches. The U.S., in his view, must begin to move away from a monolithic approach to a country-by-country approach in this area. However, this must be done subtly and gradually and could only work on the basis of general operative principles.

Nevertheless, the President went on, the U.S. would keep the commitments it has made thus far, because a failure here would bring drastic repercussions in terms of American credibility and what would happen to the people in the area. However, we do not intend to expand any treaty; the time has come for a painstaking examination of our commitments on a country-to-country basis. He was not suggesting, he said, that the American role in Vietnam had been all wrong. Were it not for the U.S. keeping the cork in the bottle in Vietnam, the one hundred and fifteen million people of Indonesia would now be under Communist rule.

These then were the basics of the President's new policy: To maintain the credibility of America's existing commitments and to make no new ones in the area. In other words, a "limit on commitments." However, if a major power should move across a border openly, this could mean a different ball game; but because that would involve a confrontation of some kind with the U.S., the President felt this to be an unlikely development.

In the event an Asian nation is faced with an internal threat, it will in the future be forced to deal with the difficulties entirely on its own. However, if the internal troubles are being provoked and subsidized from the outside, then we will provide

assistance in the form of arms and materials, but we will not provide troops. This is the new approach: we will help in a material, not a manpower, way.

The President, who was interrupted by a burst of applause, then talked about the need for Japan to play an increasing role in the area, a theme he had touched upon before. However, in talking with the leaders of the non-Communist states in Asia, he had discovered that Japan was considered a hard bargainer.

As for Vietnam, the President said he was not quite certain but it seemed evident that the military situation had improved substantially in recent months. Casualties were decreasing, but, as far as he was concerned, the rate was too high. We had been expecting an enemy offensive in late June or early August, but it hadn't taken place. Perhaps one reason for the lull was the effective tactics employed by General Abrams. We have been doing things to keep the enemy off balance that have not been publicly known, the President said.

The President said that General Thieu, whom he had seen again on his quick trip to Vietnam, continued to impress him as one of the more able and sophisticated Vietnamese leaders, which, he added, wasn't saying a great deal. He said that Thieu had opened up the elections to the Vietcong because he realized that this was as much a political war as a military one.

As for the Paris talks, the President said we were making no progress whatsoever. Though we had made concession after concession, the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong had not moved an

inch. We would be happy to negotiate without conditions, but we cannot and must not while the enemy sits with his feet planted in concrete waiting for us to go further. However, there was the possibility that the lull in the fighting might indicate that the enemy was hurting and wanted to bring an end to the conflict.

The President said it was his guess that if the enemy does seek serious negotiations he will do so in private, not public, talks. What the U.S. has offered them, the President went on, was a peace with justice and honor for both sides. If they don't take that, then we will have to look in other directions. He said the trick was to end the war in a way that would make a future war unlikely, as well as not leaving such countries as India, Thailand and Indonesia with the impression that the mighty United States, after expending blood and treasure, had been defeated. That could only leave a vacuum of power in Asia which would be filled by either the Chinese or the Soviets. If a Vietnamese settlement results in a Communist Government in Saigon in one or two years, the American people would simply throw up their hands and get out of Asia. And we couldn't let that happen. We couldn't let Communism dominate Asia because that's where sixty percent of the world's people live.

Almost every Asian leader asked whether he agreed with a Soviet proposal for a collective security pact for Asia, the President noted. His answer had been a categorical no. If the United States entered into what would amount to an anti-Chinese security pact with the Russians, it would enormously enhance Soviet

influence in Asia; would strengthen the Communist party in non-Communist countries; but it would also permit the Chinese to level the charge that the Russians and Americans had joined together in "a white alliance" against the non-white peoples in the area. Not only was the President opposed to a Soviet-American condominium over Asia, but he was anxious to find a way to communicate with the Chinese, he added.*

* Of course, unknown to the Congressional leadership and, for that matter, to most everyone but a tiny handful of White House experts, the President was already taking a number of behind-the-scenes steps to establish communication with Peking.

The President then turned to his visit to Bucharest. Something most extraordinary happened in that Communist capital. Though he had expected a good reception, he frankly had not been prepared for the overflow crowds which greeted him wherever he went. In Eastern Europe, said the President, there are about one hundred and fifty million people, most of whom like the United States. Though liberation was now no longer possible, increased communication with these peoples behind the Iron Curtain most definitely was in our interest. Thus, he heartily recommended that Senators and Congressmen travelling abroad program time for Eastern Europe. And, incidentally, the President went on, he predicted "those Soviet troops won't move into Rumania," as had been feared.

The President said he believed that the unusually friendly reception that he had received in Bucharest would not be lost on the men in Hanoi. That coupled with the Apollo mission had brought a tremendous increase in American prestige around the world.

At this point, a Congressman asked what the President's position was on East-West trade. The President said that he did not favor trade with East European countries which furnish arms to the North Vietnamese. Once we get Vietnam out of the way, however, we could open up East-West trade dramatically. He conceded that at one time he was of the opinion that trading with a Communist country only helped strengthen its iron hand over its people. But now he believed in trade in order to open up those countries to other influences. Adding consumer goods to their economies tends to leaven their repressive societies, the President added.

As far as an exchange of persons goes, he generally thought that to be good.

Another Congressman, noted for his interest in military affairs, spoke up. If we are going to stop propping up the Asians, he asked, why should we continue to prop up the Europeans? He also asked about the possibility of bringing home American troops.

The President answered that he didn't think that this was the time to discuss the problem, especially with German elections imminent. He said if we do lay it on the line, we ought to do it privately, not publicly.

A Senator raised the question about an American agreement with Thailand, an agreement with which the President did not seem

familiar. According to the Senator, the agreement called for the U.S. to provide a division and two brigades of ground troops to serve under a Thai General in the event of external aggression.

The President said he had talked with the Thais and that they did not want any American personnel in their country. He said that he and Prime Minister Thanom Kittikachorn had a frank discussion, that Thanom had stated they could take care of their own problems. The main problem, of course, was the presence of an estimated twenty-five thousand North Vietnamese in Thailand. The President emphasized to the leadership that "there is no commitment for American ground troops in Thailand."

In fact, he had not made any commitments or passed out any money in any of the countries he visited.

CHAPTER 8

To no surprise to the President he began to draw flak from certain segments of the press. Most of the attacks did not unduly concern him. In the course of a crowded political lifetime, many harsh things had been said about him and, as he put it, he had developed relative immunity. On this subject he likes to quote an old political foe, Harry S Truman, "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen."

And Richard Nixon makes it clear he likes being in the kitchen.

Sometimes, in his opinion, the attacks have been absurd. A case in point was an editorial in the July 19, 1969 edition of The New York Times which, under the heading Nixoning the Moon, took the President to task for his "attempt to share the stage with the three brave men on Apollo 11" by talking by telephone with two of them.*

* At a July 22 leadership meeting, the President said he hoped the surtax would be extended so that he could pay for the phone call to the moon.

According to the editorial, it was President Kennedy who initiated the Appello program and Lyndon Johnson who was the program's most strenuous advocate. But now, the Times continued, because Mr. Nixon is President "by accident of the calendar" when the moon

shot actually was being made, he was engaging in a self-serving performance "unworthy of the President of the United States."

Obviously it was difficult for the editors of the Times to accept Mr. Nixon as President. But he was President and, as such, it was entirely fitting for him as the representative of the American people to commend the astronauts on their historic achievement. Only a bad case of Nixonphobia could lead the Times' editorial board to view the President's phone call as nothing more than "a publicity stunt of the type Khrushchev used to indulge in."

A telling reply, ~~brought to the President's attention by his Daily News Summary as he flew to greet the astronauts aboard the U.S.S. Hernet,~~ was written by Murray Kempton in the New York Post. An iconoclast whose writings frequently "amused" the President in his New York days, Kempton accused the Times of "bad manners," noting that "Mr. Nixon does happen to be commissioned to be our national voice" and that if he "should announce that all men are created equal, will the Times point out that these sentiments are Jefferson's and denounce the intrusion?...can it be that [the Times'] annoyance with Mr. Nixon has broken the conventional bounds of courtesy because it feels a greater anger with America displaced to him? That, of course, would be an anger at things for which Mr. Nixon is not responsible, an anger at a history made by murder, and a war of which we are ashamed."

There were other critics who did not reach into the depths of the picayune for ammunition against the new President. Their

most common complaint in those early months seemed to be not so much that Mr. Nixon had been wrong, but that he had not been active enough. They recalled with nostalgia that the first hundred days of the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations had been filled with furious activity -- new policies proclaimed, Congress flooded with legislative proposals, the nation rallied to action behind a new leader.

Of course, it could be argued that there was no Bay of Pigs either. But that was generally overlooked by such partisan critics as Arthur Schlesinger Jr., who quite predictably described Mr. Nixon as "an almost invisible President," contending that "no new President in memory has made so little effort in his first weeks in office to define his purposes."

The President had indeed defined his purposes in his Inaugural speech. And one of those purposes was to avoid the kind of overblown rhetoric which in Mr. Nixon's opinion had led his predecessors into promising things that could not easily be fulfilled. As a matter of fact, Mr. Nixon had carefully gone over the final drafts of his speech to make certain that it contained no heart-lifting slogan that could be construed as promising immediate cures. The nation's problems were too deeply-rooted to be resolved by empty phrase-mongering.*

* Ten years after the dawn of Camelot, a number of liberal writers looked back on the Kennedy Administration and discovered

they did not like what they saw. "How could we have been thrilled by that pompous Inaugural Address?" asked Gerald Clarke in The New Republic of January 16, 1971. "It was jingoistic, a Monroe Doctrine for the globe itself. How could we have been excited by its swollen, Cold War Rhetoric? 'Now the trumpet summons us again -- not as a call to battle, though embattled we are -- but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle year in and year out...In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility -- I welcome it.' Nineteen-sixty-one, the hour of maximum danger? Were things all that bad? Had good old Ike left us in that bad a state?"

The Schlesinger view of the Presidency calls for a Chief Executive to write instant history practically from his first day in office. It cultivates the notion that a President must be a semi-royal style setter a la Camelot. And, as during the first frantic spring of Franklin Roosevelt, results should become apparent after the first one hundred days.

The Nixon theory of the Presidency, however, was something that called for judgement over the long haul. Taking note of the fretful chatter among some Washington observers that the first hundred days of his Administration were undramatic, if not inanimate, the President said in effect the pace was deliberate: listen for a steady humming noise, not the William Tell overture. "I don't count either the days or the hours, really," he told reporters.

"I have never really thought in terms of one hundred days. I plan for a long term."

The liberals may not have been happy with the new Administration but neither were some conservatives who began to learn that the President was not the man they thought he was. "In the euphoria that followed upon Mr. Nixon's election in November," wrote James Jackson Kilpatrick, "some of us on the troglodyte Right fell into dreams we had no business dreaming. We imagined new brooms in the State Department, dramatic coups at Paris, the eloquent enunciation of sound conservative doctrine, the appointment of advisers who bore some modest resemblance to the Goldwater image..."

"But, alas, very little of this had taken place and "we chafed in unwarranted disappointment. Perhaps the spirit of moderation is contagious. These first hundred days have been days of constructive non-accomplishment. It isn't another Camelot this spring -- it's more like Paducah in August -- but one Camelot in a generation may suffice. As he promised on Inauguration Day, Mr. Nixon has invoked a lowering of voices. After eight years of uproar, it's a pleasant change of pace."

On the hundredth day of his Administration, April 30, President Nixon held a Cabinet meeting at which, among other things, he introduced Rogers C.B. Morton, a Congressman from Maryland who was also Chairman of the Republican National Committee. The President said he had asked Morton to attend Cabinet meetings since it was important for him to be "closely clued in on what we are thinking and doing." The President added that he was not trying to make the Cabinet a partisan body but "if some of you can be

partisan from time to time, we wouldn't mind." He then called on Morton to report on what the Republican National Committee had been doing, commenting: "He didn't know I was going to call on him but a Congressman is always ready to talk. Someone told me that this is the one hundredth day of this Administration and Rogers can tell us what we have done and what is coming in the next hundred days."

"Well," began Morton, "what we've done in the first hundred days is elect Barry Goldwater Jr. to Congress from California."

In his travels around the country, Morton went on, he had found people generally pleased with what the Administration was doing, although some Republicans were still grumbling about not enough of the party faithful getting jobs. But the big question on peoples' minds was the war. "What they want to know is, 'When are we going to get some good news about Vietnam?'" said Morton.

The President then introduced to the Cabinet his new assistant and director of the Office of Economic Opportunity, Donald Rumsfeld of Illinois, who had given up a safe Congressional seat to take over one of the toughest jobs in the Administration -- the poverty program.

"Have you been approved?" the President asked Rumsfeld.

"No," said Rumsfeld, "the hearing won't be for another two weeks."

"Is Dirksen for you?" the President asked, with an ironic grin.

"I think I'm all right there."

"Well, if Dirksen is for you," said the President, "you're in."

Most of the session was devoted to a discussion of an Administration plan to enlist volunteers in the work of aiding domestic programs. Among those who did the briefing were George Romney, as Chairman of a newly formed Cabinet Committee on Voluntary Action; Max Fisher, the President's Special Consultant on Voluntary Action; and Mrs. Patricia Reilly Hitt, Assistant Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare.

One of the principal matters of concern that came up was the relationship between the volunteers and career employees. Mrs. Hitt pointed out that "we are likely to run into resistance from the professional -- the so-called bureaucrat. We have already found this out in HEW." That, said HEW Secretary Finch, was "the understatement of the day." Finch said that the professional employees needed to be assured that the volunteers will be well-trained. The volunteer's role must be clearly understood on all sides, he said. "We must get over the old concept of Lady Bountiful from the suburbs running down into the city scattering rays of sunshine."

The President conceded that there was a great deal of skepticism on the part of Government people about what volunteers can do. To a degree, such skepticism was natural. "We learned a lot about volunteers in the campaign," he said. "We knew we couldn't run it without them, but sometimes it was hard to run it with them -- the way they squabbled with one another. But still they were tremendously important and valuable."

"We are not saying volunteers can take over everything," the President went on. "We are trying to mobilize a great many people who want to do something that is useful. There is a reservoir of well motivated potential power here, and we must make good use of it."

The President had a wry thought: "Someone said one of the problems with volunteers is that you can't fire them. Do any of you have a way that we can fire some paid people?"

The President also mentioned in passing the "very exciting time" he had the night before in hosting a dinner honoring Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington on the musician's seventieth birthday. The President had not yet found the time to throw many parties, but this was by far the liveliest.

The idea for the evening had come from Charles McWhorter, a longtime Nixon friend who has broad contacts in the musical community. McWhorter, a lawyer for the American Telephone & Telegraph Company in New York, passed the idea along to Leonard Garment. The President's reaction was "go."

The President took the opportunity to award Ellington the Medal of Freedom. He was the first American Negro to be so honored at an official White House dinner, this man whose father had once worked in the White House as a butler for Warren G. Harding.

After dinner in the State Dining Room, the President presented the Medal of Freedom in the East Room. Reading the recipient's name, the President paused humorously after "Edward

Kennedy," drew a big laugh, and concluded with "Ellington." Then he added: "In the royalty of American music, no man swings more or stands higher than the Duke."

Ellington showed his gratitude characteristically by kissing the President twice on each cheek. Then the President asked everyone to stay. "Duke was asking me earlier if I would play, and I said I had never done so yet in the White House. But it did occur to me...that one number was missing...Would you all stand and sing -- and please, in the key of G." Then he sat down at the imposing Steinway and proceeded to thump out "Happy Birthday," as everyone sang heartily and joyfully.

There followed a jam session, the likes of which could probably never be duplicated. The White House had never seen anything like it. Some of the nation's greatest jazz musicians played Ellington hits. Even Vice President Agnew pounded out a few convincing bars of "Sophisticated Lady."

"Can you imagine Coolidge ever doing anything like this?" asked composer Harold Arlen.

Not everything had gone well in those early months. There was the flap over the appointment of Willie Mae Rogers, director of the Good Housekeeping Magazine's Institute, as Special Assistant to the President for Consumer Affairs. Miss Rogers had stirred up sharp criticism by refusing to quit her Good Housekeeping job. When the dust had settled four days later, Miss Rogers had resigned. And the President gave the post to Mrs. Virginia Knauer of Phila-

delphia, who had headed consumer protection in Pennsylvania. And, in the President's later opinion, she turned out to be one of his better appointments.

The President did not shrink from confirming that he had vetoed the appointment of Dr. Franklin A. Long, vice president for research at Cornell University, as director of the National Science Foundation. Criticism of the still-unannounced appointment had come from a number of prominent Republicans including Ev Dirksen who had pointed out that Dr. Long had written an article opposing the Sageguard anti-ballistic missile system proposed by the President.

The President said that in view of the disagreement over the AEM issue Dr. Long's appointment might be "misunderstood."

But partisans of Dr. Long howled long and loud and The New York Times fired off a broadside. Then the President had a session with the National Science Foundation's board, which formally had deplored the "winds of political change" involved in the incident. The President said he had been wrong in denying Dr. Long the directorship. He said he had asked Dr. Long if he wanted his name resubmitted but that he refused because he did not want the controversial case reopened.

It had been a long time since a President of the United States had confessed making an error, but there was another aspect to the story which was brought out by John P. Roche, who had been Lyndon Johnson's intellectual-in-residence. Roche, a liberal Democrat who has taken to writing a column since his exit from the

White House, made this point: "As Senate Minority Leader, Dirksen has taken on the job of protecting the Nixon Administration from bipartisanship. Now I share some of the Senator's views -- had we won the election, I would certainly be doing my best to keep any of his political ilk out of high Federal posts. Under present circumstances, therefore, I hardly expect him to give his apostolic blessing to liberal Democrats. Dirksen is perfectly consistent in arguing that Dr. Long's opposition to the ABM should bar him from high office. He is indeed far more consistent than some of Long's supporters who claim that the post is 'non-political,' but who would scream like banshees if Nixon had appointed a distinguished scientist who, for instance, indorsed a preemptive nuclear strategy."

A similar case was the nomination of Dr. John Knowles, director of Massachusetts General Hospital, as Assistant Secretary of health in HEW. The nomination was opposed by Ev Dirksen and the American Medical Association which considered Knowles too liberal. Eventually Knowles was vetoed by the White House. In his place, Secretary Finch nominated Dr. Roger Egeberg who, though as much a medical "activist" as Knowles, did not arouse AMA disapproval.

Administration critics tried to make capital out of the foregoing flaps. But, as the President stated privately, they would be largely forgotten in a matter of weeks. What really counted were the big issues and on these most objective observers gave him, in the words of Dean Acheson, "good marks." The former Secretary of State was commenting on the President's European travels which Acheson had opposed at the outset.

"I was wrong," Acheson said.

Acheson also defended the President's decision to proceed with the Safeguard ABM project, then under heavy fire from Senate doves. He compared it with Harry Truman's judgement in going ahead with the hydrogen bomb in 1948, even though many eminent scientists had voiced disapproval. U.S. intelligence had reported to President Truman that the Soviets were building their own bombs and would proceed no matter what the U.S. might or might not do. "Under these circumstances," said Acheson, "it required no special knowledge" to arrive at the right course of action. "If we had not developed this weapon, the Russians would have been well ahead."

What made Acheson's remarks all the more interesting was the fact that he and the President had had many well-publicized differences over the years. But now all that was forgotten and the former Secretary of State became a familiar figure around the White House.

Mr. Nixon went out of his way to bury the hatchet with former President Truman. The occasion was a visit to the Truman Library in Independence, Missouri, where Mr. Nixon presented the Steinway piano which had been in the White House during the Truman years. The President took the occasion to note the bipartisanship on foreign policy in those years: "...where the defense of the United States is concerned, or peace is concerned, we are not Republicans or Democrats, but Americans."

The President concluded his short visit by playing The Missouri Waltz on the Truman piano.

All of which proved disconcerting to the President's would-be detractors. Where was the "Tricky Dick" they had so loved to hate? Except for his momentary irritation with Clark Clifford (and that was mild compared with some Presidential outbursts of the past), Richard Nixon was just not acting the way they had expected Richard Nixon to act.

The truth was that his lack of partisanship even confused his political allies. Key Federal jobs were being filled slowly and there were gags about awaiting the start of the Nixon Administration. Party loyalists up on the Hill were screaming to high heaven about not being able to get jobs for their constituents. Senator Robert Dole complained about his inability to place a single Kansan in the Administration in those early months. "There must be a spot for one between now and 1976," he said. "A janitor maybe?"

At one Republican leadership meeting, Ev Dirksen brought up the problem and noted that the man who shot President Garfield was an office-seeker disgruntled by a lack of patronage. The President laughed and said he had better lay on some more security.

Eventually, under the guidance of 28-year-old Harry Flemming, the Republican furor over the President's talent hunt subsided. Flemming, hired by the President for what proved to be one of the tougher assignments, had been a businessman, member of the Alexandria, Virginia, City Council and a Special Assistant to the Republican National Chairman.

One of Flemming's problems was the fact that the President had only about 2,300 patronage jobs (out of a total of three million Federal positions) to bestow, of which three hundred were at the Cabinet and sub-Cabinet level, with the rest a little lower than the angels but a little higher than civil service. Another problem arose from the fact that the President, himself, had told his Cabinet Secretaries that they could do their own hiring. Later, the President conceded that this instruction had been unwise. By that time, however, it was too late. And Harry Flemming was soon involved in some pretty tough battles trying to get good Republicans into some of those vacancies.

What really stunned many Republican legislators was Richard Nixon's insistence on removing postmasterships from the political spoils system. This was a principal source of patronage for the Congressmen and they couldn't understand why, after eight years out in the wilderness, it had to be snuffed out so quickly.

But the President was adamant about pushing through postal reform even though he knew full well it wouldn't gain him many votes.

And he knew he was heading for political trouble in trying to cope with inflation. For, in the early weeks of his Administration, he made one of his ^{four} riskiest decisions. And that was to slow down the economy, after four successive years of inflation, by reducing Federal expenditures as well as adopting fiscal policies designed to hold back business expansion even at the risk of increasing unemployment. It was a gamble, but Richard Nixon could see no other way.