Richard Nixon Presidential Library
Contested Materials Collection
Folder List

Box Number	Folder Number	Document Date	No Date	Subject	Document Type	Document Description
17	3		☑	Foreign Policy	Book	A book entitled, "The Nixon Years", by Victor Lasky. RE: Chapters 17-27. 230 pgs.

DOCUMENT WITHDRAWAL RECORD [NIXON PROJECT]

DOCUMENT NUMBER	DOCUMENT TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE OR CORRESPONDENTS	DATE	RESTRICTION
N-1 [DOC # 2]	MSS	The Nixon years by Victor Lasky, chapts 17 — 27	n.d.	C

FILE GROUP TITLE: HRH

BOX NUMBER: 267

FOLDER TITLE: The Nixon years by Victor Lasky [Part 3 of 3]

RESTRICTION CODES

A. Release would violate a Federal statute or Agency Policy.
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Presidential Materials Review Board

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Collection: H. R. Haldeman
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Folder: The Nixon Years by Victor Lasky [Part 3 of 3]

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CHAPTER 17

Even before he took the oath of office, Richard Nixon had been warning that the Middle East constituted a "powder keg" that could well explode into a nuclear confrontation between the superpowers. This was one of the "nightmares" he inherited and, in terms of complexity and emotions, it was to prove more difficult a problem than anything he was to face in his first term in office. In fact, by mid-1970 the United States and the Soviet Union were being propelled on a collision course which could have touched off World War III. However, by a series of decisive moves, the President managed to dampen the crisis -- the most serious to confront his Administration during his first years in office.

The basic reason for the crisis, of course, was the bitter hatred felt by the Arab powers toward Israel. As the President had repeatedly observed, both privately and publicly, it was the Arabs' principal ambition "to drive Israel into the sea." The Israelis, on the other hand, just wanted to be left alone. And whatever the merits of the Arab case, the President's primary concern was to prevent their almost fanatical bitterness from dragging the Soviet Union and the United States closer to the ultimate conflict.

By May of 1970 all United States efforts to get a settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict proved fruitless. Instead of cooperating with the United States, the Soviet Union, following its mechanistic catechism of exploiting trouble while expanding its

sphere of influence, kept supplying the U.A.R. with arms, taking the position that arms control could only follow, not contribute to, a settlement. In April the President was informed that Soviet pilots were flying operational missions over the U.A.R. Meanwhile, fighting was taking place almost daily along the Suez Canal. And, in retaliation, the Israeli Air Force struck deep into the U.A.R. At the same time, Israeli forces conducted a thirty-two-hour sweep against Arab guerrilla positions in neighboring Lebanon. The "explosion" that the President had feared seemed in the making.

This led the Nixon Administration to propose a cease-fire for ninety days, one which called for "a just and lasting peace... based on (1) mutual acknowledgement by the United Arab Republic, Jordan and Israel of each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence, and (2) Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in the 1967 conflict, both in accordance with" the U.N. Security Council Resolution of November 22, 1967.

The presence of Soviet personnel -- both technicians and combat pilots -- in the U.A.R. was of particular concern to the President. So much so that at an off-the-record briefing with top publishers and broadcasters in San Clemente early in July, Dr. Kissinger warned it might become necessary to "expel" the Russians from Egypt before they became firmly entrenched. Asked how he would carry this out, Kissinger said he was reminded of the World War II story of the man who was asked how to deal with German U-boats in the Atlantic. The man had said the answer was to heat up the

ocean and boil the submarines to the surface. When a persistent questioner had then asked, "How do you do that?" the man had replied: "I have given you the idea. The technical execution is up to you."

The Kissinger statement caused some concern in the State Department which had for weeks been conducting an intensive diplomatic campaign to obtain support for the U.S. cease-fire initiative. Finally, Jordan, the U.A.R. and Israel accepted the military standstill. As did the Soviet Union. And on August 7, the guns were stilled along the Suez Canal. And Gunnar Jarring of Sweden, the special United Nations Mideast envoy, in accordance with the new agreement, began separate talks with the representatives of Israel, the U.A.R. and Jordan. It appeared that negotiations might be begun.

In the early hours of the cease-fire the United States received evidence that the Egyptians were massively moving surface-to-air missiles toward the Suez Canal. The missiles, Soviet-supplied and Soviet-manned, could now hit incoming Israeli planes over Israeli territory. There was nothing clandestine about any of this. The Soviets knew full well that U.S. and Israeli aerial reconnaisance were monitoring the moves.

Obviously the Russians didn't care. And they didn't care because they apparently believed that the Nixon Administration, preoccupied as it was with political turmoil resulting from the explosive campus reaction to Cambodia, would say and do nothing about their cynical Suez trickery. But they guessed wrong.

Nevertheless, at first, Israeli confidence in American pledges was seriously eroded because of the Soviet-inspired cheating.

And just as troubling to the Israelis was the fear that anti-war sentiment had so poisoned America's will to resist Communist aggression that, in the event of a crunch, the United States would capitulate. And there was the complicating factor that Israel herself had lost much popularity in the world, largely because of her unwillingness to return the territories captured in the June war of 1967. In the final analysis only Richard Nixon could prevent the destruction of Israel.*

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* These were the sentiments expressed to the writer by top Israeli officials during a ten-day visit to Israel at the height of the crisis in the fall of 1970. The Israelis talked about the Soviet Union the way American anti-Communists did twenty years ago -- in terms of Moscow seeking world domination. The Israelis viewed the Soviet military presence in Egypt as part of their political strategy for Asia and Africa.

The Soviet doublecross angered the President. "It will not be overlooked," he said at the time.

Against this background there occurred a well planned series of hijackings of jet planes bound for New York from Europe. The hijackings, beginning on September 6, were committed by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a pro-Marxist terrorist group seeking the "liberation" of Palestine from the "Zionist invaders." The leader of the Popular Front, Dr. George Habash, said he was opposed to a peace settlement in the Middle East and that

he would not hesitate to risk a third world war if it served his objectives.

Three of the planes, with hundreds of passengers aboard, many of them Americans, were flown to a desert airstrip outside of Amman, the capital of Jordan. By now the passengers had become hostages and attempts to get them released were unavailing. The demands of the Arab guerrillas holding the hostages were rejected by the United States, Britain, West Germany, Switzerland and Israel. The President himself talked by telephone to the leaders of the other nations in order to coordinate a united response. The President was spending a considerable amount of time on the problem.*

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* And he looked it, too. I had a chance to talk with the President for about ten minutes during this period. I had run into him as he was leaving his EOB office for the White House. He asked me to accompany him across the street. I remarked to the President that he looked tired. He said he was indeed. He had been going with little sleep for several nights, working on the problem of getting the terrorist-held hostages out of the Jordanian desert. I told him I was leaving for Israel. He asked me to go to the small kibbutz of Godot in the Golan Heights that he had visited shortly after the Six Day War. He said he had been greatly impressed by the remarkable courage of these people who had been under constant Syrian fire for years. "Tell those people in the kibbutz that I am thinking of them in this moment of crisis," the President said. I carried out the President's request.

Obviously unforeseen by all parties in the Middle East dispute, the hijackings nevertheless had the effect of undermining confidence, particularly among the Israelis, in the Arabs' ability to control their constituents or to deliver on any settlement that might result from serious negotiations.

And more specifically, the Fedayeen's flagrant disregard of King Hussein's authority was precipitating a crisis within Jordan.

On the night of September 15, many of the nation's highest officials had gathered at Airlie House in Warrenton, Virginia, for a dinner honoring Defense Secretary Laird. During the dinner Henry Kissinger received an urgent telephone call. The message was that the White House had received a "hotline" call from London advising that a full-fledged civil war was about to break out in Jordan. The call had come from Sir Dennis Greenhill, the Permanent Undersecretary of State, who wanted to know what the United States intended to do. Sir Dennis also reported that Prime Minister Edward Heath (who had bested Harold Wilson in the general elections the previous June) might want to talk with the President.

Kissinger left for the White House immediately. With him went other members of the Administration's crisis-management team, the Washington Special Actions Group (WSAG), which was organized following the North Korean shooting down of the U.S. spy plane in 1969. They included Admiral Thomas Moorer, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of staff; Deputy Secretary of Defense David Packard; CIA Director Richard Helms and Assistant Secretary of State Joseph Sisco

in charge of the Middle East. Arriving at the White House at 10:30 p.m., they were joined by three members of the NSC staff: General Al Haig, Harold Saunders and Talcott Seelye.

Kissinger called Sir Dennis. Sisco was also on the line. One of the issues discussed was how to rescue and evacuate the hijacked hostages whom the Fedayeen were threatening to kill -- unless their demands were immediately met.

~~Out of this talk and the WSAG meeting~~ came ~~the following~~ preparatory measures: The aircraft carrier Independence, cruising in the eastern Mediterranean, was ordered to sail eastwards; evacuation planes were flown from Europe to Turkey; and an airborne brigade in Germany was placed on semi-alert.

By this time word was received that Hussein had proclaimed martial law and had installed a military government. And WSAG considered the major possibilities as a result of Hussein's moves. They included: the routing of the Fedayeen with Hussein coming out on top; victory of the commandos and the fall of the King; and a prolonged stalemate. But one eventuality was the most ominous -- the fear that other Arab states, Iraq and Syria, long sympathetic to the commandos, might intervene. If that should happen, the Israeli Government would feel they had no alternative but to move militarily. Then Egypt would respond and that would most definitely involve Soviet technicians and airmen.

Shortly after midnight Dr. Kissinger called the President, who had been working late on a speech he would deliver later that

day. He summarized the latest intelligence from Amman, what the WSAG had discussed, and said that a memorandum summarizing the options would be ready for the President the first thing in the morning.

On Wednesday morning, September 16, the President met with Dr. Kissinger before taking off to deliver an Alfred M. Landon lecture before students and faculty members at Kansas State University. He took the WSAG memo with him.

In his speech, the President declared: "When Palestinian guerrillas hijacked four airliners in flight, they brought to two hundred and fifty the number of aircraft seized since the skyjacking era began in 1961. And as they held their hundreds of passengers hostage under threat of murder, they sent shock waves of alarm around the world at the spreading disease of violence and terror and its use as a political tactic.

"That same cancerous disease has been spreading over the world and here in the United States."

The President then flew to Chicago where he conferred for ninety minutes with Kissinger and Sisco. At this time, the President was concerned about making it clear that there was a limit to how far the United States could be pushed in the Middle East. But he was also worried about the Israeli troops perched on the Golan Heights and the West Bank of occupied Jordan. Any intervention on their part could bring the Egyptians -- and the Russians -- into the steadily deteriorating situation.

Kissinger flew back to Washington. At 2:00 a.m., Thursday, September 17, the National Security Adviser was awakened at home. The Situation Room reported that widespread civil war had broken out in Amman. Kissinger immediately called for a WSAG meeting to be held at 7:30 in the morning and he talked with Secretary Rogers and Admiral Moorer on the telephone. The primary concern at this point was the American hostages in Jordan and the American citizens living there.

At 3:00 a.m. Kissinger telephoned the President in Chicago. The President mulled over the bad news and decided not to inflate the crisis by rushing back to Washington. But he did intend to signal the Soviet Union that the United States would not stand idly by in this crisis. The President was still smarting from the cease-fire violations of both the Egyptians and the Russians. Another display of indecisiveness could well embolden the Russians into doing something even more serious.*

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* Discussing Israel's plight as a result of the cease-fire violations, William F. Buckley Jr. wrote in his column, "Why would any country in the future accept an American assurance if it is so glibly over-ridden by the Soviet Union?"

At 10:00 a.m. that Thursday the President drove up to the building on North Wabash Avenue that houses the Chicago Sun-Times and the Chicago Daily News, where in the corporation's board room on the seventh floor he expounded on the state of the world for nearly two hours.

Out of that session came the report to the effect that the United States "is prepared to intervene directly in the Jordanian civil war should Syria and Iraq enter the conflict and tip the military balance against the Government forces loyal to King Hussein..." That was the way the Sun-Times reported on the session which supposedly was off-the-record.

Considerable confusion as to what the President had said ensued. And what the President later said he had said was that intervention was one of several hypothetical options open to him, but that he did not think it desirable. There was also a Presidential hint that the U.S. might use the holding of the hostages as an excuse for attacking the Palestinian commandos. And he indicated that it might be helpful if the Russians believed the United States was capable of "irrational or unpredictable" actions. After all the President did unexpectedly send troops into Cambodia some months before.

As a result of two WSAG meetings that day, and with the President's approval, a number of moves were made which, as anticipated, were picked up by the press -- thus deliberately heightening the sense of American determination. First, another aircraft carrier, Saratoga, was sent into the eastern Mediterranean. Second, a third carrier, the John F. Kennedy, which had been scheduled for NATO exercises in the Mediterranean, was sent over ahead of time. And third, the helicopter team Guam and its Marine battalion landing team was ordered to leave North Carolina for the same exercises a day earlier. This would establish two landing teams afloat in the "Med."

At the same time WSAG decided to warn the Fedayeen that they would be held fully responsible for any harm befalling the hostages being held on the Jordanian desert. And a tough statement to that effect was issued later in the day by Ron Ziegler.

Thursday night, September 17, the President returned from Chicago and went to Dr. Kissinger's office where they discussed the developments of the day and the thinking of WSAG. Over this period the U.S. had kept a careful watch on Israeli actions, noting that they were not sitting idly by. They were moving quietly, calling up reserves, and were concentrating additional forces on the Golan Heights.

On Friday unconfirmed reports began reaching the Situation Room of movements inside Jordan of both the Iraqis and Syrians. Iraq, of course, had kept some seventeen thousand troops in Jordan with Hussein's approval since the Six-Day War. And the White House thought the Iraqis more likely to attack the Hussein forces. During the day the President met with Kissinger on four occasions, one of them a briefing by the CIA. He also met with Golda Meir who advised him that Israel would not take part in peace talks until the new missiles were removed from the Egyptian-held side of the Suez Canal truce zone. However, Israel would continue to observe the ninety-day cease-fire.

Friday night a note was received from Moscow advising the White House that the Russians had no intention of intervening in Jordan; that they were hoping that the United States would not

intervene and that the United States would discourage others, specifically Israel, from intervening. The United States declined to reply.

Actually the reports of Iraqi and Syrian intervention turned out to be premature. And Hussein's forces seemed to be gaining the upper hand in the struggle against the Fedayeen. The crisis appeared to be ending. The President didn't think so, however. For one thing, he took the Soviet assurances with a grain of salt. After all, they had callously violated the Suez standstill agreement. "Take it easy," he told Kissinger. "We've had that sort of thing before."

And then the worst happened. On Sunday, September 20, word reached Washington that the Soviet-advised Syrians had invaded Jordan. Syrian tanks were reported to be rolling southward to relieve the hardpressed commandos. The Jordanian crisis had taken a new -- and most ominous -- turn.

There were various conversations between the President, Rogers, Sisco and Kissinger that day. Some thought was given to going to the United Nations. Then the proposal was made for an international conference in Cairo, Paris or London. But the President felt that a conference held under these circumstances really would give an advantage to the aggressor and would hinder unilateral counter-action.

Furthermore, it had become clear that if the situation continued, what with the intervention of the Syrians, the Hussein regime was doomed. It was a classical situation, in many ways similar

to that in Vietnam, where -- as the President noted -- you are fighting both main forces and guerrilla units. The King could handle one or the other, but not both.

Though early reports indicated that Hussein was doing well, the President decided that a tough note should be sent to the Soviets in light of the fact that their Syrian friends had attacked as well as the fact that the Russians, in their note of the past Friday, were extremely critical of any intervention. The note -- the toughest the Nixon Administration ever sent to Moscow -- warned of the "gravest consequences" if the Syrians did not withdraw. After dispatching the warning, Secretary Rogers decided to spend the night on a cot in his office, something he had never done before.

Meeting piled on meeting that Sunday of crisis. The possibility of American intervention had suddenly become very real. And the President was concerned that all options be explored. At one point, he told Kissinger: "Let's you and me war-game this," the idea being, according to the President, to see "where the weak points might be" in the proposed plans.

The President, himself, did something unusual Sunday evening by joining an Action Group session in the Situation Room. The discussion revolved around the question of how much time there was before a basic decision had to be made. There was a difference of opinion of from twenty-four hours to a week or ten days.

The question was resolved just as the Action Group was ending its meeting. The Situation Room teletypes were tapping out word that Syrian tanks had overrun Irbid, a small town in northern

Jordan.* The Action Group members were hastily reassembled to consider how far the Syrians now intended to go. At the same time, Kissinger called Rogers to get the Secretary's views.

* By coincidence, the writer was inside occupied Jordan, about ten kilometers from Irbid, a few days later. Accompanied by Israeli Army officers, he could hear the explosions of the tank battle as the Jordanians fought to regain control of the pivotal town.

From this WSAG meeting came the following actions: the 82nd Airborne at Fort Bragg was alerted and the airborne unit in Germany was put on full alert. The assumption was that Soviet intelligence would pick up both these moves. Simultaneously, Kissinger checked with the British and Israeli embassies to learn what they knew. By now, U.S. intelligence was being coordinated with the British and the Israelis.

At about 10:30 p.m. the intelligence net reported that about three hundred Syrian tanks had crossed the border and had broken through Jordanian defenses. From that moment until 11:30 p.m. the President, Sisco and Kissinger met in the latter's office. The Action Group was reassembled again at midnight. The issue before them was simply what to do if the Syrian breakthrough succeeded and Jordan completely disintegrated. The session lasted long enough to give each of the Action Group members his assignment and to set up a twenty-four hour intelligence watch.

At 3:00 a.m. Kissinger received really bad news. Jordan appeared to be in dire straits. Kissinger immediately telephoned the President who had been asleep. That was the first of several calls during that long night. What the President wanted was a new reading on what should be done. Others whom Kissinger called on the President's behalf the next four hours were Secretaries Rogers and Laird, Sisco and Moorer. In the morning President Nixon organized a new crisis group, called "the principals," to carefully go over each Action Group recommendation before submission to the President.

The first meeting of "the principals" was at 8:30 a.m., Monday, September 21. Members of this select group were Rogers, Laird, Packard, Moorer and Kissinger. The possibility of U.S. military intervention was raised at this and other meetings. But it was ruled out for the time being. Among those who raised bitter objections to sending troops were the State Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who made it quite clear they did not want to get involved in another Vietnam. That ugly war had burned deep into their psyches and, in a sense, had paralyzed their capacity to react affirmatively. In fact, they even looked askance at suggestions to rescue the hijacked hostages and other American citizens in Jordan. For one thing, landlocked Jordan was a logistical nightmare. But if ordered to do so, the Pentagon would of course make the effort, though reluctantly. It was pointed out, for example, that the sight of U.S. paratroops dropping down from Jordanian skies could well result in the execution of the hostages and reprisals against Americans living there.

But there was another, even greater, argument against military intervention in the tangled affairs of the Middle East. As the President put it to a visitor that week, "The American people do not have the heart to go into another war."

Somehow the President had to find a way to convince the Russians to tell their Syrian puppets to get their armor the heck out of Jordan. Consequently the Administration continued to sound and act tough. When the Russians Monday night delivered another note, saying pretty much what they had said in their previous note, the Administration failed to reply. And the Administration rejected a British-French effort to seek a Four Power declaration urging an end to the fighting, knowing full well it would only result in fruitless, time-consuming arguments. Meanwhile, the carefully-orchestrated series of military alerts was no doubt being analyzed at the Kremlin.

On that Monday, the President met with Israeli Ambassador Yitzhak Rabin -- "one of my favorite diplomats" -- and out of their secret talks came an informal understanding that, in the event the Syrians reached Amman and Hussein was imperilled, the Israelis would themselves go into Jordan. The U.S. not only would not object but the reinforced Sixth Fleet would protect the Israeli rear.

Another private visitor that day was Representative Mendel Rivers of South Carolina, the powerful Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, who had asked for the interview because he wanted to talk about the growing Soviet naval presence around the world.

Rivers voiced his concern that not all of the President's advisers understood the need for a strong Navy.

The President sought to disabuse Rivers of that notion. "Mendel," he said, "you are among friends here. As you know, I am a Navy man. You can be proud of Mel Laird and Admiral Moorer and their awareness of the problems facing us. The very fact that I am taking this trip to Europe and the Mediterranean, if conditions now permit, is because we want an in-depth review not only of our Sixth Fleet, but of other conditions in that area and to show that the United States has a plan" to deter aggression. The President then discussed the contingency plans being devised for the rescue of the skyjacked hostages and other Americans in Jordan.*

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* The President had previously announced a trip to Europe that would include a visit to the Sixth Fleet and conversations in Rome, Belgrade, Madrid and London. Also planned was a visit to the grave sites of ancestors in Ireland.

They then talked about Mrs. Meir's recent visit. Both agreed that the Israeli Prime Minister was a "remarkable woman." And Rivers said, "We've just got to help Israel," even if the consequences were unpleasant. The President said that he would do whatever was necessary for the security of the United States, adding, "The President needs freedom to act." Rivers nodded in agreement. The President then gave the Congressman a copy of an article by Cyrus L. Sulzberger, entitled: "Power Is as Power Does," and commended it to his reading.

All day Tuesday the White House meetings continued. And that evening Henry Kissinger went to a U.A.R. Embassy reception. Asked why later, Kissinger said that, in part, it was to "show the flag" and also to show that "we were not anti-Arab." It was at this affair that Yuly Vorontsov, Minister Counselor of the Soviet Embassy, asked Kissinger why he had not received any reply to the latest Soviet note. Aware he was being overheard by other guests, Kissinger said quite bluntly there was no need for a reply since "our friends haven't done anything." Besides, Kissinger went on, a prior note had stated the Soviet hope that no one would intervene. Yet the Syrian tanks had advanced. Would the United States be satisfied if the Syrian tanks stopped advancing? No, Kissinger said, they must all be withdrawn.

The next morning a ~~WSAG meeting was followed by an NSC session.~~ The question of what the U.S. should do in the event of King Hussein's collapse was still being threshed out. That afternoon, the President was meeting with Secretary Rogers and Kissinger, when word came at 2:30 p.m. that the Syrian tanks had begun to withdraw. The President's first reaction was to have the information double-checked. Within the hour there was confirmation. The Syrians were indeed returning home.

What had happened almost overnight was the success of a devastating counterattack by Jordanian troops and aircraft. They literally began to chew up the Syrian armor. Another reason for the sudden withdrawal was the knowledge that the Israelis were in

position to come swooping down after them. In addition, the threat of American intervention had helped convince the Syrians they had no chance. And it was possible that their Russian advisers, not knowing what the Americans might do, had informed the Syrians they were on their own.

On September 25, fighting between Jordanian troops and the Palestinian commandos ended with the announcement of a cease-fire agreement. And within days the hostages, mostly Americans, were liberated by the Jordanian Army. Soon they were on their way home.

And, ironically, only a handful of close Presidential advisers had any idea of the urgency of the crisis, one that was in many ways as hair-raising as the Cuban missile crisis during the Kennedy years when a good part of the nation's population was almost frightened to death. This time the eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation was kept behind the scenes. As the President told a visitor when it was over, he aimed "to show great power but also to show great restraint." And, as even his political critics conceded, he did so most successfully. He had managed to preserve the hope of peace in the Middle East.

Ironically, too, another crisis involving Cuba was building at the very time President Nixon was seeking to dampen the Middle East situation. And that had to do with the construction of a Soviet submarine base in Cuba.

At first, United States intelligence had no idea of what was taking place. In late August 1970, U-2 reconnaissance planes

discovered signs of construction taking place in Cienfuegos Bay, an ideally situated deep-water harbor on the southern coast of Cuba. On September 9, a Soviet naval task force arrived at Cienfuegos. Additional U-2 photographs were taken on September 16. A "readout," available on Friday morning, two days later, disclosed the following:

-- A complex of barracks buildings, a wharf, recreation grounds, and other extensive administrative, communications and support facilities -- begun less than a month before -- was nearing completion on Alcatraz Island.

-- The Soviet submarine tender accompanying the task force was moored in permanent fashion to four large buoys in the deep-water basin.

-- Anti-submarine nets were in place across the approaches to the basin.

-- Though no Soviet submarines were in evidence, two barges of a type used by the Soviets at facilities supporting nuclear-powered submarines were in the harbor.

All this information was immediately reported to the President, who by this time, of course, was deeply involved in the Jordanian crisis. The President, however, immediately ordered, on an urgent basis, a detailed analysis of all that was known of the full scope of Soviet military activity in Cuba and of its strategic implications. And he ordered that the latest information be restricted only to the most senior officials, in order to prevent a leak which could precipitate an unwanted crisis.

The following morning, September 19, the President told Kissinger, "We have to be clear about what it is and what it is not. We shouldn't run around excited. Our own people must be very careful. I do not mean I don't consider it serious. It could mean a hell of a crisis. I don't want that sort of thing."

Later that day the NSC Senior Review group met in the Situation Room -- Kissinger, Packard, Johnson, Helms, Haig and Moorer -- to analyze the latest intelligence data, the background provided by the 1962 missile crisis and its aftermath, and the military significance of the various uses to which the Cienfuegos facility could be put. They agreed that further study was needed before possible U.S. responses could be considered. Detailed papers were provided the White House by the State and Defense Departments and the CIA.

The President called an NSC meeting on Wednesday, September 23, for a clearer assessment of the Soviet moves in Cuba, the issues they raised for the United States, and of the range of choices open to him. If used to service missile-carrying submarines of the powerful Yankee class, the President's advisers agreed, the Cienfuegos facility would mean a material and instantaneous increase in the number of Soviet missiles targeted at any one time against the United States.

Beyond this, what was the political implication of such a Soviet move in the context of the SALT talks and against the background of Soviet actions in the Middle East? About the only quick

answer was the oldest of maxims about the Soviet Union: Moscow will move into any situation where it can find an opening, provided that the risks were not too great.

As usual, the President made no final decision at the NSC meeting. But it was clear to everyone in the room, he said, that a Soviet submarine base in Cuba would be a violation of the 1962 understanding.*

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* That understanding was spelled out by President John F. Kennedy at a press conference on November 20, 1962, following the missile crisis. "As for our part," Mr. Kennedy said, "if all offensive weapons are removed from Cuba and kept out of the Hemisphere in the future, under adequate verification and safeguards, and if Cuba is not used for the export of aggressive Communist purposes, there will be peace in the Caribbean." As Mr. Nixon observed, the operative part of the statement was: "If all offensive weapons are removed from Cuba and kept out of the Hemisphere in the future." That remained the policy of the Nixon Administration.

The President also told his ~~key~~ advisers that he saw the Cuban problem as two-fold: our private communication with the Soviets, and our public posture. Privately, he went on, we should leave no doubt in the Kremlin's mind that a submarine base would be unacceptable. But in our public posture we should avoid blustering and avoid stirring up a great domestic clamor or crisis atmosphere against the Soviets -- because if we took a bellicose public stance, this

could force the Soviets to react in the same way. Therefore, if the story leaked prematurely, we should make clear -- calmly and firmly -- that the U.S. Government was aware of the situation and was watching it very carefully, that we considered the 1962 understanding in effect, and that we would of course hold the Soviets to it.

The President then instructed the WSAG to develop precise options and a scenario for public and private responses. The senior WSAG advisers met the next day and agreed on the language of a public position in line with the President's instructions.

The language was put to use fairly quickly. The next day Cyrus Sulzberger reported in The New York Times that the Soviets were building an installation for missile-carrying subs at Cienfuegos. At his noon briefing, the Defense Department spokesman Jerry Friedheim responded to questions along the agreed line. He reported the construction of what appeared to be a submarine base, adding that Soviet activities were being kept under close surveillance -- which they were.

Later in the afternoon, anxious questions were put to Henry Kissinger conducting a background briefing on the President's forthcoming trip to Europe. Talking very quietly, but deliberately, the President's national security adviser declared, "The Soviet Union can be under no doubt that we would view the establishment of a strategic base in the Caribbean with the utmost seriousness." The statement was in accordance with the guidelines agreed to the day before.

"Dr. Kissinger," a reporter asked, "with the possible establishment of Soviet submarine bases in Cuba, isn't this a bad time to be taking a foreign trip?"

"Let's be careful about what has been said," Kissinger replied. "We are watching the events in Cuba. We are not at this moment in a position to say exactly what they mean. We will continue to observe them and at the right moment we will take the action that seems indicated. We are in excellent communication. Nothing very rapid and dramatic is likely to occur, and we are going to be in very close touch with the situation."

Then, at the President's direction, word was passed directly to the Soviet Government that a submarine base was indeed unacceptable to the United States Government. The message further said it was up to the Soviets whether to go the route of conciliation or confrontation; the President, it was emphasized, was prepared for either eventuality.

The official Soviet reply came soon after the President's return from Europe. On October 9, Radio Moscow reported that a commentator in Izvestia had stated that reports of a Soviet missile-submarine base in Cuba "have no basis whatsoever" for the simple reason that the Soviet Union was opposed to bases on foreign soil and was strictly adhering to the 1962 understanding. On October 13 Tass, the Kremlin's official news agency, issued an authoritative statement along the same lines. Shortly afterward the United States Government stated, "We have noted the Tass statement and consider it to be positive, but we will of course continue to watch the situation."

Meanwhile, the Defense Department disclosed that aerial reconnaissance photographs revealed that the Soviet submarine tender, the barges with their indispensable cranes, and the equally necessary tug, had steamed out of Cienfuegos harbor. At the same time, work had stopped on the communications center. Two days later, the tender and a salvage tug had stopped at Mariel, a port about twenty-five miles west of Havana. It was noted that the port of Mariel had been used by the Russians in 1962 to remove their long-range missiles.

For the present, at least, the Soviets had no nuclear submarine base at Cienfuegos. And, in a pledge to the United States, the Soviets said they would not install one at any time in the future.

The pledge came after several diplomatic talks with the Russians. They were in low-key fashion because the President did not want the Russians to lose face at a time of critical negotiations on other issues such as arms limitations and the Mideast.

It was decided by the Nixon Administration to avoid the eyeball-to-eyeball public confrontation that had occurred during the Kennedy years. The result, however, was the same. The Russians backed off a second time, but in a manner that did not involve worldwide embarrassment for either side. And once again the American public was saved from the kind of heart palpitations it suffered during the 1962 missile crisis. With extreme calm and precision, Richard Nixon had defused yet another potentially explosive situation.

It was while the President was in Europe, visiting with American clergymen at the Vatican, that he told a poignant story

about himself. Sometimes in the middle of the night, he said, he comes half awake and thinks of some probelm he ought to talk to the President about. "Then, when I am fully awake, I realize that I am the President."

And, as President, he still had the Vietnam problem to contend with. At his first Cabinet meeting following his return, he provided a preview of the speech he was to deliver later that evening, October 7, 1970. The Vice President was on the road campaigning vigorously for Republican candidates and drawing a lot of flak for his use of such picturesque expressions as "radical liberals" in denouncing the opposition.

The President noted Agnew's absence. "There is an empty chair here," he said, with a smile. "I wonder what he's doing."

~~After the laughing stopped~~, the President ~~got down to~~ business. He said that in his speech he was going to propose an immediate cease-fire in place throughout Indochina; an immediate and unconditional release of prisoners of war; convocation of an Indochina Peace Conference, and a political settlement that met the aspirations of "all" South Vietnamese. He said he would offer to negotiate an agreed timetable for complete withdrawals as part of an overall settlement.

He said the political settlement he sought was based on "the relative strength of the existing political forces in South Vietnam." This, he explained, contained "a subtlety that will be seen only by the sophisticates. It means that the Viet Cong would have the opportunity to participate in the political process." Of

course, he went on, one could expect on the basis of the V.C. track record a rejection of his proposals. "But rejection might not necessarily mean rejection."

"This is a serious proposal," the President went on. "It goes very far -- frankly as far as we can go."

The President said that the U.S. was making the proposal from a position of strength. For one thing, Vietnamization was progressing nicely and the Cambodian operation had been extremely successful. A year ago, he pointed out, his military commanders would have been opposed to a standstill cease-fire and so would he. Now, it was possible to offer this step because South Vietnam could handle much more of its own defense. If this initiative for a political settlement failed, the President said, "then we are ready to go the longer route. We will continue our withdrawals. We will be out of Vietnam."

An important positive factor was the low casualty rate. "While one is too many," the President said, weekly casualties had been reduced dramatically: 281, two years ago; 181, a year ago; and this week, 38.

Secretary Rogers said the reception to the President's plan had been highly favorable and that Secretary General U Thant might make a statement urging the other side to consider the Nixon proposals.

"Don't bank on it," the President said quickly.

General William Westmoreland, Army Chief of Staff and former Commander in Vietnam, told the Cabinet members that he would

not have wanted to accept a cease-fire as recently as six months ago, but "now a cease-fire is an acceptable risk."

The President said that while the war in Vietnam was being brought to an end, he felt there was another problem in that unhappy country that should be kept very much in mind. This was the problem of the economy -- particularly inflation and corruption. "We are very aware of this terribly difficult situation and are examining it," he said, noting that he had dispatched George Shultz, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, to study the problem first-hand. Shultz reported briefly that the problems were indeed "staggering" but he felt there were some good men in the Saigon regime wrestling with them and the situation was not entirely hopeless.

The President then called on Kissinger to present a brief appraisal of the recent European trip. "Henry didn't know he was going to be called on so he will be short."

"You're being excessively optimistic, Mr. President," Kissinger commented.

However, Kissinger was brief. He pointed out that by visiting such countries of such diverse politics as Spain and Yugoslavia the President had demonstrated that deterring Soviet aggression was a unifying force. And it enabled countries with very different points of view to consult and communicate for the common interest. The trip was also helpful in disabusing those who may think that the Nixon doctrine spells a decline in America's world responsibilities.

The President then took over. Suggesting that Cabinet members plan to visit Spain, he said he had been tremendously impressed by the able, effective young people in the Spanish Government. They could be expected to handle well the transition period when General Franco stepped down. The President offered his own estimate that "Spain in the next thirty years will move into the first ranks of Europe."

The President also suggested visits to Yugoslavia, where he also found a group of very able young men in the upper levels of the Government.

Turning to a more general theme, the President remarked, "We have been through some difficult times since we came here." But he said he was not pessimistic about the international situation. On his European trip, he said, he found that "other countries want the United States to play a role in the world." While there often is shouting against the U.S., he went on, the attitude becomes quite different when the suggestion is made quite seriously that the U.S. should "go home." Then, he said, the attitude becomes, "Oh, no, please don't go!"

He said that President Marcos of the Philippines had once told him that while it was politically popular in some countries to say publicly the United States must go, it was also quite necessary to say privately, "I hope that you won't."

"We are the most powerful nation in the world," the President said. "But no nation in the world <u>fears</u> the United States.

This is the greatest asset we have in diplomacy." The United States is "the only nation in history that hasn't used its great power to acquire more power. This country can be proud of its role in the world and we should stand up and say so."

A hush fell on the Cabinet room and George Romney began to speak. The HUD Director said that everyone in the room "thanks God that you, Mr. President, are at the head of this country's Government at this time and are handling our role in the world with such great skill."

The President returned to his forthcoming speech. He said he believed "it may take forty years for it to be written but it is the truth that America has never worked for a better cause than it has in Vietnam. If we can bring this war to a close, if we can give South Vietnam a chance, this will be an achievement of which we can be extremely proud. I am sorry that a Republican Mayor [Lindsay] said that our best young men went to Canada to avoid serving in the armed forces. I say our best young men went to Vietnam."

As the President left the room, the entire Cabinet gave him a standing ovation.

CHAPTER 18

There was one thing the President did not have to worry about those long hot summer months of 1970. Except for minor riots here and there, the nation's cities had come through relatively unscathed by racial flareups. For the second year in a row, there were no burnings of cities, as had been widely predicted by the doom-sayers.

And as the colleges and universities re-opened in the fall the nation's students, despite their widely advertised bitterness over Cambodia, for the most part were peaceful. Major campus violence, which many experts had said was now a way of life, had been reduced to isolated acts of terrorism.

Another, perhaps even more remarkable thing, occurred that fall. And that was the swift and massive termination of dual school systems across the South. This Nixon Administration triumph went largely unheralded. The Administration had long been saying to civil rights advocates: "Judge us not on what we say, but what we do." Of course, the oft-repeated remark constituted an oblique slap at previous Administrations which had talked big about such issues as school desegregation but accomplished very little. As Alexander M. Bickel noted in The New Republic: "Lyndon Johnson uttered the words, 'we shall overcome,' to the applause of a joint session of Congress in 1965. John Kennedy and later his brother Robert held out their hands to the blacks. There was no rush of desegregating activity in the first two years of John Kennedy's

Administration. Lyndon Johnson did not desegregate the schools of Clarendon County, South Carolina, and Robert Kennedy had no thought of moving Watts bodily into Orange County, and said so..."

But under Nixon the stepped-up desegregation of the schools in the South was done quietly and with dispatch. Central to the success of the Southern transition to unitary schools were the State Advisory Committees on Public Education, biracial panels of civic leaders formed by the Nixon Administration in seven states.

As each of these Committees was organized, the members came to Washington for briefings on their role in smoothing the integration process and for a meeting with the President. They came in groups of twelve to fifteen individuals, uncertain of each other and of the Federal intent, apprehensive about the risks of taking a stand on the touchy school issue. But, in each case, they went home with the beginnings of a team feeling, a determined confidence and a sense of mission.

And without doubt the President's meetings with these groups in the Oval Office helped make most of the difference.

First, the President let these groups know that he understood the South, believed in the South, and would not stand for the South to be treated as a second-class region of second-class citizens. He invariably displayed a staggering knowledge of detail about each State, the people, places and problems -- far more than could have come from any briefing paper. And often he recognized old friends and acquaintances among the committee members, and greeted them warmly. Thus the initial impression he made on all

of them was that here was a man who knew and cared -- an impression seldom left upon Southerners facing Federal authority.

Then he spoke to them about leadership, relating it to the Oval Office where the leadership burden has been so heavy over the years and where so many momentous decisions have been made. The point he really drove home was that each of them, in his own community, had leadership responsibilities as challenging, as full of opportunity, as a President has in the Nation. And he called on the committee members, both black and white, to rise to the challenge of bringing their States peacefully in line with the law of the land. Exercise your own "Oval Office responsibility," he said; step forward for principle and your act of courage will move others to step in behind you.

Meanwhile, the President began to pay attention to the forthcoming Congressional elections. On August 19, prior to the flareup in the Middle East, he called the Cabinet together to discuss what he described as appropriate activities for the Secretaries during the coming campaign. He announced that Bob Finch, now a Counselor to the President, would act as the general coordinator of all campaign activities.

Finch, along with Senator John Tower of Texas and GOP Chairman Morton, reviewed the situation for the Cabinet, covering the races in both the House and the Senate, paying particular attention to the key states.

At one point, Tower, who was Chairman of the Senate Republican Campaign Committee, said the minimum hope was that the

new Senate would be divided fifty-fifty -- "which will leave the Vice President casting the deciding vote on our side."

"Are you sure he'll vote that way?" asked the President, and the room echoed with laughter.

When the state-by-state discussion got to the Virgin Islands race for Governor, the President smiled and said, "Well, I said all states are important but I don't want all of you running off to the Virgin Islands to campaign."

The President suggested that the Cabinet members speak on general Administration themes rather than simply on subjects in their own area. (The Secretaries of Defense and State, by the nature of their positions, were excused from campaigning.) "As you know," the President went on, "out there in the boondocks when the Attorney General talks about foreign policy, they really think he knows something about it." The President turned to John Mitchell and grinned.

Then he turned to another favorite subject -- press relations. He urged that emphasis be placed on television. He said the "name of the game" was local television. Remember, he said, out there in the country a Cabinet member is a big name. "Maybe you won't be getting coverage in the Washington Post -- but be thankful for small favors."

Speaking as "a voice of considerable experience," Vice President Agnew had something to say about dealing with the press. "Everybody here thinks he's a political pro, but until you've dealt

with the press in a campaign situation, you don't know what can happen to you. Be damn careful what you say. A casual remark can blow you right off the tube."

At one point in the session, the President turned to Secretary Laird and said, "Mel, if you're going to close any bases during this period, close them in some nice, safe Republican districts."

The President said that the 1970 election would turn chiefly on the state of the economy -- and if the economy was in reasonably good shape by Election Day, the Republican party could expect to win control of the Senate.

The state of the economy -- as reported to the President at a meeting of the Quadriad on September 14 --- was as follows:

One, evidence was accumulating that the economic decline was ending, that inflation was abating and that recovery would come.

Two, the key question now was whether the revival would move at an adequate but not excessive pace, the more probable danger being too slow a rise.

Three, the time was not opportune for any marked change of policy, and present uncertainties did not call for a change. The appropriate posture for the present was to watch closely and be prepared for possible changes, which might have to be in a more stimulative direction, when final budgetary and program decisions were to be made in December and January.

Arthur Burns, however, warned against excessive optimism about the imminence of an upturn, though he did agree with the

evidence indicating an end to the decline. With this minor amendment of emphasis, there was no other dissent.

One issue the President ~~believed he~~ had defused for the coming campaign was Vietnam. His October 7 speech proposing a standstill cease-fire was wholeheartedly endorsed by the loyal opposition. Democratic National Chairman Larry O'Brien welcomed the proposal, claimed that the Democrats had advocated it before, and acknowledged that "I know I speak for the vast majority of Democrats when I say that this issue of ending the Indochina war is not in the political arena...The President and our Paris negotiating team have the goodwill of all Americans -- Democrats, Republicans and those in-between." Presidential hopefuls effused goodwill, too. Hubert Humphrey pledged his support for the President's "sound, welcome and heartening" proposals. And even Senator George McGovern, while patting himself on the back for his own peace moves, said the Nixon effort "is clearly the most advanced peace proposal yet made by the White House."

And so it was. But, unfortunately, the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong thought otherwise. One week after the speech, they declared their "firm, total, and categorical" rejection of the President's peace proposals.

Nevertheless, Vietnam was a non-issue, for the most part, during the 1970 campaign. As syndicated columnist Nick Thimmisch put it: "People have the idea that Skipper Nixon's even hand at the tiller will sail us out of the stormy waters that he didn't sail us into in the first place."

What did become a viable issue for the Democrats was the state of the economy. Prices continued to rise and jobless rates continued to climb. Which spelled trouble for the Republicans. The Consumer Price Index in the crucial election month of October rose at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of six percent. There were special factors -- the General Motors strike, for one -- but there was no blinking the fact that the progress against inflation had been slower than the Administration wanted.

And the fact that unemployment had climbed to the highest rate in seven years was due to cutbacks in defense and aerospace spending as well as the introduction into the labor market of tens of thousands of veterans returned from Vietnam. In other words, the rise in joblessness could be explained as a direct consequence of winding down the war.

The President, who reads statistics very well, knew he was in trouble on the economic issue. But he also knew there was no point in saying, as he was urged to do, that his Democratic predecessors had faced up to the problem of unemployment by sending men to Vietnam. That argument, even if true, hardly can be expected to satisfy a man looking for work or afraid of losing his job.

"Nixonomics," in other words, was a phoney issue. It permitted the Democrats to blame the Nixon Administration for both inflation and unemployment, without at the same time making any serious suggestions on how either one of these ills could be cured without aggravating the other.

With bad times as their chief issue, the Democrats could conceivably gain at least two or three more Senate seats and anywhere between thirty to forty-five more House seats, according to figures provided the President on his return from Europe. This, of course, spelled bad political trouble.

The President felt that if the situation were left to drift, it could be highly detrimental to his leadership in the next Senate. On defense and foreign policy issues, every vote was vital. So he had to get into the campaign -- even though he was aware that history indicated that presidential intervention in mid-term elections was of doubtful effectiveness.

The President feared the consequences of a Senate more deeply infected by neo-isolationism and pacifism. This was not partisanship, as far as the President was concerned. For example, he wanted to see Democrats like Senator Henry Jackson of Washington re-elected. For Jackson, like Senator Richard Russell of Georgia, Chairman of the Appropriations Committee and second ranking Democrat on the Armed Services Committee, was devoted to the cause of the nation's security and held no illusions about Soviet intentions.*

* Russell was moved to despair in commenting on the continuing Soviet deployment of the huge SS-9 intercontinental missile even while Russia was talking strategic arms limitation with the U.S. "It's no use," said Russell, "I've never seen a Senate like this one. They won't believe the facts if you tell them the facts; or if they believe the facts they will not understand what the facts mean."

Hoping to cut his Congressional losses, the President therefore took the offensive, throwing himself into the fray (instead of sitting out the election, as he had hoped). He hit the liberal Democrats where they were most vulnerable -- on the "Social Issue." The "Social Issue" -- meaning crime, riots, violence, permissiveness, "kidlash," drugs, etc. -- was a term made popular in a new book by two Democratic partisans, Richard Scammon and Ben Wattenberg, entitled The Real Majority. It was a book that made a tremendous impression on the men around the President.*

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* The President read a thirteen-page analysis of the book prepared for him by Pat Buchanan, who described the volume as containing "realistic cogent strategy."

Much was written about the President's role in the 1970 campaign that was just plain untrue. The charge that was repeatedly made was that it was one of the "dirtiest" campaigns in American history. And all sorts of "fear and smear" tactics were ascribed to Republican campaigners, including the President himself. A writer for Time, for example, reported: "Particularly in the last ten days, Nixon's campaign was an appeal to narrowness and selfishness, and an insult to the American intelligence. He diminished the Presidency."

It seemed to be a thesis assiduously promoted by other pundits (including James Reston of The New York Times), few of

whom apparently took the time either to travel with the President or even read the transcripts of the speeches he delivered in twenty-two states during the eight days he devoted to intensive campaigning. But such is the power of political myths that this thesis may well go down in the history books as gospel.

The truth was something else. This reporter, who traveled with the President for most of the campaign, heard him make what amounted to the "basic" speech in state after state. In this basic speech he listed what he called the "three key issues."

The first was Vietnam, Mr. Nixon hitting hard on the theme that he was winding down the war "not just for the next election, but for the next generation."

Next came inflation, the President blaming rising prices on his Democratic predecessors and on "runaway spenders" in Congress.

Passing quickly to the next subject, he discussed Government reform, with particular emphasis on the welfare system. And invariably he received a tremendous response when he denounced "a system that makes it more advantageous for a man not to work than to work!"

And then the grand finale: a call for law and order. This was always most effective when he was being heckled. And almost every place he spoke it was the same: kids chanting such slogans as: "One-two-three-four -- we don't want your fucking war" and "Five-six-seven-eight --- we don't want a fascist state." The President's response went something like this: "Let me say that I respect their right to be heard even if they do not respect my right to be heard. And...I can assure them that they are a very live minority in this

country, but they <u>are</u> a minority, and it is time for the majority to stand up and be counted. The way you can be counted is not by trying to shout speakers down, not by throwing rocks, not by bombing buildings, not by shouting obscenities, but I will tell you how you can be counted: with the most quiet, powerful voice in the world, by voting on November 3 for...."

That was the show stopper. That invariably brought campaign audiences to their feet, with deafening cheers. It also brought flak from some reporters, who claimed that the obscenity-shouting kids could have been denied entrance to the rallies. But if they <u>had</u> been kept out, as one of the President's men observed, "then the same critics would be writing about how nasty we are to dissenters. You just can't win."

Not once in any of his speeches did the President attack an opponent. Not once did he use "fear and smear" tactics against anyone. Rather he stated the case for the election of those he endorsed in positive terms. Yet the myth still persists that somehow the President had stepped across the line in attacking the opposition.

The confusion undoubtedly stemmed from the slashing attacks levelled against "radic-libs" in both parties by Vice President Agnew. Interviewed during the campaign by the editors of the New Orleans <u>Times Picayune</u> and <u>States Item</u>, Agnew laughingly referred to the Republican Senatorial candidate Charles Goodell as "a political Christine Jorgensen."*

* It was the President who gave the signal for the dumping of Republican Goodell, who had veered sharply leftward since moving from the House to the Senate in 1968 to fill out the term of the late Robert F. Kennedy. Goodell, who apparently felt the only way to retain his Senate seat was by catering to the Kennedy constituency, had gone out of his way to annoy the President. On September 15, 1970, meeting privately with William F. Buckley Jr., the President said that it was essential that the conservative writer's brother, James Buckley, running as a Conservative, win the three-way Senate race. The President said that there was no possibility of Goodell's winning. The polls that had come to his attention showed that Democrat Richard Ottinger was running ahead, Jim Buckley slightly behind, and Goodell practically out of the running.

Liberals who complained about rhetoric, of course, had short memories. Franklin Roosevelt was a master at the technique, labelling Republicans as "economic royalists" and gluttons of privilege. And Harry Truman, in his "give 'em hell" campaign of 1948 recited how his foes put pitchforks in farmers' backs, and warned of Republicans who would cut the throats of workingmen. More recently, in 1964, the Democrats blanketed television with "paid political announcements" which made Barry Goldwater out to be a mad bomber and an evil fellow ripping up old people's social security cards.

"Behind the hypocritical complaints on Administration rhetoric," commented Nick Thimmesch following the 1970 election,

"is the terrible truth that there are influential people, especially in Washington, who plain hate Richard M. Nixon and want him to fail as President. These haters include the 'liberal-academic complex': editorialists, cartoonists and pundits of our most influential magazines and newspapers; and a passel of rich lawyers, consultants and lobbyists who grew fat and sleek here during Democratic Administrations."

The President appeared to enjoy campaigning. Leaving his Chicago hotel on Thursday before Election Day, he cheerfully greeted a splendidly-uniformed doorman wearing a gaudily-spiked helmet. The President shook the doorman's hand warmly and said, "That's quite a uniform. You're giving me some ideas for the White House." Laughing ~~at his own joke~~, the President got into his limousine to launch a sixteen-hour day of campaigning which took him from a Chicago suburb to San Jose in California.

The episode with the doorman was indicative of the President's relaxed mood in the closing days of the mid-term election. He was "feeling pretty good," as he put it, and aides said that it was the first time they could recall the President's making reference to the fiasco of the fancy uniforms he had ordered -- and then had revoked -- for the White House police earlier in the year.

San Jose, of course, nearly turned into a terrible tragedy. From a vantage point in a press bus, this reporter observed with horror the dozens of frenzied, hate-ridden youths who hurled rocks at the Presidential limousine and motorcade.

The next day, Friday, Bill Safire worked on a speech dealing with the San Jose rioters. The President delivered the speech at an airport rally in Phoenix, Arizona. It was a hard-hitting reply to those who engaged in violence. One of the more effective lines was: "Those carrying a banner that says 'peace' in one hand while hurling a rock or bomb with the other are the super-hypocrites of our time."

Another statement was: "The terrorists, the far left, would like nothing better than to make the President of the United States a prisoner in the White House. Well, let me just set them straight. As long as I am President, no band of violent thugs is going to keep me from going out and speaking with the American people whenever they want to hear me, and wherever I want to go. This is a free country, and I fully intend to share that freedom with my fellow Americans. This President is not going to be cooped up in the White House."

It was a tough, hardhitting speech which pleased the audience in Phoenix. And it was the speech which the Republican National Committee paid to have televised nationally on the eve of the election. But a bad videotape, in black and white, was broadcast. As a consequence, the President looked bad. In contrast, Senator Muskie, who delivered the Democratic reply, looked good. Sitting behind a desk, the man from Maine read a speech written by Richard N. Goodwin. The Democratic rebuttal was in color, a decided contrast to the badly prepared Nixon videotape. Even the Republicans

had to admit that Muskie came off the better and there were those who saw in the encounter a preview of possible campaign debates of 1972.

Another problem for the Republicans lay in the fact that the Democrats had also read the Scammon-Wattenberg book and, as a result, many of them shifted from the soft line on drugs, crime and violence they had previously taken to a position of strong condemnation, thus warding off the GOP attack on the "Social Issue." In addition to Muskie, the Democrats wound up with a national television appearance by E.G. Marshall, the actor known for his firm, public service and law-and-order roles. And through the campaign, American flags sprouted on the lapels of Democratic candidates, no longer the monopoly of their Republican rivals. And in a widely quoted speech at Boston University, Senator Edward M. Kennedy deplored "those who seek change by the threat or use of force" and urged that they "be identified and isolated, and subjected to the sanctions of the criminal law."

When the votes were counted they showed a net Republican gain of several Senate seats; and a net Republican loss of only nine House seats, against a projected loss of between thirty to forty. And it was noted at the White House that a near-identical off-year result in 1962 was widely hailed as a personal triumph for President Kennedy.

The President took the attitude that in the Senate he had won "a working majority of four" -- in ideology if not in party

label. But he did view with some satisfaction that five of his most antagonistic Senate foes would no longer be around to harass him on defense and foreign policy matters. He was ~~particularly~~ happy that Jim Buckley had ~~beaten Senator Goodell~~ in New York. Also beaten were Senators Albert Gore of Tennessee and Joe Tydings of Maryland, both of whom voted against the President on such key issues as the ABM. In Texas a conservative Democrat emerged the victor, taking the seat held by the very liberal Ralph Yarborough. And Bob Taft, a Nixon Republican, emerged victorious in Ohio.

As the President told it at a Cabinet meeting, the real victory was that his vigorous campaign had staved off an even worse defeat. "I knew we were behind everywhere but Tennessee," he said, "but when it's something you believe in and that's worth fighting for, you go all out whether you're behind or ahead."

And then it was back to Presidential business.

CHAPTER 19

On November 5, 1970, two days after the mid-term elections, the President was briefed by Defense Secretary Laird on a top-secret plan to stage a raid on a North Vietnamese prison camp in order to rescue American prisoners of war.

The President had been thinking of that plan for two months. He had long been concerned about the Americans being held prisoner by the Communists, some as long as five years. He had spent considerable time listening to the stories of wives and other relatives of the POWs or men missing in action.

One of the more poignant stories was told by the President's chief delegate at the Paris talks, Ambassador David K.E. Bruce. A young woman, whose airman-husband had been missing for five years, had come to see him. Within the past year she had met another young man and they had fallen in love. Was she wrong, she asked. Was she a widow or not? What should she do?

For over a year, the President had sought to put pressure on the Hanoi regime either to release the Americans or to treat them in more humane fashion. He used every channel known to diplomacy, including an offer to release the twenty-five to thirty thousand North Vietnamese and Vietcong held in South Vietnam for the four hundred Americans held captive in North Vietnam. He even appealed to left-leaning Governments such as Sweden to use their influence, but to no avail. It became obvious to the President that the reason

for Hanoi's recalcitrance was the Communists' belief that the POWs "constituted a tremendous political asset in their ever-dwindling pile of assets."

Since Hanoi had indicated no desire to exchange prisoners, senior American military men of all four services had decided that an effort should be made to free the Americans forcibly. First, there was talk of an amphibious landing by a Marine division in North Vietnam aimed at so unnerving Hanoi that the Communist leaders might quickly sue for peace and release all prisoners. But this was ruled out after it was argued that the White House would never permit any such widening of the war. Then a concensus developed that the job could be performed expeditiously by small, handpicked teams, using surprise to overwhelm local guards and extricate the prisoners by helicopter. A study in depth was made of the Israeli use of helicopters on intelligence missions. The Israelis, of course, relied on absolute surprise and were usually dramatically successful.

The plan had been brought to the President's attention in late August. Laird had called Kissinger just before the President's two-day goodwill visit to Mexico to say he was considering a very daring operation which would entail a considerable amount of risk, and that he wanted the President's judgement on whether the planning should continue. Laird also said that new information received at the Pentagon indicated that "some of our men" in the POW camps were dying.

Kissinger received a summary briefing from Laird at the Pentagon on August 18 on the objectives of the operation, and

passed the information on to the President at San Clemente on August 21 after the President returned from Mexico.

The President quickly decided that planning for the operation should continue, and that Kissinger should get a further briefing from the Pentagon as soon as they were back in Washington. Informed of the President's tentative approval, Laird authorized the assembly and training of a special task force, called Joint Contingency Task Group Ivory Coast. Picked to plan the mission was Brigadier General Leloy Manor, 49, commander of the Air Force Special Operations Force -- the air commandos -- at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida.

Chosen to lead the raid itself, if and when it was finally approved, was Colonel Arthur ("The Bull") Simons, 52, who had considerable experience leading intelligence-gathering units on forays into North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. These units, composed of Americans and South Vietnamese, gathered information on such things as location of enemy troops, supply dumps and concentrations of air defenses. A near-legendary figure, Simons is considered to be the finest derring-do combat commander in the U.S. Army.

Back in Washington in September, Kissinger met with both General Manor and Colonel Simons. Then he decided that the two men should brief the President directly. The President was informed that he did not have to give the go-ahead signal until two weeks prior to the operation. There were two possible dates, October 21-23 and November 21-23, which met the requirement of a waning quarter moon. The position of the moon was most essential. It had to provide

just enough light for the raiders to operate but not enough for the enemy to discover their approach.

The President kept his own counsel. First, he decided that the October date was too soon. He did not want the raid to get mixed up in the mid-term election. And he also thought it would be better to wait until the North Vietnamese had an opportunity to respond to his October 7 ceasefire initiative, for which he had great hope. The initiative had also proposed "the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of war held by both sides."

As it turned out, the Hanoi regime was as intransigeant as ever. And, following the election, the North Vietnamese became more belligerent than ever. At the Paris negotiations, for example, they accused the President of having "lied" throughout the campaign, adding, "However, the results of the November 3 elections have proved the failure of his enterprise." U.S. negotiator Bruce responded by saying that the North Vietnamese "distorted analysis" showed "how little you understand our democratic process."

It was at the November 5 meeting that Laird pretty much convinced the President to approve the plan to liberate the Americans from a North Vietnamese prison camp. The President ordered the Defense Secretary to proceed with the planning, but in the strictest secrecy.

On November 11 -- Veterans Day, renamed "Prisoners of War Day" that yaar by Presidential proclamation -- the President summoned his principal advisers, Rogers, Laird, Kissinger and Moorer, to his

office. Admiral Moorer, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, reviewed the plans. All the pros and cons were discussed. The entire operation could backfire. But the President said to go ahead. "If we can get fifty men out, it will be worth it," said one adviser.

"No," replied the President, "if you can rescue ten men, it will be worth it."

The date for the operation was tentatively set at November 21.

Early the next week, Kissinger and Al Haig drove over to the Pentagon to make sure that all details were in order. Training for the operation was going on at Eglin. The planning was so detailed that a full-scale mock-up of the prison camp to be raided was constructed on the basis of aerial reconnaisance photographs and every phase of the operation was rehearsed again and again.*

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* The reproduction of the camp was destroyed after the training exercises were over, for fear that Soviet satellites might photograph it.

The actual prison camp was at Sontay, a scant twenty miles west of the center of Hanoi. It had been selected from about half a dozen other prison sites because of its flat terrain which would permit the landing of enough large helicopters to remove the Americans believed to be housed inside.

Kissinger reported back to the President that Admiral Moorer estimated the chances of success at eighty percent while Secretary Laird thought they were fifty-fifty. On November 18, the

President gave the final go-ahead. He said he was aware of the possibility of failure. In fact, at a meeting of the National Security Council, the President passed a note to Laird saying that "there will be no second-guessing from me" if the worst should happen. A primary concern was whether Sontay still held the seventy to one hundred Americans seen on reconnaissance photos taken a month before. As the day for the Presidential decision neared, reconnaissance over the target area was limited so as not to arouse suspicions on the part of the North Vietnamese.

The men who had been assembled for the special operation were by then at a base in Thailand, awaiting final instructions. All volunteers, they had been taken from military assignments all over the world, one even from a desk at the Pentagon. But most of the men were "green Berets," members of the Army Special Forces with headquarters at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, while others were from Eglin, home of the Air Force's special air warfare teams. Their training had begun in late August and had lasted for two and a half months.

Because of an approaching typhoon, the operation, originally scheduled for November 21, was moved up a day. When the operation began, the President ordered that he be informed instantly of every development.

The rescue party, consisting of about fifty men led by Colonel Simons in ten helicopters, crossed into North Vietnam about eight minutes ahead of schedule, touching down at the Sontay compound exactly on the minute. The lumbering helicopters had skimmed the

treetops in a roundabout route in from Thailand, but were not detected by the North Vietnamese. One reason was that a number of diversionary flights had been flown by Navy aircraft, which had dropped flares and jammed the enemy's radar. Many North Vietnamese thought the U.S. was invading their country.

Back in the White House, the President was informed that everything appeared to be going well. As usual in periods of crisis, Mr. Nixon was calm, cautioning his advisers against speculating on the impact of a successful raid -- because, as he said, "That's bad luck. Don't speculate."

A waning half-moon was up as one helicopter crash-landed right in the cramped yard of the Sontay compound, and the American commandos spread out, cutting the locks of the buildings and doing battle with the guards who had been caught completely by surprise. At least five of the enemy were killed and an undetermined number were wounded. Only one American was wounded -- a minor flesh wound caused by AK-47 automatic-rifle fire. The other helicopters had landed on the outside of the camp, awaiting the prisoners who were thought to be inside the buildings.

While the party was still on the ground at the compound, a message was flashed to the White House by Admiral McCain, Commander in Chief of U.S. Forces in the Pacific, suggesting the possibility of a "dry hole."

Which, unfortunately, proved to be the case. As it turned out, the American prisoners, unknown to U.S. intelligence, had been moved to another compound several weeks earlier. All the courage, the long training, the perfectly executed mission, had been for naught.

However, word reached the White House that the raiding party had departed the compound exactly on schedule, one hour after it had arrived, the plan having been flawlessly carried out, even in the face of hostile fire.

But a careful search of the abandoned cells showed no American prisoners in the compound. The President, who had been summoned out of a meeting to be informed of the disheartening development, asked Kissinger to immediately call Secretary Laird and Admiral Moorer to tell them he was proud of them, ~~that the effort had been the crucial thing~~, and that they should think of other efforts of this nature which hopefully would be more successful.

There were some positive aspects to the daring raid. It was believed that the audacious rescue strike so close to Hanoi may have unnerved the men who set North Vietnam's war policies. That Hanoi was embarrassed was demonstrated by its week-long silence on the helicopter landings, a startling indication that its air defenses had been so easily penetrated.

The raid also served to let the families of the American POWs know that "we will not let them be forgotten." As for the prisoners themselves, they quickly learned through the "grapevine" about the Sontay mission, thus providing a spark of hope to desperate men.

In that sense, therefore, the President felt the Sontay effort was most worthwhile -- if only in dramatically bringing the plight of the American prisoners to the attention of the world.

The knowledge that some four hundred Americans were rotting away in barbarous conditions in North Vietnamese prisons troubled him more than most problems.

Of course, the rescue attempt drew flak from some of the President's more dovish critics up on the Hill. Though they vied with each other in praising the gallantry of the raiders, they deplored the risks undertaken in the operation. Senator Fulbright, for example, said the maneuver certainly was "...very provocative. It may lead to other things. Who knows?"

Laird, in testimony before Congress, hinted there might be other rescue attempts: "We shall continue to make every effort to free our prisoners of war." And he warned that Hanoi's leaders would be held personally responsible for any reprisals against prisoners as a result of the raid.

On November 25, five days after the Sontay ~~caper~~ raid, the President pinned the Distinguished Service Medal on General Manor and the Distinguished Service Cross on Colonel Simons. He awarded the Distinguished Service Cross to Army Specialist Tyrone J. Adderly of the Army for "neutralizing" the enemy on the ground with grenade fire, and the Air Force Cross to Sergeant Leroy M. Wright, a helicopter crewman, who helped lay down covering fire during the party's departure despite a foot injury. The Sergeant was on crutches during the White House ceremony.

In his remarks, the President described the raid as a "mission of mercy" and said that this was "a day that makes us very proud of the United States."

CHAPTER 20

Traditionally the weeks following a national election are marked by a President and his staff turning their energies away from the exigencies of partisan politics to the business of running the government. Rarely does any "hard" news emanate from the White House as the President keeps to himself, working on such chores as the budget and the ground work for legislative programs for the new year.

The 1970 post-election period, at first, followed precedent. Newly elected Democratic Senators Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota, Lawson Chiles of Florida, and Lloyd Bentsen of Texas were invited to the Oval Office for friendly chats.

And the President breakfasted with his former neighbor from New York, Governor Nelson Rockefeller, who had just been re-elected to a fourth term after what at first had appeared to be an uphill battle against Democrat Arthur Goldberg. The ostensible purpose of the two-hour session was to discuss New York's need for more federal aid and the Governor found the President most receptive. With Attorney General Mitchell sitting in, political matters were also discussed, among them the election of James Buckley as a Conservative Senator from New York and the future of John Lindsay. According to Rockefeller, the New York Mayor, who had endorsed the Governor's Democratic rival, was desperately trying to figure a way to run for President. After the meeting was over, sources close to

the President and the Governor agreed that the two men were personally closer to each other than they had ever been.

The President also found time for a talk with Pearl Bailey, the songstress who had entertained at his state dinner for Chancellor Willy Brandt of West Germany. He had named her "Ambassador at Love" and Miss Bailey later made inquiries as to whether this didn't entitle her to diplomatic license plates. The State Department, somewhat flustered, said no.

However, in her meeting with the President, Miss Bailey did not raise that issue. Rather, she talked at length about her concern over the drug problem and the President explained what the Government was doing to contend with a situation that had reached epidemic proportions. Towards the end of their conversation, the President proposed that Miss Bailey visit countries behind the Iron Curtain as a "cultural" Ambassador of the United States.

The President also held lengthy meetings with his principal economic advisers. Singly and in pairs they met in his office. Stans of Commerce and Kennedy of Treasury came on November 19. McCracken and Burns came the following day. Sandwiched in between was Professor Milton Friedman, the conservative economic theoretician. As usual, the President wanted to hear all sides. And, as usual, he got it.

Friedman, for example, thought things were going well on the economic front and he counseled against paying too much attention to short-term developments and moods on Wall Street. He believed

inflation was definitely being curbed and a mild expansion was under way. And he advised the President not to adopt the formal wage-price guidelines and boards that were, as he pointed out, being proposed largely by the Democrats.

The following day, Arthur Burns, speaking now as Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, urged the President to adopt some form of incomes policy, some form of Government restraint on wages and prices. Specifically, he proposed that the President suspend the Davis-Bacon Act which provided that construction workers on Federal projects be paid high prevailing union-wage rates. This, according to Burns, would serve as a warning to the powerful building trades unions to hold down their inflationary wage demands as well as greatly reduce the costs of Federal construction.

In all of these conversations, inflation appeared to be less the issue than recession. As the President reminded his aides, he had been hurt by it in the recent elections and he did not want to be hurt by it two years hence. Nevertheless, he did not plan to leap at any proposal without giving it plenty of thought.

The week of all these talks was also the week that the President gave the final go-ahead signal to the Sontay mission. And though the raid failed of its primary objective, the President nevertheless hoped that his adversaries in Hanoi would begin to recognize that, while winding down the war, he was still prepared to go to extraordinary lengths to keep Hanoi off balance. He had demonstrated that his actions could not be taken for granted. And

he had repeatedly warned Hanoi not to interfere with the American withdrawal.

Also shattering the somnolence that appeared to be gripping the White House in those post-election weeks was the President's dismissal of Walter J. Hickel as his Secretary of Interior. This had been a matter that had hung fire since his famous letter complaining about how the Administration was mishandling the problems of dissenting youth. Though addressed to the President, it had been published in the newspapers before the President had read it. No one admitted leaking the letter to the press, but it was a mistake, striking the President from behind when he was under bitter attack because of Cambodia. ~~And there had been other reasons for the President's lack of confidence in his Interior Secretary.~~ Hickel had left much to be desired as an administrator of a most sensitive department.

All this had been spelled out for Hickel in late May by John Ehrlichman when the President's Domestic Affairs Assistant told him of Mr. Nixon's desire that he leave. But Hickel asked to remain and it was agreed that the Secretary would leave following the ~~elections~~.

Now the moment of truth had arrived. But Hickel did not want to leave. This Ehrlichman determined from a conversation with him following the election. On November 20, Attorney General Mitchell all but invited him to resign, but Hickel characteristically became stubborn, stating publicly, "If he [the President] wants me to quit, he'll have to fire me."

Hickel also told a television audience on November 24, "I'm going out with an arrow in my heart and not a bullet in my back."

And that did it. Late the next afternoon Hickel was ushered into the Oval Office. After greeting the Secretary, the President sat behind his desk. Hickel took a seat to the President's left and Ehrlichman to his right. The music of a military band rehearsing on the South grounds filtered through during the twenty-five minute meeting.

The President quickly came to the point. He said he had decided to "make a change" at Interior; that he did not wish to recriminate or specify the basis for his decision; but he had thought the matter through and had concluded the change must be made.

Hickel responded by saying he understood and that he respected the President's decision. Then he recited what he judged were his accomplishments during his twenty-two months at Interior. The President said nothing. Hickel said he assumed the President intended that the transfer be made the first of the year. "No," the President said, "it should be effective immediately." Hickel obviously was taken aback.

The President told Hickel that his successor would be Republican National Chairman Rogers C.B. Morton, a four-term Maryland Congressman; and that Fred J. Russell would be Acting Secretary until January. The two men then shook hands and said goodbye. Hickel left by a rear exit before newsmen could question him. And

Ron Ziegler told reporters: "The President feels that the required elements for a good and continued relationship -- which must exist between a President and his Cabinet members -- simply do not exist in this case."

Another of the President's personnel problems was up in the air that Thanksgiving week. This one had to do with Pat Moynihan, whom the President wanted as his Ambassador to the United Nations. On November 17, Moynihan informed Mr. Nixon he would accept the post and both men talked at some length about the U.N. and the President's desire to somehow turn it into a more active organization.

Three days later, Moynihan was in Acapulco, attending a housing conference sponsored by Time Inc. And two things happened that day that were to change Moynihan's mind about the U.N. post. First, the Boston Globe published the story of Moynihan's selection for the U.N. The premature disclosure was embarrassing because the incumbent Ambassador, Charles Yost, had not yet been informed he was leaving.

On the same day, the Family Assistance Program -- Moynihan's baby -- was killed in the Senate Finance Committee. At the moment of decision, Senator Fred Harris, the populist Democrat from Oklahoma, had reversed his previous position in support of FAP, voted Gene McCarthy's proxy in the same manner, and in the process Family Assistance was defeated.*

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* "It is now a commonplace observation that if the Family Assistance Program is killed by the Congress it will have been the victim of a combined attack by the left and the right," Moynihan said in a letter to the Washington Post a week later. "There is, however, one further thing to be said. By and large the attacks on the proposal from ultra conservatives have been factually accurate...What is so disappointing about the critics on the left is that from the day President Nixon proposed FAP they have persistently, egregiously -- and can it really be unwittingly? -- misrepresented both the principles of the legislation and the details of the proposal."

Moynihan returned to Washington on Sunday, November 22, terribly dejected about both developments -- the premature disclosure and the killing of FAP. By Monday night he had determined that he really ought not go to the U.N. and the following morning he wrote a letter to the President to that effect. On Wednesday Haldeman asked if his decision was irrevocable. Moynihan said it was. That morning, in fact, there was an hysterical attack on the appointment in The New York Times. Though Moynihan "has exhibited outstanding qualities in public life," the editorial maintained he had "practically no experience in diplomacy," a factor which did not appear to trouble the Times in 1965 when LBJ named Arthur Goldberg to the same post. Moynihan, the Times went on, "is likely to be bored stiff at the glacial pace of United Nations diplomacy, but however that may be he is simply not qualified for this job." Of course, Moynihan

had already changed his mind, deciding finally to return to Harvard and the Joint Center for Urban Studies, as he originally had planned, and this information was released to the press on Friday, November 27. In leaving, however, Democrat Moynihan -- unlike Republican Hickel -- had only praise for the President.

It took several weeks before Mr. Nixon resolved this most awkward personnel problem by naming Congressman George Bush as his man at the U.N., succeeding Charles Yost who had been somewhat embarrassed by speculation about his future.* What the President

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* Administration unhappiness with Yost had to do basically with the low-profile presence he established after the President brought him out of retirement as a career diplomat two years before. The White House was also annoyed because Yost, an Arabist, had failed to prevent the recent General Assembly debate on the Middle East in which the U.S. was virtually isolated along with Israel.

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wanted in New York was a bright, hardworking and attractive representative who believed completely in what Mr. Nixon stood for in foreign policy and would not be adverse to selling the Nixon programs. In Bush he found exactly what he wanted. Actually, Bush, who had just been beaten in his race for the Senate, had been proposed as the new Chairman of the Republican National Committee. But, at a meeting with the President on December 9, Bush argued he could do better serving the cause in New York. The President agreed and two days later the story broke in the papers, somewhat to Mr.

Nixon's annoyance. "~~There have been more leaks~~ out of this Administration than public statements out of most Administrations," the President observed to a visitor.

The President's most annoying problem in the closing weeks of 1970 continued to be the economy. On December 4, in a speech before the National Association of Manufacturers in New York, Mr. Nixon signalled that his efforts would now be concentrated on economic expansion. And he also signalled his intention of engaging in more "jawboning" about the need to hold wages and prices in line. Concretely he came out against "the recent increase of twenty-five cents per barrel in the price of crude oil" and wage increases in the construction industry. "When you have an industry in which one of three negotiations had led to a strike," he said, "when construction-wage settlements are more than double the national average for all manufacturing, at a time when many construction workers are out of work, then something is basically wrong with that industry's bargaining process." At the same time the President's Council of Economic Advisers issued a ~~so-called~~ "inflation alert," labeling the continued sharp increase of wages as "the major concern." And before that Herb Stein, one of the economic advisers, said, "The rate of inflation from this point forward will depend on the rate of wage increase probably more than anything else."

On December 7, in a speech at Pepperdine College in Los Angeles, Arthur Burns publicly called for an "incomes policy," a catch-all term applied to efforts by the Government to influence private behavior. This would include "establishment of a high-level

price and wage review board that, while lacking enforcement power, would have broad authority to investigate, advise and recommend on price and wage changes."

Meanwhile, the stock market reacted most favorably to the President's speech. In fact, the market had gone up considerably for some weeks, a fact that puzzled the President. On December 12, talking to his advisers, he wondered what it was that people buying stocks knew that he didn't know about the economy. The response was that they didn't know anything different; that individual buyer's confidences build on each other and eventually result in increased stock prices.

The President also noted that in previous years unemployment rates had been substantially higher than those the country now faced but, somethow, in those years there was little public notice. For example, he recalled, the jobless rate in 1961 was nearly seven percent.

The economy was very much on the President's mind. He had read the election returns and realized the old ways were not working. Changes had to be made.

The most dramatic, far-reaching move was made on December 14. That was the day he stunned the nation by naming John M. Connally as his Secretary of Treasury, succeeding David Kennedy. Connally, who had been called "the most powerful Democrat in Texas," had served three terms as Governor of that state, where he was re-elected by huge majorities. A fifty-four year old lawyer,

rancher and oilman, Connally had served on the boards of banks and corporations and had ties to the Wall Street financial community. During the Kennedy presidency, he served as Secretary of the Navy. As Governor, Connally was riding in the car with President Kennedy when he was killed in Dallas. In fact, Connally himself was seriously wounded by the assassin.

Like President Nixon, Connally started life as a poor boy, acquiring some wealth in a lifetime of law, business and politics. But what really impressed the President was the forceful manner in which Connally conducted himself on the Ash Council, created to study the reorganization of government. The President also arranged for Connally to serve on the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board.

On November 19, at a ninety-minute meeting of the Ash Council, there was a spirited discussion of proposed reforms to make government more responsive to the needs of the people. Connally, in eloquent fashion, argued the political merits of the proposals, the thrust of his argument being that, win or lose, the President would be on the side of change while his opponents would be forced to contend the status quo was fine. The President appeared to agree.

A few days later Connally was notified by the White House of a meeting of the intelligence advisory group and, also, that the President would like to talk to him privately while he was in Washington. It was then that the President offered him the Treasury position. The fact that Connally had previously expressed opposition to some of the Administration's economic views, specifically his tight-money policy, did not trouble the President. What the

President wanted was a man with Connally's take-charge attitude who would be most helpful on Capitol Hill, particularly among the Democrats, and who would help sell the Administration's new expansionist economic policies.

Connally, though flattered, did not accept immediately. Instead, he thought it over that Thanksgiving weekend. On Monday, breakfasting with the President, he said yes. And several nights later, he and the President sat for three hours in the privacy of the Nixon office in the Executive Office Building discussing the Texan's role in the Administration. They even had dinner together, served by Manolo Sanchez at a small table in the corner of the office. From the beginning, it was obvious, the President was "comfortable" with his Secretary-to-be.

Because the President had asked him not to discuss his appointment with anyone, Connally had not informed his old friend and longtime political associate, Lyndon B. Johnson. The former President, however, was notified several hours before the announcement by Mr. Nixon. Then the President handed the phone to Connally. "I talked to Mr. Johnson very briefly," said Connally, "and he just expressed hope that all would go well. He was very kind to me, and if he looked with disfavor at it, he has certainly not reflected it since, because our relationship is unchanged from what it has been for years."

A few days after the surprise announcement, the President met with former Governor Scranton, who had headed the Commission on Campus Unrest. In its general report, the Commission had declared

that the Government, students and universities shared the responsibility for preventing campus disorders, and pleaded with all sides "to draw back from the brink" of a dangerous division. It condemned fanatical student terrorists, complacent campus officials, brutal law-enforcement officers, and the inflammatory speech of politicians. Above all, it urged the President to exercise the moral leadership of his office and bring the nation to a period of reconciliation.

Vice President Agnew said the Scranton Commission, in asking for the President's leadership, had indulged in "'scapegoatism' of the most irresponsible sort," adding that the report was "sure to be taken as more pablum for the permissivists." Earlier, the Vice President had ~~personally~~ attacked one of the Commission members, a twenty-two-year-old black youth, Joseph Rhodes Jr., a junior fellow at Harvard. Rhodes, who had previously been student body president at the California Institute of Technology, had charged that Nixon and Agnew "are killing people" and that Governor Reagan was "bent on killing people for his own political gain." After quoting these remarks, the Vice President publicly called on Rhodes to get off the Commission. But young Mr. Rhodes, enjoying his new national eminence, said no.

On December 10, 1970, the President wrote to Scranton about his Commission's report. He made these observations: "Responsibility for maintaining a peaceful and open climate for learning in an academic community does not rest with the Federal Government -- it rests squarely with the members of that academic community

themselves....Removing the causes of legitimate dissent has in my lifetime been one of the constant endeavors of the American Government. It remains the business of this Administration. Though optimistic about our capacities to redress just grievances, I am not so utopian as to believe all will be redressed in this Administration, or even in our lifetime. And so, in this democratic society, we shall always have and shall always need dissent."

As for his own role, the President wrote, "Throughout my public life I have come to know the immense moral authority of the Presidency. During these past twenty-two months I have tried to exercise that authority to bring an end to violence and bitterness; and I have sought to use the power of this office to advance the cause of peace abroad and social justice at home. These are matters upon which every President answers daily to his conscience and quadrennially to his judge -- the American people."

A week later, the President met with Scranton in the Oval Office. The President was still full of his visit to the Agricultural Station in Beltsville, Maryland. In fact, he was bubbling over about what he had learned -- i.e., increasing the birth rate of lambs from one every year to three lambs in two years. He was even more struck by the fact that on the basis of the technique used on sheep, the Beltsville scientists thought they could reverse the trend in humans and double the time of pregnancy to eighteen months in women, thus affecting population growth.

Scranton thanked Mr. Nixon for his letter and he offered a semi-apology for the conduct of Joe Rhodes, saying his problem

was that he was "young and black" and had to play to his own constituency. Scranton said that he thought more Presidential gestures toward the young and the black were in order. And the President went into considerable detail on just what the Administration had accomplished for black people and it was a long list ranging from franchises for service stations to dealerships in automobiles. Unfortunately, the President noted, his Administration just wasn't getting any credit.

As a matter of fact the President had begun to view with alarm the growing animosity toward his Administration by leaders of black organizations. Bishop Stephen G. Spottswood, chairman of the board of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, an organization long regarded as moderate, bitterly described the Administration as "anti-Negro."

"An unfair and disheartening attack," replied Leonard Garment in a telegram to Spottswood. Such an accusation, Garment said, paints a false picture, rallies every fear, reinforces every anxiety and makes a just society more difficult to achieve.

Garment's telegram enumerated substantial acts the Nixon Administration had taken in its effort "to achieve equal opportunity for every American." It was, indeed, a substantial record. But apparently when such programs bear the Nixon label, certain Negro leaders refuse to give him the credit he deserves.

One outstanding black leader, Whitney Young, thought the spat between the NAACP and the White House was thoroughly unproductive.

And despite his Democratic credentials, the President had sought to interest Young in a Cabinet post during the interregnum. But Young had turned down the offer, believing that he could be more useful to his people as the activist executive secretary of the Urban League.*

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* In March 1971 Whitney Young died on an African visit. The President attended his graveside services in Lexington, Kentucky, and eulogized the civil rights leader as a "genius" who "knew how to accomplish what other people were merely for. It is really easy to be for what is right. What is more difficult is to accomplish what is right." The President spoke slowly and without notes, confirming for the first time that in 1968 he had offered Young a Cabinet position.

The Urban League, a service organization which sought to get blacks into industry and the professions, had long had the President's respect. By late 1970, however, the League had run into financial difficulties and Whitney Young was in touch with Len Garment about getting some Federal funding.

Garment suggested a meeting with the President and some of the Cabinet members. This was arranged for December 22. As the President came into the Cabinet Room he noticed a black lady sitting with his advisers against the wall.

"Doesn't she belong at the table?" the President asked Young.

"I don't want to get in trouble with Women's Lib," said Young.

"Neither do I," said the President, who invited Beth Whaley to sit at the Cabinet table.

In the course of his remarks, Young described the financial plight of the Urban League and observed, "Maybe we will have to get a new President."

"You mean a new President of the Urban League, of course," Mr. Nixon interjected.

When Young asked the President to designate a member of the White House staff to serve as liaison with the League, Mr. Nixon looked at Garment, who was using a cane because of a tennis injury.

"Do you have the time?" he asked Garment, who nodded affirmatively. "Don't go playing tennis," the President warned. "These athletes around here!"

Later in the session, Young volunteered that Secretary Volpe has "the best fair employment record of any Cabinet member in history."

The President nodded, "He's told me that."

George Romney piped up: "I challenge that."

The President: "He's told me that, too."

At the end of the meeting, the President said, "If I can paraphrase what a former Secretary of Defense said, 'What's good for the Urban League is good for America.'" And he directed that a search for funds be instituted among the various Federal agencies in order to insure the continuance of the Urban League. On the way out, a member of the Urban League staff was heard to say in a warm, loud voice: "It sure helps to go to the top."

Within a matter of weeks money was found for the League. Eventually, a total of twenty-seven million dollars was put together to help keep the League's activities across the nation going. And it was done without any fanfare.

Another visitor -- one completely unexpected -- was Elvis Presley. The rock-and-roll star had shown up the morning of December 21 at the White House gate and asked to see the President. Bud Krogh was notified and he brought the singer inside for a talk. Krogh, one of John Ehrlichman's top assistants, then arranged for Presley to see the President.

Attired in tight-fitting white clothes, ~~as befits an idol of young people~~, Presley told Mr. Nixon of his enormous concern over the spreading drug problem and that he wanted to help the Government in combatting the scourge. Presley also said he wanted to help restore respect for the American flag. He was a poor boy from Tennessee and had gotten a lot from this country, which in some way he wanted to repay. ~~And he indicated that one London-based singing group, highly popular with American youngsters, was a real force for anti-Americanism, despite the fact they had made millions in this country. The President seemed surprised by this piece of information.~~ But he agreed that drugs had become "Public Enemy Number One." And he urged that Presley use his influence, in his public appearances, to convince young people that drugs could destroy them.

Then Presley told the President how much he supported him and, in a spontaneous but touching gesture, put his left arm around Mr. Nixon and hugged him.

Later that afternoon, the East Room was the setting for a gathering of some one hundred and fifty members of the Cabinet, sub-Cabinet, senior White House staff and senior agency officials to hear a review of what the Administration had done in foreign and domestic affairs in the year gone by.

Declaring that "we are now in the middle of the journey," the President said that Secretary Rogers would review foreign affairs and George Shultz the domestic scene, to be followed by a "surprise clean-up hitter." He said it was particularly important that those deeply involved with the concerns of their own agencies have the opportunity to get the "big picture" now that the Administration was at "half-time."

Rogers noted that at last year's meeting he had expressed himself as optimistic about the trend of world affairs and that he felt his optimism had proved justified. He recalled a session with a briefing officer in which things appeared to be going badly all over the world. Finally, the Secretary interrupted to ask: "Tell me, isn't there any <u>good</u> news?"

"No," the briefer responded, "but at least there's some bad news that we're not responsible for. The Aswan Dam is leaking."

The Secretary recalled that when the Nixon Administration took over three wars were going on. One of them, the civil war in Nigeria, was now largely forgotten -- a fact which illustrates that sometimes not getting involved can be a good policy. In Nigeria, the Administration resisted heavy pressures to get involved, staying out of that conflict in terms of military, diplomatic and political

activity. But the United States gave more humanitarian aid than any other country. The results were good.*

* One of those demanding deeper involvement was Senator Edward M. Kennedy.

In the Middle East, where there had been continuous warfare since 1967, Richard Nixon had decided to take strong political initiatives, knowing there would be criticism, Rogers said. But the situation had been greatly improved. There had been no fighting for one hundred and ten days and all parties wanted the cease-fire to continue. The Mideast had been on a verge of a major catastrophe. There were still tensions, but "there's hope."

Turning to Vietnam, the Secretary used charts to point out that when the Nixon Administration took over there were more U.S. armed forces personnel in South Vietnam than South Vietnamese troops. Now there were one million South Vietnamese in uniform while the number of Americans by May 1 would be down to 284,000. And casualties were down significantly. In fact, one of the reasons the supplemental appropriations bill recently went through the Senate Foreign Relations Committee -- and Chairman Fulbright lost control of the Committee eight to four -- was that the Nixon policies had been very successful and the Congress knew it.

When Rogers concluded, the President commented, "He made me feel better." He noted that the important thing was not just withdrawals and reductions in casualties, but the fact that we're ending the war in a way we can build the peace. The most effective

chart that Rogers displayed was the one showing that the South Vietnamese were developing the capability to defend themselves.

George Shultz spoke of the calming of the United States in the past two years and he said that most of it was directly attributable to the calming in Vietnam. As a result, managing the transition from war to peace had become one of the great and welcome challenges, the OMB Director added. It is striking, he said, how much the scene has changed and how much promise there is of more change. The campuses were quieting down and Southern school desegregation had taken place -- "an unnoticed miracle" -- without violence. There still were problems, but these were problems subsequent to desegregation. ~~In short, things were looking up.~~

The President then noted that it was time to introduce the "mystery guest," who had been delayed a few minutes because he had been meeting with some Senators on the Family Assistance Program which was stuck in the Senate. "While Pat Moynihan was the creative thinker who brought that program into being for all of us, he's been the inspirational man -- with his emphasis on reform and on the need for idealism as well as the pragmatic approach." Now, the time has come when we're going to lose him, when he is going up -- or down -- to Harvard. "Harvard's gain will be our loss."

Turning the floor over to Moynihan, the President said, it's time for "the Christmas charge."

And the assembled Nixon men plus the President himself certainly got the "charge," delivered with considerable oratorical flourish by a ruddy-faced Moynihan. He began by outlining the problems

that the Administration faced on coming to power two years before and he described what had been done -- the diminishing war, governmental reform, "racial rhetoric calmed, the great symbol of racial subjugation -- the dual school system of the South -- quietly and finally dismantled." All in all, he went on, "a record of some good fortune and much genuine achievement."

"And yet," he added, more in sorrow than in anger, "how little the Administration is credited with what it has achieved.... Depressing, even frightening things are being said about the Administration. They are not true. This has been a company of honorable and able men, led by a President of singular courage and compassion in the face of a sometimes awful knowledge of the problems and the probabilities that confront him."

And then he pleaded with the "members of this Administration, the men in this room, to be far more attentive to what it is the President has said, and proposed. Time and again, the President has said things of startling insight, taken positions of great political courage and intellectual daring, only to be greeted with silence or incomprehension even within our own ranks."

"I am one of those who believe that America is the hope of the world, and that for that time given him the President is the hope of America. Serve him well. Pray for his success. Understand how much depends on you. Try to understand what he has given of himself.

"This is something those of us who have worked in this building with him know in a way that perhaps only that experience

can teach. To have seen him late into the night and through the night and into the morning, struggling with the most awful complexities, the most demanding and irresolvable conflicts, doing so because he cared, trying to comprehend what is right, and trying to make other men see it, above all, caring, working, hoping for this country that he has made greater already and which he will make greater still.

"Serve him well. Pray for his success. Understand how much depends on you.

"And now, goodbye, it really has been good to know you."

It was an exceptionally moving performance and when Moynihan finished he was greeted by a thunderous standing ovation. A few of the Nixon men were seen wiping away tears as they stood to applaud.

After the applause subsided, the President said, "You can see why I referred to him as our 'clean-up hitter.'"

So obviously delighted was the President that he announced that he was himself buying Moynihan's Cabinet chair as a farewell present, noting that the cost of these chairs had lately gone up. The chair, incidentally, now cost five hundred dollars.

Later in the week, talking to Time's Hugh Sidey, Daniel Patrick Moynihan explained why he had delivered his warm farewell speech: "Look what they have been told: liberals get more women than they do, make more money, are smarter, are better looking. Their art is the best, their books are better. These fellows here are

told that constantly, and what's worse, they have begun to believe it."

CHAPTER 21

In an hour-long telecast "conversation" with network correspondents on January 4, 1971, almost two years after he had assumed office, Mr. Nixon was asked if he felt the Presidency had changed him. In reply, he mused on the age-old disparity between aspirations and achievements: When a man comes into the Presidency "he believes he can accomplish a great deal, even though he may have a Congress that is not part of his own party." But, then, after he gets in, he finds that his actual performance may not measure up to his goals.

"So...while we must set high goals and always seek them, we must not become impatient. We must plow forward, recognizing that in the end we are going to make some progress, if not all of the progress that we had hoped."

While the President expressed himself as pleased with certain accomplishments and optimistic about the next two years, the disappointments of his first two years in office were manifest enough. For example, he had hoped to end the war in Vietnam in the first two years. Nevertheless, "we are on the way out, and we are on the way out in a way that will bring a just peace..." And that, he believed, could be considered one of his primary accomplishments.

Domestically the President was disappointed by the failure to get welfare reform. Another "disappointment" was the tragic events at Kent State, Jackson State and the University of Wisconsin.*

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* The #tragedy# at the University of Wisconsin had occurred

August 24 when a bomb blast destroyed the Army Mathematics Research Center, resulting in the death of one graduate student and injuries to four other persons. Destroyed in the explosion was a $1.5 million computer.

These were "three...tragedies...that left a very deep impression upon me."

As for the economy, the President was concerned about unemployment and persistent inflation. Nevertheless he did claim progress in tempering inflation. He noted that "while the progress has not been as fast as we would have liked, the wholesale price index is turning down -- not as much as we would like but turning down."

Unemployment was, of course, too high, "even though we could perhaps point to the fact that over the past twenty years there have been only three peacetime years in which unemployment was less than five percent -- the years of '55, '56 and '57."

"But," the President noted, "on that score let me say that I take no comfort in that statistic. I know what unemployment does to somebody. I have seen an unemployed man come into my father's store. I have seen the look in his eye when he can't pay the bill. I have seen the look in his children's eyes when he can't pay that bill."

And then the President got down to specifics.

"What we are going to do first is to have an expansionary budget. It will be a budget in deficit, as will be the budget in 1971. It will not be an inflationary budget because it will not

exceed the full-employment revenues. We also, according to Dr. Arthur Burns, will have an expansionary monetary policy, and that will, of course, be a monetary policy adequate to meet the needs of an expanding economy.

"Now, in addition to that, we are going to have a program that we will present to the Congress -- a program that I believe in terms of Government reform will be the most significant reform that we have had perhaps in a century. I think that this program will also have an indirect effect in restoring confidence in the economy."

And he predicted that "1971, in essence, will be a good year, and 1972 will be a very good year."

"Having made that prediction, I will say that the purpose of this Administration will be to have an activist economic policy designed to control inflation but at the same time to expand the economy so that we can reduce unemployment, and to have what this country has not had for twenty years, and that is a situation where we can have full employment in peacetime without the cost of war and without the cost of excessive inflation."

After the broadcast was over, the President turned to one of the correspondents, Howard K. Smith, and chuckled, "I am now a Keynesian in economics." Smith, in reporting this off-handed comment, noted that this was "a little like a Christian crusader saying, 'All things considered, I think Mohammed was right.'" But actually that wasn't exactly the case. The President was making a little joke because he was preparing an unbalanced budget as one means of combating rising unemployment; and he did so regretfully rather than

as a follower of the borrowed theories of the unorthodox British peer. In fact, in talking privately with Walter Trohan of the Chicago Tribune he referred to himself as a conservative and explained that was one of the reasons why he had named John Connally, a conservative Democrat, as his Secretary of Treasury.*

* In his conversation with Trohan, the President, among other things, stated his belief that the recently-published reminiscenses of Nikita Khrushchev were not genuine; that they were manufactured by the Kremlin for still unclear reasons but probably as a means of continuing the desanctification of Joseph Stalin. The President was clearly fascinated by the power groupings within the Kremlin leadership.

At the same time the President took a pot shot at the Ninety-first Congress, especially the Senate, as one which presented in the final weeks of 1970 the spectacle of a legislative body that had "seemingly lost the capacity to decide and the will to act." Though he did not say so, the President was aware that the increasing partisanship of the Senate lay in the fact that it had developed into a launching pad for Presidential candidates. There were at least ten Democratic Senators who aspired to a place on the Presidential ticket in 1972, aiming for Number One but willing to settle, in some instances, for Number Two.

The one big surprise at the beginning of the new Congress was the ouster of Senator Edward M. Kennedy from his job as Assistant Democratic Leader of the Senate and his replacement by Senator Robert

C. Byrd of West Virginia. "While this will not change the Ninety-second Congress and its determination to get rid of Nixon," wrote Gould Lincoln in the Washington Star, "the defeat of Kennedy by a vote of thirty-one to twenty-four has effectively knocked Kennedy out of the race for President in 1972 and probably out of the Presidency at any time in the future. As one wag put it: 'A second Chappaquiddick is one too many.'"

And it did look that way to the White House at the time. The man to beat in 1972, it was then believed, was Senator Edmund S. Muskie. The Maine Democrat, who had picked up remarkable strength as the Democratic front-runner, was then traveling abroad, seeking to absorb knowledge of foreign affairs. He spent four hours with Soviet Premier Kosygin, talking over U.S.-Soviet relations and other world problems and, it was generally agreed, was out of his depth.

In his State of the Union Message, the President outlined to Congress his "six great goals" of domestic legislation:

-- To complete the "unfinished business" of the Ninety-first Congress by passing more than thirty-five pieces of holdover legislation including, in particular, the plan to reform welfare by placing a "floor under the income of every family with children in America."

-- To achieve "full prosperity in peacetime" by approving an "expansionary budget" that would propel the economy forward without relighting "the fires of inflation."

-- To "restore and enhance our natural environment," the President pledged to submit a "strong new set of initiatives" to combat air and water pollution, as well as a new program to expand parks and open spaces around cities.

-- To improve America's health care, especially for the poor, by providing fresh funds, increasing the number of doctors, improving the delivery of health services and encouraging better preventive medicine. He also disclosed he would support a one hundred million dollar campaign to find a cure for cancer.

-- A large revenue-sharing program "to reverse the flow of power and resources from the states and communities to Washington and start power and resources flowing back from Washington to the states and communities and, more important, to the people all over America."

-- A major reorganization of the Federal Government which would leave intact only Justice, Defense, Treasury and State while consolidating seven other Cabinet-level departments into four new ones -- Human Resources, Community Development, Natural Resources and Economic Development.

The most appealing part of the "new American revolution" described in the President's Message was perhaps his suggestion that Government power should be decentralized. The idea that a "bureaucratic elite" in Washington knows best what is good for everybody had indeed been abundantly discredited and, as the President said, is "completely alien to the American experience." And he

went as far as appropriating a slogan from the New Left in calling for "a peaceful revolution in which power was turned back to the people."

The phrase "power to the people" troubled William F. Buckley Jr., but a fellow conservative columnist, James Kilpatrick, noted that "under our Federal system, the ultimate power of sovereignty -- the power to make or unmake -- lies with the people in their states. In his invocation of this abiding truth, Mr. Nixon wasn't embracing a Marxist future. With Jefferson, Adams and Madison, he was going back to the point of beginning."

Bob Hope, appearing at the White House, remarked on the President's words: "I heard the State of the Union message -- he called for a new revolution. Since then he has been tailed by the CIA, the FBI, Army intelligence and the Pasadena branch of the DAR. And he's had three obscene phone calls from Barry Goldwater."

Unlike other conservatives, Goldwater did support the President's domestic initiatives. But such publications as Human Events and National Review were decidedly critical of what they considered overly liberal aspects of the President's program.

Editorial support, however, was overwhelming. Even the Washington Post, which rarely found anything good to say about the Nixon Administration, termed the address "distinctive, innovative, and committed to both some proper concerns and some excellent ideas." Tom Wicker in The New York Times suggested that "the proposal for reorganizing the executive branch appears to be the most brilliant

stroke of Mr. Nixon's Administration...The managerial program also is squarely in line with the President's campaign pledges and with the managerial tradition on which Republicans pride themselves." And Joseph Alsop said the Message "was bolder and more innovating than anything heard from a President since the time, nearly forty years ago, when Franklin D. Roosevelt was putting the country on a new course."

Nevertheless, the President knew he had a pretty tough battle on his hands selling the Congress on his six goals -- with the most bitter controversy likely to be generated over revenue sharing and Government reorganization. The proposed reduction in the number of executive departments from twelve to eight, for example, would cut deeply into the established divisions of power. The Congressmen who were being asked to preside over the dissolution of the specialized committee kingdoms were the chairmen of those committees, and they had the power to block the legislation. Other groups, lobbying for the farmer and organized labor, would undoubtedly be opposed to abolishing the Agriculture and Labor Departments respectively. The President knew only too well that LBJ's sensible plan to merge the Labor and Commerce Departments was sunk by George Meany without a ripple of public reaction.

Consequently, the President authorized an ambitious White House campaign to sell his "new American revolution" to the public. The President himself participated in numerous bipartisan meetings with leaders of Congress and business explaining his legislative program.

The President was thoroughly relaxed at these meetings, which were arranged by Clark MacGregor who had become the new White House liaison with Congress. MacGregor, a former Congressman from Minnesota, had arranged for White House personnel to wear "I Care About Congress" buttons.

At one such meeting, the President turned to his old friend, Representative Florence Dwyer of New Jersey, and asked, "Flo, do you play golf?"

"No, I don't," the Republican lady said.

"Do you have any rich constituents who do?"

"Yes."

"Fine," said the President, turning to the others in the room, "I'll send you each a golf ball. That's all you get for coming here."

Then he added: "I'm a man of the Congress. I respect you. I want to work with you."

And he also talked turkey with fellow Republicans over breakfast. "Look," he said, "we've been <u>against</u> things a lot in the past. We've been identified with special interests. I know that a lot of people are saying we can't get this program through because of the special interests -- the lobbies. Let's be the movers this time. Let the Democrats have the lobbies and the special interests. The only thing that can damage us is to go out and start nitpicking. We might pick up the wrong nits."

In covering all bases, the President also met with network officials. The first group was from the American Broadcasting

Company on January 28. The President's knowledge of broadcasting problems and personalities astonished the ABC executives. In discussing the "fairness doctrine," as it applied to Democratic demands for air time to reply to the President's television appearances, Mr. Nixon said, "All I ask is that you give them the same amount of time you gave us when we were out. I think we got time once during the eight years." This drew a lot of nervous laughter.*

* Some weeks later, the President said the same thing to a group of Columbia Broadcasting System executives, who also laughed nervously.

Early in February, while talking with Dr. John C. Lundgren, medical consultant to the President, about what he would say about health insurance before the American College of Cardiology, Mr. Nixon was interrupted by a message that Prime Minister Heath was calling from London and that he should pick up his "secure phone." The President started to do so. Dr. Lundgren took his leave. But then the President said, "Oh, that damn 'secure phone' is no good. You can't hear anyone at the other end of the line. Tell them to transfer it to the regular line -- you know, the White House line."

The Prime Minister was calling on a matter of utmost importance -- Laos.

CHAPTER 22

Although you would never get the President's critics to admit it, the strike into Cambodia in the Spring of 1970 had been a remarkable success by any reasonable standards. At a cost of 227 American dead and 847 wounded, U.S. and South Vietnamese troops (the latter's losses: 751 killed, 3,083 wounded) captured enough rifles to arm thirty-four Vietcong battalions, enough heavy weapons to equip twenty-eight more battalions, and enough rice and ammunition to maintain these units in the field for a year. And there were over 9,600 enemy dead -- another significant allied victory.

Perhaps as important was the undisputed fact that the South Vietnamese (ARVN) forces had proved themselves in battle. This meant that the President's policy of Vietnamization could be speeded up. As Zbigniew Brzezinski was to note in the Summer 1971 issue of Foreign Policy, "The Administration has so far been successful in effecting a very substantial decrease in the U.S. military involvement in the war while avoiding the military risks involved in that decrease. In retrospect, its Cambodian operation deserves major credit..."

More concretely, the success in Cambodia meant that the port of Kompong Som (formerly Sihanoukville) was closed to the Communists. This meant that the main enemy supply route was now the so-called Ho Chi Minh Trail, a complex of roads and trails running south from North Vietnam through the Panhandle of Laos.

And intelligence reports in the fall of 1970 indicated that the Communists were gearing for a major offensive in early 1971.

The President determined in November 1970 that the United States had to be prepared for the Communist attacks and should be willing to help the South Vietnamese seize and hold the initiative during the dry season of February and March. These are the months in which the Red forces had traditionally launched their most extensive operations in all regions of South Vietnam, from base areas and supply routes they illegally occupied in southern Laos and eastern Cambodia.

On November 4, the day after the 1970 mid-term election, and again on November 28, the President issued directives for State, Defense and CIA to carry out intensive studies of the full range of contingencies -- military and political -- in Southeast Asia. He dispatched General Haig of the NSC staff to Vietnam and Cambodia; and Secretary Laird and Admiral Moorer to Vietnam and Thailand to assess the situation, confer with American and local officials, and bring back their ideas on how the U.S. could assist the South Vietnamese.

From these joint studies, there emerged in December the idea of South Vietnamese preemptive operations in the Chup Plantation area of Cambodia and the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos -- to disrupt the North Vietnamese buildup of men and supplies.

On December 23, the President told his advisers that if he should decide to proceed with these operations he would order U.S. air and logistics support for the South Vietnamese forces.

On the morning of January 18, 1971, the President met with Secretaries Rogers and Laird, Admiral Moorer, CIA's Helms, Al Haig

and Henry Kissinger in the Oval Office to hear Laird and Moorer report on their just completed trip to Southeast Asia. They reported that the North Vietnamese were trying to re-establish their sanctuaries as well as redoubling their supply efforts, making unmistakably clear their intentions to attack during the upcoming dry season. At the same time, they reported that the ARVN were consistently getting better both in capability and morale, and had developed workable plans for disrupting the enemy's sanctuaries. Both Rogers and Laird gave their blessings to those plans.

The President, however, withheld final approval. But he declared in favor of U.S. support for one phase of the operation -- the Chup campaign in Cambodia and combined U.S.-ARVN actions along the portion of Route Nine in the northwestern corner of South Vietnam. The President wanted further WSAG analysis of the desirability of backing Phase II -- the South Vietnamese thrust along Route Nine to the heart of the Ho Chi Minh Trail supply system inside Laos.

On January 26, the eve of Tet, the President discussed the military aspects of Phase II in detail with Admiral Moorer. On the same day in Saigon, General Abrams, Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker and General Cao Van Vien, Chief of the Vietnamese Joint General Staffs, met with President Thieu in Independence Palace. Thieu approved the full invasion plan.

On January 27, the President met with all of his advisers on the Laos operation -- Rogers, Laird, Moorer, Helms, Kissinger and Haig -- to hear their views. He then requested that Ambassador Bunker be brought back from Saigon to join in the deliberations.

Meanwhile, the President studied a concise but detailed five-page single-spaced memorandum summarizing all the pros and cons of Phase II, ~~prepared by the NSC staff~~. It included all the arguments on the issues that had been raised in the prior discussions -- such as the effects of the contemplated action on Vietnam, on Laos, on the Paris talks, on relations with other countries; the likely enemy response; the risks of failure; possible gains; the risk of U.S. casualties; alternative operations and timing; and U.S. domestic and Congressional opinion.

As the President pondered the alternatives, he asked Dr. Kissinger to brief the Vice President, the Attorney General and Secretary-designate John Connally on the issues involved; and Kissinger did so on February 1.

In South Vietnam, meanwhile, three U.S. battalions landed at Khe Sanh. Because he believed there would be heavy fighting at this northern outpost, General Abrams embargoed all news of the operation. Fortunately the Americans met no resistance at Khe Sanh.

Unfortunately, however, not all correspondents in Saigon were advised that the news embargo itself was embargoed and, as a result, wild rumors -- many of them reaching the states -- began to circulate. If the correspondents were confused, so was the enemy. The North Vietnamese had no idea of what was going to happen next.

On the afternoon of February 2, 1971, Mr. Nixon met again with his chief advisers, this time joined by Ambassador Bunker. Once again the President asked for all the pros and cons they could think

of. As Mr. Nixon subsequently observed, "There were twenty-eight good reasons for not doing it and only two for doing it. But if you analyzed them carefully the two reasons for completely outweighed the twenty-eight against -- which were mostly domestic political reasons anyway."

Meanwhile a Japanese news agency reported (falsely, as it turned out) that the invasion was on. Still more confusion was created when General Abrams dispatched a small naval task force into the Gulf of Tonkin. This generated rumors of a landing in North Vietnam.

At 11:30 p.m. that February 2, after a White House concert by opera star Beverly Sills, the President once again went over the pros and cons, this time with Kissinger. The President understood the arguments in behalf of the operation: if it accomplished the maximum objectives, it could cripple Hanoi's supply system for an indefinite period and could mean a decisive turn in the war. But even if it did not achieve its maximum objectives, it would damage the enemy's ability to launch offensives in 1971, and thus save lives and further Vietnamization. And, given the President's withdrawal program, this would be the last time that U.S. air and logistical support would be sufficiently available to make a strategic difference.

But in this conversation the President still was not eager to give the go-ahead. He was acutely conscious of the risks -- likely domestic criticism, possible adverse diplomatic consequences, and the certainty that the North Vietnamese would fight hard to

defend the supply system on which they were now totally dependent for prosecution of the war in South Vietnam.

The next morning, February 3, the President called Kissinger into his office and said he had decided to approve U.S. support of Phase II. Essentially, the decision meant that the South Vietnamese advance into Laos would be supported by U.S. air power. Kissinger immediately notified all of the President's senior advisers and word was flashed to Saigon that the invasion was on. At the same time, the President let about thirty key Senators and Congressmen in on the invasion secret. But he, himself, kept the operation low-key by flying down to the Virgin Islands for the weekend and acting for all the world as if nothing extraordinary was taking place.

In fact, the President spent considerable time reading several of the books which he had brought with him for his weekend in the sun. These were books which had been recommended by Pat Moynihan, who had compiled the reading list at the President's request. One of the books that interested Mr. Nixon was a biography of Disraeli by Robert Blake. And as Bill Safire noted to correspondents, Disraeli was the first statesman to use the phrase "peace with honor" which, as the speechwriter-cum-lexicographer observed, was what the President was trying to obtain in Vietnam.*

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* The other Moynihan-recommended books -- all political biographies -- were John Adams' Autobiography; Lord Charnwood's Lincoln; The Education of Henry Adams; Talleyrand by Duff Cooper; Melbourne by David Cecil; Hitler, a Study in Tyranny by Alan Bullock; The

Republican Roosevelt by John Morton Blum; Alexander Hamilton and the Constitution; and Zapata and the Mexican Revolution by John Womack.

Perhaps because Laos was deliberately played down by the White House, major domestic opposition failed to materialize. Except for isolated protests, largely by radical extremists, the nation appeared to take the President's decision calmly and without the furor that had greeted the Cambodian announcement of the previous Spring. Only in the Congress was there serious opposition.

Senator Kennedy, ~~the memory of Chappaquiddick apparently~~ receding in his mind, went so far as to complain that no one had been really aroused over the President's "gross" incursion into Laos. In a speech, Kennedy said: "No trains are coming from New York filled with the finest legal minds. No law schools have prepared their briefs on the constitutionality of it all. My mail room is not flooded with telegrams; no Senate committees are meeting in public. Rather, we read in weekly magazines that America is cooling off, that we are entering a period where each person will be more interested in literally doing his own thing and less interested in the larger events that do not seem to submit to control."

To the White House the speech was also significent because it indicated that, no matter how much he denied having 1972 Presidential ambitions, the Senator from Massachusetts quite obviously was setting himself up just in case.

What the outside world did not know at the time was the fact that there were members of the White House staff who had come

close to panic in the post-Laos political atmosphere. The President later told this writer that he himself had to reassure some of these dissidents. Bob Haldeman, however, had to use even stronger language to rally some of these troops on the staff. It had become obvious that the constant downgrading of the Laos operation in press and over television was taking its toll.

On February 9, the President told legislative leaders that he realized that the press generally was not enthusiastic about the Laos operation. Nevertheless, the action should have been taken five or six years ago. In fact, the President recalled that back in 1965, on a visit to Saigon as a private citizen, he had recommended to General Westmoreland cutting the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Since that year, the President noted, the CIA estimated more than six hundred thirty thousand North Vietnamese troops, along with uncounted tons of equipment, had come down the trail to help inflict forty-five thousand U.S. deaths and a quarter of a million casualties.

The President warned the leaders that in this operation "there are going to be some hairy days." The best indications were that the North Vietnamese were going to have to stand and fight because the ARVN had begun to cut their lifelines.

On that day, too, the President granted one of his rare interviews to a member of the press. Some months earlier Peregrine Worsthorne, a noted British journalist, had arranged with Patrick Buchanan for a visit to the Oval Office. And it wasn't so much what Mr. Nixon said that impressed Worsthorne as the manner in which he said it. What really impressed the visiting newsman was the fact

that during his two hours with the President, Worsthorne forgot that he was talking to the most powerful man in the free world.*

* As President, Mr. Nixon has talked privately with ~~only a handful~~ of newsmen, including Cyrus L. Sulzberger of The New York Times, Richard Wilson of the Cowles Publications, Allen Drury, and this writer.

"What a contrast with LBJ, whom I visited in the same Oval Room some three years earlier and who conducted the interview stretched out on an easy chair, feet on a footstool, exuding great clouds of barroom bonhomie."

Mr. Nixon sat upright behind his desk and never learned back once. "The formality," wrote Worsthorne, "does not give an impression of awkward stiffness or unapproachability. Rather the opposite. With LBJ, the deeper he sank back into slumberous relaxation in his chair the more nervously I was forced to lean forward onto the edge of mine. His exaggerated ease made me nervous. Could it be the lull before the storm?

"With President Nixon there is never any doubt," wrote Worsthorne. He promises an interview and he gives one, "not a beer garden display of personality a la Johnson or Khrushchev, or a bravura show of charm a la Kennedy, but an hour or two of serious conversation.

"This was not a politician putting on an act or using me for his purposes. The approach was more like that of a good lawyer who is being consulted about a problem and wants to give you your money's worth."

On February 16 the President met with his Cabinet. He noted that this was the first session attended by John Connally as a member. Then he turned to Mel Laird and said, "Now we'll see whether what we read in the papers is untrue, true, or half-true." He was referring, of course, to the press reports and nightly TV news shows which generally were stressing the downbeat on developments inside Laos.

The Defense Secretary said that, despite reports to the contrary, the South Vietnamese forces were acquitting themselves well. They had disrupted many of the trails and had uncovered and destroyed a considerable amount of equipment and supplies. Another major objective was to destroy a pipeline in the area. Even if terminated tomorrow, the Secretary went on, the operation could be considered a success. Not only had a great deal of damage been done, but the operation had demonstrated to the North Vietnamese that they were not invulnerable.

Though all planned objectives were being met on schedule, the Secretary warned that, looking ahead, there would be difficult times. The enemy would stand and fight and the South Vietnamese could not be expected to win all battles.

Now, as for the other operation in Cambodia, the South Vietnamese were performing excellently under the leadership of the flamboyant but able General Do Cao Tri. With less than two ARVN divisions, General Do had been taking on Hanoi's Fifth, Seventh and Ninth divisions -- which used to be three of the most feared enemy units in South Vietnam. According to Laird, the South Vietnamese

were flying seventy-five percent of all air and gunship sorties. Laird reported that Do was upset because his extremely successful Cambodian campaign was virtually being ignored in the American press.*

* Before the campaign was over, General Do Cao Tri was killed in a helicopter crash.

The war, therefore, had narrowed to Laos and Cambodia, Laird went on. The situation in South Vietnam was now pretty well stabilized. The enemy was now relying mainly on terrorist attacks. Unfortunately, Laird said, many Americans had failed to realize that, from the U.S. standpoint, the war was indeed winding down.

Summing up, the President said the Laotian operation was extremely successful and it had been undertaken with strong political opposition, especially in the Senate, and with almost no support from what he termed "the Establishment."

Patriotic feelings were close to the surface the next night when the President entertained generals and admirals from the various armed services at a White House reception. He cited Washington and Pershing in his tribute to the leadership qualities his guests had displayed in the difficult war now ending, and he spoke of the challenges they will face in the peacetime period ahead. Singing groups of cadets from each of the service academies then performed. The Army, Navy and Air Force offered folk and barbershop selections and bantered about football -- but the Coast Guard trio, last on the program, changed the mood sharply with a moving, original talk-and-song medley about the American dream.

For the finale, all four groups combined to cap the American theme with such songs as "This Is My Country," "This Land Is Your Land" and "God Bless America." A few bars into the Irving Berlin classic the President stood and joined in the singing. His guests rose with him, with more and more voices joining in. And when they came to "God bless America, my home sweet home!" all in the East Room were singing in unison.

As the President and his Defense Secretary had predicted, the North Vietnamese soon began to fight with unparalleled ferocity. They actually had no alternative if they were to keep supplies flowing to their forces in both South Vietnam and Cambodia. The television news shows began to exaggerate South Vietnamese setbacks. Then there were journalistic efforts to "prove" that American ground forces had become involved in the fighting in Laos. Every anonymous GI willing to say he had been shot at across the border made immediate headlines. Every rescue mission to pick up air crews or helicopters downed by enemy fire was cited as proof that Congressional injunctions were being defied.

"It is utterly astounding," wrote Crosby S. Noyes in the Washington Star, "how many reporters have been struck simultaneously with the idea that the Laotian operation is really a sort of war by proxy, in which the Americans are calling all the shots -- in other words, that the South Vietnamese are inept stooges while the North Vietnamese are all 'battle-tested veterans,' even if many of them seem to be about fifteen years old...All this, of course, is merely an extension of what has long been accepted as the savvy

journalistic attitude in Vietnam, somewhat heightened by a greater-than-usual ignorance of what is really happening. No reporter has ever gone wrong in assuming the worst in every situation, by knocking the natives, extolling the qualities of the enemy and impugning the honesty and intelligence of anyone in authority. Indeed, this is the stuff that Pulitzer prizes are made of."

"Laos," Noyes went on, "has simply added a new dimension to these standard attitudes. There is in this operation the inherent risk of calamity. And through much of the reporting shines a barely disguised hope that it will end in a disaster great enough to confirm the reporters' blackest misgivings."

The critics, journalistic and otherwise, had a field day when the South Vietnamese forces began to withdraw from Laos ahead of schedule. Probably the most disheartening development, however, occurred when the nation's television screens showed panicky ARVN troops, who were seeking to escape from encircling Communist units, clinging to the skids of American helicopters evacuating the wounded. The pictures had an unsettling effect on the nation.

One immediate consequence was that the President's credibility suffered. Although the domestic reaction had produced no new surge of street demonstrations, the first public opinion surveys were disturbing. George Gallup reported that public approval of the Nixon Presidency had fallen to fifty-one percent, the lowest point in his Administration; while only nineteen percent agreed with the President that Laos would shorten the war. And Senator Jacob Javits warned that Richard Nixon might wind up a one-term President,

the victim of the same vision of military victory in Vietnam that undid Lyndon B. Johnson.

At a press conference on March 4, the President tried to stem the tide. He reported that his Vietnam commander, General Abrams, had informed him that the South Vietnamese troops had proved in Laos that they could "hack it" against "the very best units that the North Vietnamese can put into the field." Moreover, the President said, the disruption of enemy supply lines already "assures even more the success of our troop-withdrawal program." Then he referred to the fact that there had been "a drumbeat of suggestion" from commentators that the Laos incursion "isn't going to work." As to the correctness of that policy, the President said: "I hope for the good of the country [the decision] is [correct]; and if it is right, what you say now doesn't make any difference."

The President recalled that much the same criticism had accompanied the move into Cambodia the previous year, when the doom-sayers were saying that the operation was bound to be a failure. Warning his critics against too-quick judgements on Laos, the President noted that "the jury is still out..."

On March 22, two days before the Laos operation was ended, the President was asked about his credibility problem by Howard K. Smith in the ABC commentator's one-hour televised "conversation" with Mr. Nixon. The President noted that the nation was reaching "the key point when we see that we are ending America's involvement in a war that has been the longest, the most bitter, the most difficult war in our nation's history. And once we go over the hump, once the

American people are convinced that the plans that have taken so long to implement have come into effect, then I think the credibility gap will rapidly disappear. It is the events that cause the credibility gap, not the fact that a President deliberately lies or misleads the people..."

As far as Laos was concerned, events were to prove the essential correctness of the President's position. As of this writing -- nearly one year after Laos -- the North Vietnamese had not launched any largescale actions inside South Vietnam. And the President made good on his pledge to keep withdrawing U.S. forces as well as on his pledge to reduce American casualties and involvement in ground combat action.

Despite all his pledge-keeping, the President well knew that he was ensnared in the pedantry that anything having to do with Vietnam was all lies and deception. And he was resolved to adhere to his definition of Vietnamization, in which U.S. withdrawals were dependent on South Vietnam's expanding capabilities, no matter how much pressure was exerted to get him to "bug out."

That pressure took an unusual turn. Having failed to bring down the Government of President Thieu in Saigon, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee turned its sights down the street in an effort to bring down the Nixon regime. The orchestration was well done. First, Missouri Democrat Stuart Symington denounced Henry Kissinger for usurping the authority of Secretary of State Rogers. Chairman Fulbright described Kissinger as "the principal architect of our war policy in Indochina," and James Reston wrote an uneasy column about Kissinger's power.

According to Symington, Rogers had become a "laughing stock" along Washington's cocktail circuit because Kissinger had become "Secretary of State in everything but title." Obviously the purpose of this provocative ploy was to put the President in a position where he would have to choose between Rogers and Kissinger. The stated reason, however, was to get Kissinger to come out from behind his claim of executive privilege and to testify before the Fulbright Committee.

Ironically, while the Senators were seeking to portray Kissinger as some sort of Svengali exercising his persuasive powers over a presumably innocent and naive Richard Nixon, the same thesis was being promoted on the ultra-right by anti-Semites who bluntly stated the President was being victimized by a "Zionist Jew."

At his March 4 press conference, the President described Symington's statement as an "attack upon the Secretary and a cheap shot." He praised Rogers as his "oldest and closest friend in the Cabinet," adding that he "participates in every foreign policy decision that is made by the President."

The clash over executive privilege, however, is a recurring and complex one. Of course, the Senate has a right to review foreign policy; but at the same time a President needs candid advice from his aides, which he is unlikely to obtain if the aides know that they may be publicly grilled on what they tell the President.

One morning in his news summary, the President read portions of a column written by John P. Roche, a former LBJ adviser. The concluding paragraph was this: "The great minds of the Foreign

Relations Committee have not had any real competition since Dean Rusk and George Ball left town. A public hearing on our foreign policy featuring the President and the Foreign Relations Committee would be a fascinating innovation. It would be even more interesting if neither were permitted to consult staff during the hearing! The results, I suspect, would at best dispose of the committee for the next decade; at worst, teach it some manners. How about it, Mr. President?"

But the President had other problems to worry about. The economy, for one, still was not responding as he had hoped.

CHAPTER 23

Within the Administration in the early months of 1971 debate continued on what, if anything, to do about economic problems. They had proved to be more stubborn than expected. From the beginning the President's "game plan" had been to check inflation gradually, thus minimizing the resulting impact on economic activity and employment. And inflationary pressures had indeed begun to subside and even the rise in unemployment, at least by historical standards, was unusually small.

One of the problems was that the economists and economic writers who like to indulge in Democratic politics began to grind out an awful lot of gloom-and-doom prognostications. The President himself noted the role of the press in a March 5, 1971 meeting with Secretary Connally, Arthur Burns, George Shultz and Chairman McCracken. He said that in some ways the situation was parallel to Vietnam: that there were those people in the press who do not want to see the Administration succeed; and what was most important was to strengthen confidence because, after all, the Administration was doing the right things.

At this session, McCracken noted that the employment picture was "mixed," despite the decline of the unemployment figures in February.

The unemployment problem seemed more dramatic than ever before because it affected many in the white-collar, professional class. As Herb Stein observed, "If an engineer or Ph.D. has to take his daughter out of college, you'll hear about it." And a

major reason for increased unemployment in this professional group was the sharp cutback in aerospace and defense plant spending. This was one of the prices to pay for what the President had begun to call the "transition" from a war-time to a peace-time economy.

On March 23, the President met with Republican leaders to discuss the controversy over the Administration program to proceed with a supersonic transport plane -- the SST. At issue was Federal funding of the project which had developed during the Johnson years. Opposition to the SST was strong in both houses of Congress and within the Administration itself there was a strong feeling to let it die. The President decided on the basis of all the evidence that the SST was good for the country. But he knew he was in for a fight.

To explain his position in detail the President met with his leaders. First he examined the arguments against the SST. There was, for example, the environmental issue which "bugs a lot of our friends" like James Buckley of New York. This most definitely is a legitimate concern, the President said. But he added he could not see the United States giving up its undisputed lead in the world to "save" its environment. If we do, we will have lost world leadership. The truth is that the Administration was not asking for a fleet of SSTs, but just two prototypes, and if the environmental danger from these two was shown to be real, he planned to cancel the project.

Therefore, as far as he was concerned, the environmentalists had no strong case, the President said.

The second argument was economic. The costs were too high. But, as the President observed, the American people did not want to go ahead with jet aircraft when the British first built them. They felt the jets weren't worth the investment. But we went ahead and built them and we caught up with the British. As a result, the United States now has eighty-seven percent of the business. Therefore, it was worth it. As for the SSTs, the fact was that the airline companies who know more about the economics than we do, were ready to buy the supersonic aircraft. Obviously they were not going to buy anything that was uneconomical.

The third argument against the SST, the President went on, was why put money into the project when the cities and the poor needed funds so badly. He then told a personal story of how as Vice President in 1953 he visited Burma and called on Premier U Nu. He informed Mr. Nixon that, as a dedicated Socialist, he was going to build schools, build roads and guarantee an annual income, among other things.

"Where are you going to get the money?" Mr. Nixon had asked. And U Nu's answer was, "Oh, we're going to appropriate it."

The President described U Nu as "a wonderful man" but not an altogether "practical fellow." The fact was that Burma was one of the poorer countries in Southeast Asia.

Once fully developed and a going concern, the SST could mean an extra ten to twelve billion dollars a year in taxes, the President said. And that money could be utilized among the poor and in the ghettoes.

The President said he was aware that the public opinion polls showed considerable opposition to the SST. But he contended that "if they had polled the people on the Wright Brothers," they probably would have been against airplanes, too. The President noted that the U.S. was the number one country in the world in transport; and we don't want to lose that lead the way we lost the lead in electronics to Japan. Look at the spin-off from the moon project, in terms of computers. Now we seem to be turning away from space and the SST. Whenever a great nation drops out of the race to explore the unknown, it ceases to be a great nation. The President said he was convinced the SST constituted a "dramatic breakthrough" since, among other things, it would help bring the nations of the world closer. Sooner or later the United States will find that it won't be able to keep out of the race, the President concluded.

Secretary Connally, seconding the President's views, said that while he sits over at Treasury and sees ten billions in balance of payments deficits and, at the same time, hears people knocking the SST that would bring the U.S. perhaps twenty-two billions, he is "utterly astounded."

The next day the Senate voted to kill Federal funding for the SST. The vote hardly came as a surprise. The President had fought what he had considered the good battle and had lost. And as one of his Democratic supporters on the SST, Senator Henry M. Jackson of Washington, candidly put it, "The know-nothings are taking over."

And that was the tragedy of the SST vote. As Jackson pointed out, it signified a growing anti-technology crusade "without proper reflection and thought." For the opponents went to absurd, almost hysterical, lengths in their campaign against the SST. One Senator, in fact, said the SST would produce skin cancer. He had no scientific basis for the statement. It was an unproved opinion. Instead of being laughed out of the Senate chamber, there were those who seemed to take him seriously.

At the end of the year, Richard Nixon met with President Pompidou on Terceira Island, The Azores. In her United Press International dispatch, Helen Thomas reported: "In a bit of aviation one-upmanship, Pompidou arrived...aboard the French-British Concorde SST -- a supersonic transport of the type which Congress refused to build despite Nixon's efforts. Pompidou winged in from Paris in about one and three quarter hours -- covering the 1,875 miles in less than half the time it took Nixon to fly the slightly longer distance from Washington."

Prior to leaving for Washington, the President inspected the sleek white and blue Concorde. After moving down the plane's narrow passageway, accompanied by Henri Ziegler, president of the French aerospace industry, Mr. Nixon said: "I congratulate you for building an SST. I said I was not envious, but I wish we had built it."

"Well, he continued, his voice trailing off, "maybe sometime..."

Another not so incidental aspect of the SST defeat was that it threatened to throw an estimated thirteen thousand scientists,

technicians and other workers out of their jobs -- at a time when they could not readily find other employment. As the President noted to a visitor, it is easy to say that the nation must reorder its priorities. But how are you going to put those people trained in aviation into jobs dealing with mass transit or housing?

On March 26, the Cabinet met for a discussion on what to do about cost inflation in the construction industry. The meeting began on a light note. Transportation Secretary Volpe arrived shortly after the President and the other Cabinet members were seated. "What's the matter?" the Attorney General asked Volpe. "Did your transportation break down?"

Volpe muttered an apology and James Hodgson took the floor. The Labor Secretary began by recalling how the President in January had called on the construction industry -- both labor and management representatives -- to come up with a voluntary wage-price stabilization plan within thirty days. But they had come up with nothing.

So on February 23 the President had suspended the Davis-Bacon Act, a law that tends to prop up wages on Federal construction projects. This, said Hodgson, finally got the industry's attention "the way a two-by-four gets the attention of a mule." Generally, the public felt this was the right thing to do, but the parties themselves -- both labor and management -- fulminated about being abused.

The President, at this point, noted that management had been highly irresponsible. The big contractors, who had union

contracts, had not wanted Davis-Bacon suspended because it might leave them open to greater competition. The unions themselves, looking down the road, knew if suspension of Davis-Bacon continued it would mean a serious erosion in Organized Labor's power in certain areas. Hodgson noted that it could lead over a period of three or four years to a restructuring of the entire construction industry. The President agreed, emphasizing again that management in this case had been just as irresponsible as labor.

The President conceded that his moves would not raise his political stock among the "hard hats." While the Administration may get a few individuals, the President said, most labor people would be against us. But, as President he could not make decisions affecting the nation's wellbeing on that basis.

The President said he also faced opposition from the "bosses." At the Republican fund-raising dinner the other night, the oil men gave only twenty-five percent of what they had given the previous year. "I respect them for it," the President said. "We've done things they didn't like. We did them because they were the right things to do and it's understandable that some people are unhappy."

Three days later, the President issued an executive order formally establishing wage-and-price-stabilization machinery in the construction industry that would be manned largely by labor and management. And, as a sop to the unions, he reinstated Davis-Bacon. The order, in retrospect, was a significant break in the President's hitherto adamant refusal to approve wage-price controls generally.

He hoped it would serve as a significant warning to labor and management elsewhere to begin thinking in terms of the public interest.

The President, however, hadn't given up on the "hard hats." He invited sixteen construction union leaders for an hour-long heart-to-heart talk in the Cabinet room. The leaders were in town for a meeting of the Building and Construction Trades Department of the AFL-CIO, at which some four thousand lesser chiefs and business agents heard a series of Democratic speakers -- and labor officials -- rip into President Nixon, warning him of political reprisals in 1972.

In effect, the President told the sixteen hard-hat leaders that there would be a construction boom. He added that no longer was there any question of whether the economy was going up. What the economists were arguing about was how swiftly or slowly it was going up -- but never that it was going down. The President said he understood their problems, but he pointed to the nearly four-dollar-an-hour increase per man won by a handful of unions in Kansas City. This meant, he said, a jump in labor costs of about one hundred and fifty eight dollars a week, over a three-year contract period. And, he added, the rest of the nation follows the construction industry. Which was why he had to take some action.

The President made it clear that the hard-hats were his kind of people and he felt most comfortable with them. He added: "If every man around this table opposes me for partisan reasons or if every man around this table opposes every one of my domestic

programs, for what you have done for your country on the vital issues which affect our nation's security, you will always be welcome in this room as long as I am here.

"I want you to know you can always come in. I don't want only those groups that hold up their hands and say, 'we support you, Mr. President.'"

Then the President took the group out to the Rose Garden for some picture taking.

To demonstrate his even-handedness, the President also rapped the knuckles of Bethlehem Steel and got them to give up half of a proposed twelve percent price increase. But it was done without the furor which had greeted President Kennedy when he sought to bring down steel prices. Which again demonstrated the difference in approach taken by these two Presidents.

And in a speech entitled "The Right To Be Confident," the President told the annual meeting of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce on April 26 that he would continue to use the power of his office "to persuade business and labor to act responsibly in making further progress against inflation." At the same time he promised to do "all that I can in my present office" to preserve "the economic freedom that built this nation." But he also said there were times when economic freedom "must be protected from its own excesses."

The President obviously was turning away from his previous instinct to interfere as little as possible in the workings of the market-place.

Previously, on April 7, the President had once again addressed the nation on the subject of Vietnam. Announcing he would

withdraw another one hundred thousand troops between May 1 and December 1, he also flatly refused to set a terminal date for a total pullout. But he emphasized the U.S. was getting out of the war, adding that the withdrawal would be on our terms, agreed to by the South Vietnamese, not the terms of Hanoi. He insisted, too, that the U.S. would not withdraw completely until all American prisoners of war had been released by the enemy. And he warned that "a nightmare of recrimination" would sweep the country if "I should move to end this war without regard to what happens in South Vietnam."

The possibility of such a "nightmare" was far from hyperbole. On March 31, First Lieutenant William Laws Calley Jr. was sentenced to life imprisonment by a military court after being found guilty of the premeditated murder of at least twenty-two South Vietnamese civilians at My Lai in March 1968.

For millions of Americans, Calley's fate was the catalyst which crystallized much of the national ambivalence, frustration and confusion over the war in Vietnam. It was, said one of the jurors who had convicted Calley, "tearing the country apart."

And for a few days it looked that way. A record amount of mail, phone calls, telegrams and petitions descended on Congress, other public officials, radio and television stations as well as the White House, where they were running one hundred to one in favor of Calley. Many were outraged over what they saw as the conviction of a soldier for "doing nothing more than obeying his orders." Others viewed Calley as a scapegoat, bearing the entire

burden of guilt for My Lai while everyone else involved went free. Still others saw in the verdict condemnation of the U.S. role in Vietnam.

And still others, like Senator J. William Fulbright, suggested that perhaps an appropriate followup would be for war crimes charges to be preferred against President Nixon. For good measure, he said, he would bring Lyndon Johnson and General Westmoreland into the dock, too. Fulbright's argument was that Calley had been put in his position by policies originating in the White House.

The fact was that Richard Nixon had not been elected when the tragedy of My Lai occurred. And what of Fulbright's role in the escalation of the war? After all, the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee was the author of the Gulf of Tonkin resolution of 1964, which gave President Johnson the go-ahead to start bombing North Vietnam and dispatching more troops, one of whom was Lieutenant Calley. By his own logic, Senator Fulbright could also have been charged with war crimes.

Such was the bitterness which swept the nation in the wake of the Calley verdict.

The President himself was disturbed by the verdict and the reflection it might have on other U.S. fighting men. The verdict had been brought to his attention as soon as it came off the news tickers at San Clemente. He pondered over it that evening and still had it on his mind when he went to bed. At about 2:00 a.m. he awoke, unable to sleep. All through the night he thought the

issue through. In essence, he felt Calley had been tried in the public spotlight and would be in the stockade for an extended period while his case was being reviewed. He decided there was no need for Calley to remain in the stockade. After all, there were draft-dodgers -- heavyweight champion Cassius Clay came immediately to his mind -- who were free on bond or bail pending their appeals.

The President's decision was this: Calley was to be released immediately from the stockade at Fort Benning and returned to his quarters on the post where he would remain under loose house arrest until all his appeals to higher courts -- military and civilian -- were decided.

Three days later, on April 3, the President took further action. Through John Ehrlichman, he announced that before any sentence against Calley took effect, the President would personally review the conviction and make the final decision about the lieutenant's fate.

Actually the President was breaking no new ground. He was merely saying he would perform his Constitutional function as Commander-in-Chief to review the Calley case. Nevertheless he was denounced by those who rarely hestitated to urge the President's intervention in civil rights cases -- no matter what their court status. "In yielding to what may have seemed an irresistible surge of public emotion," commented the New York Post, "Mr. Nixon may have unleashed long-range passions and reflections that extend far beyond the furor over Calley."

The Post was to be proved wrong again. Most of the public clamor over the Calley case ended almost as quickly as it had begun. As the President later noted, his entrance into the Calley case aimed at calming down the nation's emotions -- emotions which could have erupted into violence. And he succeeded.

In his April 7 speech on Vietnam, the President shied away from adding any additional emotional fuel to the issue. But he did praise "the two and one-half million fine, young Americans who have served in Vietnam." And he added: "The atrocity charges in individual cases should not and cannot be allowed to reflect on their courage and their self-sacrifice."

In the speech, the President fought back against swelling demands for a de facto surrender in Vietnam. The seeming ambiguity of the Laotian operation along with the Calley sentencing had angered the President's critics in the Senate and had brought renewed pressures for immediate withdrawal along a prearranged and preannounced timetable. A considerable amount of opposition was building in the President's own party. And the once solidly pro-war Southern flank of the Democratic party began to break, as former super-hawks demanded that the U.S. get out of Vietnam immediately.

The President and his advisers were fully aware that by now most Americans wanted the war over at whatever cost. "Neville Chamberlain's sellout of Czechoslovakia at Munich was supported by at least eighty-five percent of the British people," noted Henry Kissinger. "A few months later the popular will reversed itself, and he was a tragically ruined man."

The Chamberlain specter also haunted Mr. Nixon. At a White House meeting with Senate Republicans on April 20 in the Cabinet Room, he emphasized that no matter how much opposition he faced he meant to go forward, come hell or high water, with the orderly Vietnamization of the war.

"I know that you gentlemen are concerned about the war," said the President. And he recognized that there were many in his own party who "would like me to announce a specific date of withdrawal." But "the real issue" is where the United States "will be after Vietnam." We need to end the war so that the South Vietnamese will have a chance to survive. We can't guarantee their perpetual survival, but we certainly owe it to them and to the Free World to give them a chance for survival -- not only for their sake, but for our sake, because the other nations on the perimeter of Asia such as the Philippines, Korea, Japan and others cannot be allowed to lose confidence in us and they would if we leave precipitously.

And, the President continued, "if the world begins to think that the United States is content to be a second-rate power (and even if that seems to fit well within the United States) it will not be conducive to peace in the world." He then went on to explain that there were two great and key nations on the periphery of the Communist world who looked to the U.S. for guarantees of their security. They were Japan and Germany, neither of whom is a nuclear power. These nations are with us not simply because of economics, though there are strong economic ties, but because the U.S. is the number one power in the world. When the U.S. ceases to be the first

power and when these countries lose confidence in the American nuclear umbrella, they inevitably are going to look elsewhere for their arrangements. When that happens, the U.S. will be in serious trouble.

"What this would do to our nation's soul is frightening to contemplate," the President said. And that is why, with the delicate power balance existing in the world, the President needed strength and evidence of such strength -- not only in the military sphere but in a cohesive political support which would enable him to play the proper cards as well as have the "blue chips" for the high stake international poker game.

"Let's analyze just where we are in terms of national strength," the President said. The U.S. was ahead in conventional power and roughly equal with the Soviets in air power. As for ICBMs, the Russians have approximately one thousand five hundred while we have one thousand. But they possess a bigger warhead. And by 1974, they will catch up to us in nuclear submarines.

The President called on Kissinger, who compared Soviet power in the year 1962 with 1971. In 1962, the Soviets had only sixty ICBMs. The U.S., therefore, had a ten-to-one advantage at a time when, Kissinger noted wryly, there was supposed to be a missile gap. As of now, Kissinger went on, we still have a greater ICBM accuracy, but once the Russians close the "miniaturization gap" their accuracy will become so improved that they will be equal to us.

The President noted that the U.S. was engaged in difficult negotiations around the world. For example, the fourth session of

the SALT talks was then under way in Vienna and the President said he believed the Soviets had "strong reasons" for an agreement. However, "we know for a fact that they will only deal from strength and that they respect those who have strength. Otherwise, they have historically moved into power vacuums."

Springtime had come to Washington. The crocuses, jasmine and forsythia were out in all their glory. It was symptomatic of the times, however, that the big event celebrating Spring -- the blossoming of the cherry trees -- was somewhat marred by smog damage. Up on the Hill, Congress was in a lethargic mood. There was the usual fussing about the President's war-making powers. But Administration legislation moved slowly and the outlook for favorable action on the President's revenue-sharing bills, executive reorganization proposals, health care program and family assistance plan was only fair.

But all wasn't smog for the President. As he had predicted, the stock market began to move up, busting through the nine hundred barrier. And the unemployment picture seemed to be getting better, the jobless rate falling below six percent. The President hoped it would fall to five percent or less by the end of the year.

And with great joy he confirmed the worst-kept secret in Washington -- the fact that his eldest daughter, Tricia, would marry Edward Finch Cox in June. The President was quite fond of his future son-in-law. He had had many discussions with him over the dinner table. Young Cox had a mind of his own. Having once

worked for Ralph Nader and the New Republic, Cox frequently took a liberal position. Which was quite amusing, considering Tricia's innate conservatism.

But Spring also meant the season for demonstrations. And the first one took place on a cold but sunny Saturday, April 24, when an estimated two hundred thousand anti-war demonstrators gathered in the nation's capital for what turned out to be a generally peaceful protest. But all the previous week a new dimension was provided by one thousand Vietnam Veterans Against the War who camped on a shady patch of the green Mall which stretches from the Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial. How many of these "veterans" actually fought in Vietnam was subject to question. But there was no gainsaying the fact that they were extremely effective. They staged impressive street theater, simulating search and destroy missions in Vietcong villages; they picketed the White House; they disobeyed a Supreme Court ruling against them; and they wound up their week-long activities by hurling their military decorations onto the Capitol grounds.

A great deal of media attention was paid their leader, John F. Kerry, a former naval officer who had served in Vietnam. He made a particularly impassioned statement (reportedly written by Adam Walinsky, a former Robert Kennedy speechwriter) before the Fulbright Committee. "...How do you ask a man to be the last man to die in Vietnam?" Kerry asked. "How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?"

Because of his eloquence, good looks, his twenty-four carat social connections and the right set of initials (JFK), Kerry became a national celebrity. And, in his groovy fatigues bedecked with battle ribbons, he became an overnight hero among the radical chic in Washington. In fact, he and his socialite wife found lodgings in a fashionable Georgetown home and were the guests of honor at several cocktail parties that week. Meanwhile, Kerry's "brothers" and their groupie girl friends slept onthe ground, drinking cheap wine and whisky, smoking pot, singing folk songs and showing anxiety only when the bullhorn proclaimed that "narcs" -- narcotics agents -- were in the area.

In retrospect, this was a prize example of a media event. The Washington Post and the networks presented the story as if this ragtag lot represented a portentous uprising. And the politicians catered to them. Former Attorney General Ramsey Clark acted as their lawyer in their dealings with the Justice Department. And Senator Ted Kennedy gave out with a stream of anti-Nixon rhetoric, completely ignoring the fact that it was his late brothers who had gotten the U.S. into the war in the first place. And after an early morning visit to their campsite, the Massachusetts Senator stated that the protestors represented "the best of America." As Nick Thimmisch noted, "It's ironical that the one-time fans and followers of the Ivy League liberals who came down to Washington a decade ago to plan, administer and execute the terrible Vietnam war are now making the most absurd statements about it and use the unfortunate

delegation of earnest, conscience-stricken, anti-war Vietnam vets to further indulge in their favorite sport of masochism."

The remarkable aspect of the week-long events was that they came off peacefully. Only a handful of arrests were made. What was ahead was another story. A militant group headed by Rennie Davis, one of the Chicago Seven defendants, who organized the street fighting at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968, announced it intended to block commuter traffic in downtown Washington and suburban Virginia, shutting down the Pentagon, the Capitol and the Justice Department. Davis said this "spring offensive" would take place the following week beginning May 1 -- May Day.

Fully informed of all developments, the President gave Attorney General Mitchell specific responsibility for the law enforcement response of the entire executive branch. In essence, Mr. Nixon set forth a general guideline -- to keep the government open for business, consistent with the public safety. Meanwhile, the President kept to his schedule. On April 26, for example, he met with a delegation of Tennesseans who had come to present him with a portrait of himself. Senator Howard Baker mentioned that one of his last visits to the White House had involved discussions of the Tennessee Valley Authority.

"Didn't we sell that?" the President deadpanned. Then he reassured the delegation, which included representatives of union locals at the TVA, "That's a standard joke the Senator and I have. Everyone now is talking so much about selling the Pentagon," he added -- an oblique reference to a controversial CBS documentary -- "they've stopped worrying about selling the TVA."

As he was being photographed standing next to the nearly life-size oil portrait of himself, the President commented to the artist, "I can't be caught looking at the picture -- they'd say I was admiring myself."

Told by State Representative Ben Longley that Republican Governor Winfield Dunn's budget had come within one vote of adoption, Mr. Nixon asked the party composition of the Tennessee legislature. Longley said both Houses were fifty-eight percent Democratic. "Obviously many of them are statesmen," the President remarked dryly.

Next on the schedule was a visit from the Ohio Youth Choir which was scheduled to tour Europe in the summer. The mythical President-who-can't-relate-to-youth was nowhere in evidence as he walked with the youngsters and talked with them in a low, easy voice. He struck a chord in the group with wry recollections of his experiences on his high school glee club. "I was such a bad bass that they always made me master of ceremonies," he said. "The singing was fun, but the bus rides were even better." From the back of the choir came a scandalized "ooohhh."

As thousands of youthful demonstrators began to stream into the city, the President felt it necessary, at an April 29 press conference, to deny that Washington is "in a state of siege," and to remind Americans that neither the Congress nor the President was intimidated. "It doesn't mean that we are not going to listen to those who come peacefully, but those who come and break the law will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law."

In their raggedy camps as well as at all-night rock-concert festivals in West Potomac Park, the youngsters geared for their

moment of truth by smoking pot, guzzling all manner of booze, fornicating in sleeping bags and tents, urinating in public, burning American flags, and leaving a monumental litter for environmentalists to weep over.

The Washington police moved in early Sunday morning, May 2, to clear an estimated thirty thousand demonstrators out of West Potomac Park after their camping permit was revoked because of open violation of its conditions. Though this left the scrubby legions confused, they did cause enough disruption Monday morning in their efforts to "shut down the government" that police arrested them en masse, bagging seven thousand in one day. Even the Washington Post was later to concede that "the behavior of large numbers of demonstrators on Monday was destructive and dangerous -- dangerous not only or even primarily to the community, but equally to themselves..."

With but few exceptions major traffic arteries were kept unclogged for the movement of officials and government workers, though considerable damage was done to vehicles. The prisoners quickly filled the city's jails and the overflow was removed to a fenced-in athletic field.

After the first day of trashing and traffic-blocking was over, Rennie Davis said, "We failed this morning to stop the U.S. Government."

There were other mass arrests during the week, but essentially the worst was over. Rennie's May Day Tribe followers dribbled out of detention and out of town, and nobody seemed sorry

to see them go. Up on the Hill, only a handful of militants like Bella Abzug and Ted Kennedy were upset by the firm measures taken to control the "nonviolent" children who had blocked traffic, thrown bricks, bottles, boards and manure, slashed tires and ripped out distributor caps and otherwise dramatized their opposition to the war.*

* Mrs. Abzug was seeking to take over the anti-war leadership in Congress. Despite her lengthy record of leftwing activities, she was elected the previous November as a Representative from Manhattan. Her demanding ways infuriated even fellow radicals in the Congress. On one occasion she angrily berated the vigorously anti-war Ronald Dellums, a black Congressman from California, for not having attended a Democratic caucus at which an amendment to end the war was the topic. Dellums' reply to Bella was brief: "Why don't you shut up -- you white elitist motherfucker!"

Most anti-war spokesmen were horrified by the May Day activities. Oregon's Representative Edith Green, a Democrat, spoke for many when she said: "Only the police and the FBI stand between us and anarchy." The new Democratic Senator from California, John Tunney, agreed, bemoaning the fact that the May Day antics "well might have ruined several months of hard work by the real advocates of peace."

Still high on the thrill of it all, the Washington Post's house radical, Nicholas von Hoffman, made what in retrospect was an important point: "It's very hard for the respectable, working and shaving doves to understand that their real leaders are the

freaks and the crazies....What the freaks say today the respectables will say in about a year....The freaks break the ice with some new outrage which gets everyone apoplectic and then people think about it and often agree. So it is that Rennie Davis and the rest of his sordid lot have done more to shape and change American public opinion than the last three Presidents."

Before the week was over, cries of "repression" and "concentration camps" filled the air. The media began to catalogue every single Serious Constitutional Question raised by the mass arrests. Fading into the background were the issues raised by the efforts of those who sought to interfere with the functioning of government and the civil rights of citizens. And Americans for Democratic Action, once an estimable liberal-intellectual organization, at the closing session of its twenty-fourth annual convention actually resolved that Congress institute impeachment proceedings against Richard Nixon "on the grounds of high crimes committed by him" in the prosecution of the war. "We passed this resolution," said Joseph Rauh, ADA's illustrious Vice President, "because we have the same feeling of frustration that the kids do who sit and block the streets here. Kids are arrested for idealism, and yet there is the criminality of this immoral war. I can't get angry at the kids."*

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* Oh, how they were laughing only ten years ago when Robert Welch of the John Birch Society announced that his solution to it all was to "Impeach Earl Warren." Hubert Humphrey, one of ADA's founder-members, said that a small number of delegates "apparently

acted more out of emotion and passion than reason and prudent judgement in calling for the impeachment of the President. I find their action irresponsible and unwarranted."

On May 8, the President met privately with Mayor Walter Washington, Police Chief Jerry Wilson and several army officers to thank them for preventing what he described as the spectacle of a Government being shut down by anarchy in the streets. Referring to the Monday Morning Quarterbacks now busily criticizing the successful defusing of the May Day caper, Mr. Nixon said: "Why don't you ask them how they would have dealt with the situation and what they would have done to keep the city open?"

The civil libertarians, led by Ted Kennedy, kept harping on the few cases of innocent bystanders who were grabbed during the mass roundup for little more than having long hair or a floppy look. But none of the critics could come up with any plausible suggestions for containing the tens of thousands of militants. In fact, John P. Spiegel, director of the Center for the Study of Violence at Brandeis University, thought that the Government should have permitted the demonstrators to have a "half-hour of blocking streets to make their point...It's not going to bring the Government down."

At his June 1 press conference, the President was asked, "Regarding the mass arrests in Washington -- you seem to have thought that keeping the Government running was so important that suspending Constitutional rights was justified. Was it that important?"

"I think," replied the President, "when you talk about suspending Constitutional rights that this is really an exaggeration of what was done. What we were talking about here basically was a situation where masses of individuals did attempt to block traffic, did attempt to stop the Government. They said in advance that is what they were going to do. They tried it, and they had to be stopped. They were stopped without injuries of any significance. They were stopped, I think, with a minimum amount of force, and with a great deal of patience.

"And I must say that I think the police showed a great deal more concern for their rights than they showed for the rights of the people of Washington."

As the debate over police tactics and the legal processing of the arrested demonstrators continued, few of the experts in the media paid much attention to a significant remark made by the President. And that was when he said flatly that he expected to visit Communist China at some point in his life.

"I hope and, as a matter of fact, I expect to visit Mainland China sometime in some capacity," the President volunteered at his April 29 press conference. "I don't know what capacity, but that indicates what I hope for the long term. I hope to contribute to a policy in which we can have a new relationship with Mainland China."

It was a noteworthy remark if only because no President before him would have dared to have said any such thing in the years since Mao Tse-tung had seized control of the Chinese mainland.

CHAPTER 24

> Though recent years have accustomed us to political ironies, the idea of a Washington-Peking detente under the presidency of Richard M. Nixon strains the imagination. Could anything be more bizarre than a Nixon-Mao summit?
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> Yet considerably less bizarre, indeed almost plausible, would be a meeting between Nixon and Chou En-lai, two of the most skilled practitioners of political survival in the postwar world.
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> And more than merely plausible would be the new administration's seizure of an opportunity for maneuver and progress in Sino-American relations. Mr. Nixon's bitterest critics denounce his bent toward "opportunism," but it may take just such a tried-and-true talent to break the 20 years of deadlock between Washington and Peking.
>
> -- James C. Thomson Jr.
> Atlantic Monthly
> February 1969

Rarely has any major shift in American foreign policy been so thoroughly signalled in advance. But, as far as is known, only one expert -- Dr. Thomson, a history lecturer at Harvard --

foresaw the possibility of "a Washington-Peking detente under the presidency of Richard M Nixon."

Richard Nixon, however, had been dropping clues of his intentions all over the place. In October 1967 he had written: "Any American policy toward Asia must come urgently to grips with the reality of China...Taking the long view, we simply cannot afford to leave China forever outside the family of nations, there to nurture its fantasies, cherish its hates and threaten its neighbors. There is no place on this small planet for a billion of its potentially most able people to live in angry isolation."

But he added this warning: "The world cannot be safe until China changes. Thus our aim should be to induce change; to persuade China that it cannot satisfy its imperial ambitions, and that its own national interest requires a turning away from foreign adventuring and a turning inward toward the solution of its own domestic problems."*

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* The article, "Asia After Vietnam," was condensed in the March 1968 issue of the Reader's Digest.

Within two weeks of his inauguration, President Nixon set into motion the systematic process of review and the patient process of policy evolution that laid the groundwork for his dramatic announcement -- two and a half years later -- of his forthcoming trip to Peking.

It began with a brief personal note from the President to Henry Kissinger on February 1, 1969 commenting on an intelligence report of the day before having to do with China. Mr. Nixon told

his national security adviser, "I think we should give every encouragement to the idea that this Administration is seeking rapprochement with the Chinese." Moreover, the President wanted private efforts launched to see whether communication with Peking was possible. This could be done through informal contacts with East European Communists. Thus, the U.S. cautiously set out to find an avenue to Peking. It meant blazing a trail through a thicket of mutual distrust and hostility.

Four days later, a Presidential directive (NSSM 14, February 5) went out to the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense and the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency ordering a systematic study of U.S. policy toward China. It was to examine specifically the current status of U.S. relations with Communist China and the Republic of China (Formosa); the nature of Chinese Communist intentions in Asia; and the interaction between U.S. policy and the policies of other major nations toward China.

It was a formidable task and ultimately engaged the talents of all agencies of the Government concerned with aspects of China policy. The guiding rule was that nothing should be done or proposed that could conceivably invite a rebuff from Peking. The resulting study was finally screened on May 15 by the NSC Review Group which, in turn, sent its analyses and options to the President.

On the basis of ~~this paper~~, the President decided to take the first big step. But at the time it didn't seem that important. No blowing of bugles or clanging of gongs accompanied the unveiling

of the new China policy. Instead, on July 21, 1969, the State Department announced modifications of U.S. trade, travel and cultural restrictions that had been applied to Communist China since 1950. U.S. citizens traveling abroad would be allowed to bring back one hundred dollars worth of goods produced in Communist China and six categories of citizens -- journalists, teachers, doctors, scholars, Congressmen and Red Cross representatives -- were automatically cleared for travel to China.

The Chinese Communists themselves appeared to show no immediate interest. They had passed early judgement on the Nixon Administration by notifying the American Ambassador to Poland on February 18, 1969 that they would not participate in the one hundred and thirty-fifth meeting of the Sino-U.S. ambassadorial talks on February 20 as scheduled. They accused the U.S. of having incited a former member of the Chinese diplomatic mission in The Netherlands to betray his country and defect. "All this once again enables the people of China and the rest of the world to see clearly the vicious features of the Nixon Administration, which has inherited the mantle of the preceding U.S. Government in flagrantly making itself the enemy of seven hundred million Chinese people," proclaimed Peking's Foreign Ministry.

But statements like these were to be expected and the President did not take them too seriously. In his meetings with Charles de Gaulle early in his Administration, the President brought up the China question. He emphasized his determination to normalize relations with Peking. He frankly did not know whether he could

be successful in ending two decades of distrust between the two nations, but the President said he would try.

De Gaulle, who was most pleased with what he privately described as Nixon's realism, instructed his Ambassador to Peking, Etienne Manac'h, to inform Premier Chou En-lai that it was President Nixon's determination not only to re-establish diplomatic relations with China but to withdraw from Vietnam. Then similar word was spread through other diplomatic channels as well as by Premier Ceaucescu of Rumania, whom the President had visited in Bucharest. At first, Chou En-lai did not appear impressed. Convincing him of the genuine goodwill of the United States was to prove a difficult exercise.

On August 8, 1969, Secretary Rogers rose in Canberra, Australia, to observe that "we recognize, of course, that the Republic of China on Taiwan and Communist China on the mainland are facts of life." The speech went virtually unnoticed by the pundits. But it was the first time that any major American spokesman had recognized that fact of life for twenty years.

The statement was accompanied by numerous behind-the-scenes probings. Messages were sent to Peking through carefully selected third countries. Among other things, the U.S. expressed interest in reviving the moribund ambassadorial talks with the Chinese in Warsaw. In approving these moves, the President let it be understood that the Chinese could not necessarily be expected to respond immediately and he said we should be patient. There was always an awareness that the slightest slip could blow the whole project sky-high.

On August 14, 1969, the President met with the National Security Council at the Western White House for a broad review of China policy. The meeting began with a briefing and discussion on China's internal situation, posture toward the rest of the world, and her military potential.

The President told his advisers that it was important that we examine all our assumptions dealing with Soviet and Chinese policies toward us and our policies toward them. "Let's look at what has actually been happening," he urged. "Can we sustain our previous assumptions?" He also emphasized that "we must look at China on a long-term basis. We cannot let China stay permanently isolated." Our basic interest was to help build a safer world for the future. The key question was what kind of policy toward China would best serve this interest -- isolation or a dialogue?

A major evaluation by the NSC was that the internal convulsions that had occurred on the mainland in the course of the recent Cultural Revolution had left China in some confusion. That, plus Peking's preoccupation with the Soviet Union, would very likely limit China's aggressiveness elsewhere.

The fact was the the USSR had begun an enormous military buildup along four thousand miles of Chinese frontier. There already had been clashes along the Ussuri River in the east and the Dzungarian Gates in the west. The Soviets employed a variety of other tactics clearly calculated to exacerbate Peking's perennial fear of "encirclement." Thus, the Soviets' unprecedented briefing of the French, Japanese, West German and other non-Communist govern-

ments on the border clashes was interpreted by Peking as a ploy to mobilize international opinion against China. Moreover, Soviet officials in Washington had demanded urgent audiences with top Nixon Administration officials to underscore the gravity of Chinese "provocations" and warn of the consequences.

Then, at a Communist Congress in Moscow, Soviet Party Chief Leonid Brezhnev made a curious proposal for an Asian "security pact" aired at containing Chinese expansionism. There were even well founded reports that the Soviets might be considering a pre-emptive strike against China's rapidly developing nuclear potential. Thus, the possibility of a full fledged Soviet-Sino war was not being discounted.

In addition to the Soviet threat, Red China faced a resurgent Japan and a hostile India.

On September 5, 1969, at a time of continuing tensions along the Sino-Soviet border, Undersecretary of State Elliot Richardson publicly disclaimed any U.S. desire to exploit or take sides in the angry dispute between the two Communist giants. "Our national security would in the long run be prejudiced by associating ourselves with either side against the other," he told the American Political Science Association. "Each is highly sensitive about American efforts to improve relations with the other. We intend, nevertheless, to pursue a long-term course of progressively developing better relations with both. We are not going to let Communist Chinese invective deter us from seeking agreements with the Soviet Union where those are in our interest. Conversely, we are not going to

let Soviet apprehensions prevent us from attempting to bring Communist China out of its angry, alienated shell."

In a year-end background briefing on December 18, 1969, a White House official said that the U.S. had made it clear that we have no permanent enemies and will judge other countries, including Communist China, on the basis of their actions and not their domestic ideology. The official emphasized there had clearly been a change in American policy, that we were prepared to have serious, concrete and, hopefully, constructive talks with Peking. The problem was one of restoring a degree of confidence for a possible dialogue.

The new U.S. approach to the Chinese showed skill and patience. The President knew they were not ready for the bold step of reciprocating. Therefore he patiently built a record of low-key public statements and actions which did not require a Chinese response, but which unmistakably established the American willingness to open a dialogue. The President knew that their response would come (if at all) in their own good time. By not trying to force them prematurely, he made the decision easier for them. By avoiding melodramatic overtures, he made clear his seriousness. In his opinion, a hasty approach -- or one based on abstract sentimentality -- would undoubtedly have been rebuffed.

On December 19, 1969, the State Department announced the removal of the one hundred dollar ceiling on non-commercial tourist importations of mainland Chinese goods. And there was further alteration of the regulations to permit foreign subsidiaries of U.S. firms to trade with mainland China in non-strategic goods.

On January 8, 1970, the U.S. and China agreed to reopen the Warsaw ambassadorial talks.

On February 18, 1970, the President, in his first Foreign Policy Report to the Congress, outlined the steps that had been taken to normalize relations with the Peking regime. "We have avoided dramatic gestures which might invite dramatic rebuffs," he stressed. "We have taken specific steps that did not require Chinese agreement but which underlined our willingness to have a more normal and constructive relationship."

On March 16, 1970, the State Department announced that U.S. passports would now be validated for travel to mainland China for any legitimate purpose. On April 29, the U.S. authorized the selective licensing of American-made components and spare parts for non-strategic foreign goods exported to mainland China. And in August 1970 the U.S. lifted the prohibition preventing American oil companies abroad from supplying their foreign-produced oil to free world ships bearing non-strategic cargoes to Chinese ports.

Red China's response to all these overtures was non-committal -- but none of them was denounced out of hand. The Chinese obviously were watching and waiting. A more moderate trend in Chinese foreign policy was beginning to assert itself.

In a reflective interview with Time on foreign policy following the Jordanian crisis of October 1970, the President expressed again his hope of improving relations with China and said: "If there is anything I want to do before I die, it is to go to China. If I don't, I want my children to."

Then, making a toast to the visiting Rumanian Premier Ceausescu on October 26, 1970, an American President for the first time referred to Communist China by the name it uses -- "The Peoples Republic of China." The President did so again in February 1971. The following month Premier Chou noted publicly that the President had used the "proper name" of his country.

For some months, there had been other indirect but encouraging responses. Evidence was accumulating that the Chinese would not be adverse to opening the dialogue which Mr. Nixon was seeking. Thus, toward the end of 1970, the President decided it was time for another systematic stocktaking. Two Presidential directives were issues on November 19, 1970 -- NSSM 106 on China policy in general and NSSM 107 on the United Nations membership question. By then, it appeared virtually certain that Peking would be admitted into the world body. The review of China policy was to cover U.S. long-range goals, short-range goals, coordination with other interested nations, and implications for U.S. relations with the Soviet Union and our interests in Southeast Asia.

In a year-end review of foreign policy, a top White House official on December 24, 1970, said that the Nixon Administration was prepared to resume talks with the Chinese Communists "at Warsaw or elsewhere."

And in his second Foreign Policy Report to the Congress, the President on February 25, 1971 gave a status report on the two years of his new China policy. He traced the measures he had taken

to remove "needless obstacles" to a dialogue. He noted that the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution seemed to be ending, and that now "there could be new opportunities for the Peoples Republic of China to explore the path of normalization of relations with its neighbors and with the world." At the same time, he emphasized that "an honorable relationship with Peking" could not be constructed at the expense of our commitments to international order or to our allies. He recalled with pride the vitality of our relationship with the Republic of China and the defensive nature of our alliance.

With these principles established, and with two years of preparation and exploration behind him, the President continued to unfold his China policy in the spring of 1971. In response to NSSM's 106 and 107, the U.S. Government carried through another thorough interagency assessment of the issues and choices facing U.S. policy toward China.

On the Chinese side there were signs of receptivity. Among other things, there was Chou En-lai's visit to Hanoi in March -- at the height of bitter fighting in Laos. But the Chinese Premier said little that was disconcerting to Washington. In fact, the North Vietnamese reportedly were displeased by Chou's unwillingness to sound more aggressively anti-American.

Then came a dramatic public breakthrough. On April 6, 1971, an American table tennis team competing in a world championship in Nagoya, Japan, received an invitation from the Chinese team to play in mainland China. Graham Steenhoven, president of the U.S. Table Tennis Association, accepted the invitation the next day.

On April 10, the Chinese granted visas to seven Western newsmen to cover the U.S. team's tour. The team traveled extensively in China, playing exhibition matches, and was received on April 14 by Premier Chou En-lai who told them: "With your acceptance of our invitation, you have opened a new page in the relations of the Chinese and American people."

On April 15, Ron Ziegler expressed the President's agreement that "a new page" was indeed being turned. At the same time, the White House continued to ease controls to permit still more U.S. exports to China. And on April 16, in a question-and-answer session with the American Society of Newspaper Editors, the President stated his belief that "the steady ordered process" of a U.S. shift in China policy "now begins to bear fruit." He told the editors of a recent conversation he had had with his daughters on the possibility of going to China some day. "I hope they do. As a matter of fact, I hope sometime I do."

The assembled editors, of course, had no way of knowing that secret soundings had been made with the Chinese looking toward a possible Presidential visit to Peking. Hints about this extraordinary possibility were being dropped all over the place. For example, in its April 30, 1971 issue, Life published Edgar Snow's account of an interview he had had the previous December 18 with Mao Tse-tung. The Foreign Ministry, Mao had mentioned, was considering the matter of inviting Americans, including the President, to China. "He should be welcomed because, Mao explained, at present the problems between China and the U.S.A. would have to be solved with

Nixon. Mao would be happy to talk with him, either as a tourist or as President."

In the course of an hour-long interview with this reporter on April 12, the President dropped another hint. He asked when this book would be completed. I told him sometime in the late fall. Good, he said. There was something coming up which he couldn't discuss at the moment, but he urged me to keep a chapter open. That something would be pretty exciting, he indicated.

The President told me that he had encountered opposition to his China policy from the Kremlinologists in the State Department who feared it might offend the Russians. This was the last thing he had in his mind, the President said. This country was seeking good relations with both Communist powers. What the President seemed to be saying, in effect, was this: for too long the United States had simplified the Kremlin's international life by treating China as an outcast. The fear had been that any evidence of Sino-American "collusion" would cause the Russians to froth at the mouth, walk out of SALT, blockade Berlin and generally act nasty toward us. The President had decided we should no longer play this Soviet game.

As for Taiwan, the President said he had just talked with the Nationalist Chinese Ambassador. "They know I'm their best friend," he said. "But there will be a problem at the next session of the General Assembly. We will keep our commitment to Taiwan. However, looking ahead to twenty-five years from now, I would like to make certain that everything possible is done to make the world a little safer."

Then, at his press conference on April 29, the President stated flatly that he expected "to visit mainland China sometime in some capacity. I don't know what capacity, but that indicates what I hope for the long term. I hope to contribute to a policy in which we can have a new relationship with mainland China."

The President also acknowledged that Vice President Agnew had privately offered candid views on China that were not necessarily in accord with Administration policy. The Vice President had held a supposedly off-the-record midnight session with selected reporters at which he said he had opposed the trend away from unqualified U.S. support of Taiwan. Asked about this, the President replied:

"I think it is very hard for the Vice President to be off the record. As far as this particular conference was concerned, the Vice President in his usual, very candid way expressed some views with regard to our policy that he expressed previously in meetings that we had in which he participated, the National Security Council and other forums.

"However, now that the decision has been made with regard to what our policy is, the Vice President supports that decision. He has so stated since he was quoted on his off-the-record conference, and I think you will find the Vice President in all areas where he may disagree, as he should disagree when he has strong convictions with policies, once a decision is made, will publicly support those policies.

"I expect him to and he always has."

And then on July 15, 1971 came the President's dramatic announcement that Dr. Kissinger had secretly visited Peking for

talks with Premier Chou En-lai, and that President Nixon himself would be visiting the Chinese capital some time before May 1972.

Kissinger's mission to Peking had been meticulously planned. A major problem was how to get Kissinger and those who would accompany him into China without letting the trip become public knowledge. The decision was made for the party to go in through Pakistan, a nation on China's border that had the confidence of the two principal nations.

The entire mission was masterminded by the President. He worked on it often late into the night in the secrecy of the Lincoln Sitting Room or at his hideaway in the Executive Office Building. Both he and Kissinger, for example, worked five hours on the opening statement Kissinger would read to Chou. And they prepared at least a dozen drafts of a possible joint announcement to be made by Nixon and Chou. At the same time both men studied all relevant material regarding Chou himself so that they would know what kind of adversary Kissinger would be facing.

And then Kissinger was on his own. On July 9 he slipped secretly into Peking. He had flown from Pakistan under cover of a story that he had developed stomach trouble while on a "fact-finding trip" abroad and was going to a resort. The trip to China was so secret that even one of the two secret service agents accompanying him didn't know the destination. On the last leg of the trip, the agent spotted a Chinese navigator and, according to Kissinger, "nearly dropped his teeth."

Chou's first words to Kissinger after they had met and had shaken hands was that the President's representative was one

American who "was not ashamed to shake hands." This was a reference to an episode at the 1954 Geneva Conference when John Foster Dulles, then Secretary of State, had turned his back on Chou at a diplomatic reception. Obviously the incident still rankled the Premier.

Both men got down to business quickly. Kissinger talked in English -- "with the verbs more carefully placed than usual," as he later reported. Chou spoke in Chinese, though he understood English and occasionally corrected his interpreter.

Chou, himself, used no notes. And, according to Kissinger, he was extremely well informed about American affairs. In fact, one of the first things Chou asked about was an off-the-cuff briefing Mr. Nixon had held three days earlier for news executives in Kansas City. Kissinger explained that he had been traveling and had seen only news accounts of the President's speech -- not the full text.

The next morning, Chou sent his guest an English text of the speech. It included marginal notes in Chinese and a note reading, "Please return, our only copy."

Although the President's speech had attracted little attention at the time, one passage dealt in detail on the subject of future relations between the U.S. and China. The President had also praised the Chinese as "one of the most capable people in the world."

The talks were not all smooth sailing. Twice the negotiations threatened to fall apart. But the differences were patched up. Ideological diatribes were few and far between. Slowly, painstakingly, the two men sought out an avenue that would lead them to

common ground. Finally, they agreed on terms for a Nixon visit. But Chou held up the wording of the announcement until he had checked back with Mao Tse-tung. Chairman Mao gave his blessing and, Chou volunteered, had stated he wished to see the President personally when he came to Peking.

Many subjects were touched upon in the twenty hours of intellectually stimulating conversation -- Vietnam, Taiwan, the United Nations, the Soviet Union, India and trade relations. Chou En-lai appeared satisfied that the United States no longer would resist Peking's admission to the U.N. as the China member. However, he was also told that Washington would fight for the retention of Taiwan in the General Assembly.

Also discussed was Peking's willingness to take part in an international conference aimed at settling the whole Indochina problem, as the President had proposed in a speech the previous October. Previously the Chinese (as well as the North Vietnamese) had rejected a similar proposal when it was made by the Russians.

In a lighter mood, Kissinger warned Chou that China had seen many barbarian invasions but never one like a Presidential visit with its caravan of advance men, newsmen, photographers and secret service agents.

And then, as secretly as he had arrived in Peking, Henry Kissinger flew back to Pakistan, then on to San Clemente to report to the President.

In his four-minute announcement of his forthcoming trip to Peking, the President was at pains to point out that the drive

"to seek normalization of relations between the two countries and also to exchange views on questions of concern to the two sides" was "not directed against any other nation." This, of course, was an effort to soothe the fears of the Kremlin.

The Russians were stunned. Soviet officials expressed to Americans their suspicions of Washington's motives. Even harsher was their attitude toward Peking. Soviet magazines accused the Chinese of having sold out "the national liberation movement" -- meaning, the Vietnamese Communists -- to curry Mr. Nixon's favor.

For the first week, both North Vietnam and North Korea failed to tell their people of the Chinese invitation to the President to visit their country.

There was similar apprehension about the trip in Japan and Taiwan. And in a dispatch to The New York Times, Max Frankel reported India's anger over "the evidence that its hostile neighbors in Pakistan were used to arrange the American contacts with its other unfriendly neighbors in Peking. Already perturbed by the domestic strife in Pakistan, the flood of refugees from East Pakistan and American arms sales to Pakistan, the Indians are said to be in an extremely belligerent mood, and some are believed to be toying with thoughts of war."

A significant side effect of the President's Peking diplomacy was the disarray it caused in the ranks of those seeking to displace him in the 1972 national elections. For the first time in many months, the Democratic contenders were left almost speechless. Senator Kennedy broke the silence. "Rarely," he said, "has

the action of any President so captured the imagination of the American people as President Nixon's magnificent gesture last week."

A group of New York-based conservatives took issue with the President immediately. Led by William F. Buckley Jr., the so-called Manhattan Twelve "suspended" their support of the Nixon Administration. Probably the best commentary came from Senator James Buckley of New York. Buckley said he was not ready to join his brother and the others in a declaration of non-support because in his six months in Washington "I have occupied a position from which I have been able to get a better appreciation of the political constraints within which the President is required to operate."

Another conservative thinker, Russell Kirk, praised the President's initiative as "a lively exercise in the balance of power, an art this country nearly had forgotten. The attainment of a balance of power in the world kept the general peace throughout considerable periods of history. Maintaining that balance was Britain's great function in the Nineteenth Century; it may become America's function in the last quarter of the Twentieth Century.

"The Soviet empire is the second greatest power in the world, aspiring to become the first soon; China is actually or potentially the third greatest power. Can the greatest power of all, America, contrive to balance China and Russia on either side of the scales, so that neither Communist domination might achieve overwhelming strength? If Mr. Nixon does that, he will have performed a feat of diplomacy that will cast into shadow such

previous American accomplishments as the Monroe Doctrine and the Open Door policy."

The President, meanwhile, was seeking to dampen the euphoria that gripped the country. The road ahead, as demonstrated by our negotiations in Paris with the North Vietnamese and with the Chinese themselves in Warsaw, would be both long and tortuous. Expect no miracles, the President told Republican Congressional leaders.

Kissinger, in briefing the leadership, declared there had been no secret agreements or understandings reached during his talks with Chou, whom he described as one of the most impressive leaders he had ever met. The Presidential adviser also emphasized that the Chinese have nothing but contempt for someone who "runs after them like a puppy."

Noting speculation the President's trip might be cancelled, Kissinger observed that once the Chinese had "lost their virginity" by inviting the President, they would not get it back by disinviting him. As for conservative criticism of the China initiative, Kissinger made the point that, faced with a complex of opponents, it would be unrealistic for us to deny ourselves access to one of them.

The President said that his forthcoming trip to China was dictated by our interests and not the desire for atmospherics. Thus far, the basic disagreements between our two countries continue. There might not even be any perceptible change in the anti-

American tone of Chinese propaganda, he added. Because the Chinese consider themselves to be the vanguard of world revolutionary forces, any statement coming out of Peking will only iterate their ideological purity. Asked what will happen to the Republic of China, the President said we will have to do what we can to save Taiwan's seat at the U.N.

In a special briefing in the Roosevelt Room, the President told his senior White House staff that he had no illusions of instant success. He put it this way:

"What does our moving in this direction do? It doesn't at all mean that we're with them; it means a dialogue, that's all. But looking to the future, the world will not be worth living in if we can't get the great potential explosive forces under control.

"So it's not because we have illusions or are euphoric. I know that pleasant smiles and small talk about our grandchildren don't solve problems. Where vital interests are involved, great powers consult their vital interests. But interests sometimes may coincide.

"We're taking this step not for the next year or the next four years, but for the next twenty. It may make the world a little safer."

As another President would have put it, a beginning had been made. That in itself was sufficient cause for an optimism which was guarded but nevertheless real. It was, as the sports-loving Chief Executive might have said, a whole new ball game.

CHAPTER 25

There was an air of expectation in the Cabinet Room when the various Cabinet members arrived for a session that had been hastily called just the day before. No agenda had been announced and the Secretaries wondered aloud what was going on. The date was May 20, 1971. At precisely 9:00 a.m. the President, a big smile on his face, entered. After bidding his Cabinet officers to be seated, the President got down to business.

Glancing at a piece of paper, the President announced that the deadlock had finally been broken in U.S.-Soviet arms limitation talks. For nineteen months, ever since the talks had begun, the negotiations never seemed to get off the ground. But now in their fourth round of SALT negotiations in Vienna, the U.S. and the Soviets had agreed to agree this year on limiting anti-ballistic missile systems and to try to agree later on some limitation of offensive nuclear weaponry.

Warning that there was still much hard negotiating to be done, the President admonished his Cabinet officers: "Let the experts do the talking." And then, at 10:00 a.m. in the same room, the President met with Congressional leaders of both parties and repeated the news.

At noon, Mr. Nixon took to the air waves to inform the American people of the new development. It required less than two minutes for him to read the brief statement that was issued simultaneously in Moscow. Mr. Nixon described the agreement as a major step

in "breaking the stalemate on nuclear arms talks," even though intensive negotiations lay ahead in translating "this understanding into a concrete agreement."

"If we succeed," the President concluded, "this joint statement that has been issued today may well be remembered as the beginning of a new era..."

The strategic arms limitation talks had been stalled over the question of what to negotiate about. The Russians had insisted on limiting any SALT agreement to the deployment of ABMs alone. They were the first nuclear power to install this type of defense; while only recently had the U.S. begun installing its own Safeguard ABM system, and that after bitter debate. Conversely, the U.S. position had been that any agreement must be a total package, embracing not only the ABM systems but all offensive nuclear weapons as well.

Thus, in reaching the agreement to negotiate, both sides appeared to have given a little.

Mostly praise and optimism greeted the announcement in Congress. Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield said the U.S.-Soviet agreement for hard bargaining made "prospects for achieving something of substantial value this year in terms of both offensive and defensive missiles seem very good." There were a few skeptics, among them Senator Fulbright, who said he was also puzzled. "They seem to think it is significant," the Arkansas Democrat said. "Whether it is or not, I don't know." Another skeptic was Thomas Plate of Newsday, who observed "the talks need the fuel of concrete deeds to keep going."

But Plate, author of a recent book on the SALT talks and the arms race, also made this point: "It is important to note that

in any evaluation of the Nixon Administration's policy toward the arms race, the President must be granted the best of intentions. He would not even have made yesterday's announcement had he been disinterested in arms control. And he certainly seems one of the less militaristic American Presidents -- given any rational view of the Administration of Harry S Truman, who after all actually used the bomb (and twice); or even of John F. Kennedy, who contributed more to the acceleration of the nuclear arms race than any President to date. So in the perspective of the American Presidency, Mr. Nixon is quite a bit further from the Dr. Strangelove category than some of the competition."

The President's unexpected announcement -- unexpected because there had been no news leaks along the way -- had a secondary effect. It succeeded in raising questions about the judgement of several Democratic Presidential aspirants who, to a man, had argued that going ahead with the Safeguard system of nuclear defense would undermine the arms limitation talks.

As Senator Muskie put it, deployment of Safeguard "is a provocation we cannot afford." Senator Humphrey said it would "imperil the arms control talks and trigger another round in the strategic arms race." Senator McGovern said it would "greatly reduce the likelihood that an arms control agreement which is acceptable to both the United States and the Soviet Union can be found." And Senator Kennedy said that arguments that moving ahead with ABM would strengthn the U.S. in bargaining with the Russians are "particularly fallacious."

Fallacious or not, the President was able to announce that we had gotten off dead center in the talks. In this case at least, he was able to prove that he understood what motivated Soviet leaders. Pragmatic and realistic, the Russians respect power, not weakness or abnegation.

Thus, the President also took personal charge of the all-out effort to defeat the attempt of Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield to force a reduction in the number of U.S. troops in Europe from 310,000 to 150,000. Expressing no interest in reductions unless the Soviet Union agreed to reduce its troops in Eastern Europe, the President held a ninety-minute meeting with Democratic and Republican elder statesmen to enlist their support in the battle. He told this group, which included Dean Acheson and George Ball, both Democrats, that he was opposed to any compromise with the Mansfield proposal and would fight it and win.

The President never permitted the in-fighting to turn personal. At a GOP leadership meeting, for example, a Congressman began talking about "how to defeat Mansfield." But the President interrupted. "I'm not interested in that," he said. "Senator Mansfield is an honorable man." He added that, as President, he had to take the long view -- "to maintain the peace and to keep the confidence of our allies and maintain our credibility in that area."

And win he did, with some unexpected tactical help from a surprising source -- Leonid Brezhnev. The Soviet leader's offer to negotiate troop reductions in Europe gave credence to Mr. Nixon's

assertion that our soldiers overseas were too valuable as bargaining chips to be recalled unilaterally.

By a two-to-one vote the Senate voted to reject the Mansfield amendment. It was an important victory for the President. In his opinion, it was also a victory for the Constitution which solely empowers the President to deploy and to command American troops. And it also served to give notice that we were not prepared to abandon unilaterally and without consultation our commitments to our NATO allies.

Meanwhile, acting on Presidential orders, the Defense Department began an extraordinary effort to dispose of the enormous stockpile of chemical and biological weapons that had been accumulated since World War II. Though CBW (chemical-biological warfare) had been feared by his predecessors, it had never been rejected by Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy (who greatly increased its research) or Johnson.

Soon after taking office, President Nixon directed Defense Secretary Laird to undertake a comprehensive study of CBW policies and programs, the first in fifteen years. Military, scientific and diplomatic experts, in and out of the Government, concluded there were no military advantages in such warfare, and many diplomatic disadvantages.

On November 25, 1969, the President renounced use of biological warfare and asked the Defense Department to find ways of expeditiously disposing of existing stocks. In still another statement on February 14, 1970, the President renounced use of

chemical toxins. But, at the same time, he said the U.S. would continue to develop defenses against CBW directed at us through vaccines and early detection and warning systems.

"It's a little amusing now to hear critics say that President Nixon really isn't doing much in getting rid of this awful stuff and that any President would have done it," commented Nick Thimmesch. "That's like saying anyone could create the simple artistic lines of a Picasso painting. But it took Picasso to paint Picasso paintings. And it took President Nixon to act on the question of disposing of infectious and chemical horrors. In any field, it takes a man-made decision and effort."

From the beginning of his Administration, too, the President had devoted considerable time to dealing with the illegal drug traffic which had been spreading with all the evil speed of a great cancer. He had beefed up appropriations for the law enforcement aspects of the problem. His Administration had used its political and economic power to cut off the supply of drugs in Turkey, Lebanon and elsewhere in the Middle East. And it had sought the cooperation of the French Government to break up the processing of drugs in Marseilles and elsewhere in the Mediterranean. And under the supervision of a most dynamic Customs Commissioner, Myles Ambrose, the Administration quadrupled the number of agents watching the drug trade across the Mexican border and at all international airports in the country.

But that wasn't enough. The problem continued to grow so rapidly that it had assumed the dimensions of a national emergency

On June 3, 1971 the President addressed an inter-departmental group that had been working on the problem for over a year. He stressed that fuller cooperation between all Government departments would now be required, adding that fooling around would not be tolerated. He praised the Japanese for having so successfully controlled the problem. If they can do it, we can do it, he insisted. He announced that he intended to bring in a tough, ruthless, line-drawing administrator who understood the problem to coordinate all Government drug programs.

The President said that we would have to persuade our allies, particularly France and Turkey, of the necessity of further cracking down on the heroin traffic in their countries. American youth were being destroyed by the illicit trade and, the President said, the time had come to forego diplomatic niceties and temporizing on this subject. We will also have to get tougher with the South Vietnamese. Especially disheartening was the use of drugs by American servicemen in Vietnam. Though this was not a problem peculiar to the military, it was being used as an issue by adversaries of our Vietnam policy in order to impugn the armed forces.

Two weeks later, the President asked Congress for $155 million a year more for a campaign of rehabilitation, research, education, enforcement and international control of drug traffic. And he named Dr. Jerome H. Jaffe, 37-year-old chief of the Illinois drug abuse program, to head a new Special Action Office of Drug

Abuse Prevention. This meant that Jaffe, a psychiatrist and expert in pharmacology, would coordinate the activities of nine agencies now concerned with rehabilitation, education and research. In addition, he was assigned to direct compulsory testing of all veterans returning to this country and compulsory detoxification and treatment of those found to have been taking drugs.

Dr. Jaffe's appointment drew praise from an unusual source -- the Village Voice. The hip anti-Establishment New York weekly newspaper called the appointment the best one the President had made in any field during his entire term.

One of those anxious to assist in combatting drugs, particularly in the black communities, was Sammy Davis Jr. On July 1 the entertainer met with the President to offer his cooperation. The President said that as a famous entertainer Davis could get the message across to young people far better than any politician. The President then told Davis of a call he had just placed to Congressman Charles Rangle, who represented Harlem, an area with a high drug addiction rate. He had called Rangle regarding the successful negotiations whereby Turkey had agreed to curb the cultivation of the poppy. Rangle was pleased with the news, knowing what it meant for his community. Then the Congressman told the President how pleased his late grandfather would have been to know that he had just received a call from the President of the United States.

Turning to another subject, the President said he knew of Davis' great interest in black colleges. In all, the Administra-

tion had earmarked $150 million in that area, the President said. Davis, an exponent of education for his people, said he was pleased. On leaving the Oval Room, the entertainer remarked to Stan Scott, one of the President's black assistants, that this was the first time he had ever entered the White House through the front door.

Another visitor to the Oval Office was Chicago Mayor Richard Daley, a leading Democratic king-maker. But the hour-long visit was not about politics. It was largely about the enormous problems the nation's cities were facing. And the President put in a pitch for the advantages of federal revenue sharing.

The President also flew to Alabama -- George Wallace country -- to sell the virtues of revenue sharing at a public affairs briefing of Southern editors. But first Mr. Nixon participated in a public works dedication in Mobile of the Tennessee-Combigbee Waterway. On hand to introduce him was none other than George Wallace, himself. "I am the incoming President," Wallace intoned -- and here the Governor paused for breath -- "of the Tennessee-Combigbee Authority." The huge crowd began to laugh even before he could finish, startling the Governor. The President took the microphone with a smile to acknowledge the presence of "President-Elect Wallace."

At the editors briefing in Birmingham, the President also discussed school desegregation. "I went to school in the South, so therefore I'm more familiar with how Southerners feel about that problem than others," he observed. "And I have nothing but utter contempt for the double hypocritical standard of Northerners who look at the South and point the finger and say, 'Why don't those Southerners

do something about their race problems?'" The President noted that thirty-eight percent of all black children in the South go to schools with majorities of white students, while only twenty-eight percent of the blacks in the North were attending such schools.

Undoubtedly, genuine integration was one of the toughest problems the President had to face. And he faced it, even in the deep South. As Charles Evers, the black mayor of Fayette, Mississippi, and brother of the slain civil rights leader, Medgar Evers, put it: "Man, Nixon's really cracked down. There's not a school in this state that some blacks are not in." Agreeing bitterly with Evers' assessment were the diehard segregationists.

In seeking to follow a middle course which would show results without tearing up the country, the President found that his biggest enemies were not only the diehard Southern segregationsts but the Northern liberal hypocrites, who argued that the President was pandering to the South in order to obtain 1972 support. The President, of course, was well aware that most of his liberal critics in the Congress and the press corps failed to practice what they preach when it came to the schools. With one exception, even those seeking the Democratic Presidential nomination sent their school-age children to expensive private schools where blacks are rare.* But

* The only Presidential hopeful whose child went to a Washington public school was Senator Henry Jackson.

that didn't prevent any of them from publicly berating the President

for alleged derelictions including his opposition to full-scale busing as an integration tool.

Another problem that was causing the President great concern was the rash of slayings of policemen across the country. On May 26, 1971, Mr. Nixon met with J. Edgar Hoover to discuss the problem. Also present were Attorney General Mitchell, John Ehrlichman and Egil Krogh.

After reviewing the slayings thus far in the year, the FBI Director reported that to the best of his knowledge no national conspiracy was involved. Though there had been considerable speculation about the role of the Black Panthers, there was no evidence that they or any other militant group plotted any police killings in a conspiratorial fashion.

Krogh, a Presidential assistant in domestic affairs, then reported on legislation pending before Congress to make police killings a Federal offense. But Hoover voiced strong opposition to such legislation, contending that it would make the Bureau into a national police force -- something that he had fought against for decades. Hoover also pointed out that 94.6 percent of police killings were solved by local police within thirty days of the offense. Moreover, the FBI always was prepared to put some of its investigative resources at the disposal of local police forces -- if requested.

The President agreed with Hoover. He said he did not want legislation which would "federalize" police killings. But he did want to do something for the nation's police departments and

particularly for the widows and children of slain officers -- perhaps some direct payments to tide them over during the hardship periods. He instructed Krogh to draft legislation to that effect.

To underscore his concern, and to unveil a proposal to aid the families of slain policemen, the President decided to hold a special meeting at the White House on June 3. He asked Hoover to invite the officers of the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the National Sheriffs Association as well as police chiefs of the major cities.

To the annoyance of the President, the meeting generated controversy because of two men who were not invited. They were Patrick V. Murphy, police commissioner of New York City, and Quinn Tamm, executive director of the International Association of Police Chiefs. Both men had long been at odds with the FBI Director.

Attending the two-hour meeting in the Cabinet Room were two dozen police chiefs and sheriffs along with Attorney General Mitchell, Hoover, several Senators and Congressmen. Among other things, the President called for Federal legislation to pay $50,000 to the family of any policeman slain in the line of duty. The President also assured his guests of the prompt availability of the resources of the FBI in cases involving police killings.

In the general discussion, the President asked Hoover about FBI cooperation with the New York City police department in the case of two policemen who, a few days before, had been shot to death after having responded to a call for help in a Harlem housing project. Hoover assured the President that from the very beginning

the FBI had been in touch with the New York police and, in fact, had been able to develop latent fingerprints from some evidence which helped identify the suspects who were being sought.

The Director volunteered that some people might be wondering why Pat Murphy was not present at the meeting. Well, for one thing, because of the recent killings, the Commissioner obviously was a very busy man. Hoover also noted that Michael J. Codd, the Chief Inspector of the New York Police Department, would soon be attending a two-day FBI seminar on ways to prevent police killings.

In New York, Pat Murphy issued a statement expressing "disappointment and dismay" that his views, as police commissioner of the largest city, had not been sought by the White House. Of course, the President had no idea that Murphy had not been invited.

In the President's view, it was a needless controversy; police work is one area where you don't play favorites or demonstrate partisanship. And that was made clear to all parties concerned.

But he was distressed because the flap overshadowed his deep concern over the problem of ten policemen being killed each month.

At this time, it appeared likely that Hoover's stewardship of the FBI was likely to become an issue in the 1972 election. Two Democratic presidential hopefuls, Ed Muskie and George McGovern, had already called for the 76-year-old Director's resignation. And for a time there was even considerable speculation as to who would be Hoover's successor.

But the campaign backfired. The reason was the avalanche of anti-Hoover publicity. On a day early in April, for example, there occurred the following:

A column by Rowland Evans and Robert Novak asserted that Hoover presents "the prospect of serious embarrassment" to the White House; that the "love affair between the Nixon Administration and Hoover" has cooled; that the dilemma was "how to ease him out."

Then Life arrived in the nation's households with a cover depicting Hoover in the guise of an ancient Roman and calling him "Emperor of the FBI." Its lead article stated: "It has been widely charged that the Director's imperious disregard for any but his own views of the national interest diminishes the bureau's effectiveness and has even become a serious infringement on civil rights....And at times his behavior has infuriated and embarrassed high officials in the Nixon Administration."

This was topped off by the extraordinary charge by Representative Hale Boggs, leader of House Democrats, that the FBI was adopting "the tactics of the Soviet Union and Hitler's Gestapo" by, among other things, wiretapping the telephones of members of Congress. Boggs said he could prove all of this. Even his best friends conceded he was not able to do so.

"One of the saddest aspects of the whole sordid affair is that it will be used to discredit those who believe for other and more valid reasons that Hoover ought to accept the honorable retirement which he has surely earned after forty-seven years at the helm of the FBI," commented the Washington Star. "Boggs' failure to substantiate his wild charges has only served to delay the day when Hoover will admit that it is in everybody's best interest for him to hand over the direction of the FBI to a younger man."

The almost immediate result of all this was that any White House thinking about replacing Hoover was dissipated. In the Director's favor was his extraordinary record of crime enforcement and dedication to country. The White House felt that this record far outshone a few lapses in judgement. Eventually, of course, Hoover will resign. When this occurs, the President will make certain that the Director will be accorded the fullest honors any American can receive after such loyal service to his country.

At a press conference on May 1, the President termed "hysterical" much of the recent criticism of the FBI. He had been asked to comment on accusations made by Congressman Celler. The Brooklyn Democrat had stated he feared the nation was on the verge of becoming a police state because of wiretapping.

"Well," replied the President, "I have great respect for Congressman Celler as a lawyer....However, where was he in 1961? Where was he in 1962? Where was he in 1963?" These were years when John F. Kennedy was President and his brother Robert was Attorney General.

There were less than one hundred wiretaps authorized then without court order on grounds they were necessary for national security, and there are less than fifty now, the President said.

"Today, right today, at this moment, there are one-half as many taps as there were in 1961, '62, and '63 and ten times as many news stories about them," the President added. "Now, there wasn't a police state in 1961, '62 and '63, in my opinion, and there is none, now, at the present time.

"All of this hysteria -- and it is hysteria, and much of it, of course, is political demagoguery to the effect that 'the FBI is tapping my telephone' and the rest -- simply doesn't serve the public purpose....This isn't a police state and isn't going to become one."

In the same vein, the President also asked where the critics were during the Johnson Administration when there was Army surveillance at the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago.*

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* It was Ramsey Clark who, as Attorney General, authorized the use of Army personnel to spy on extremist groups in Chicago and elsewhere. The purpose was legitimate. So overtaxed was the FBI in that troubled year of 1968 that extra help was required in the area of surveillance. Clark, who has since emerged as a foe of the FBI, thought otherwise as Attorney General. In 1967, he described the Bureau as "an illustrious institution...unsurpassed in the excellence of its performance." And though he later had a change of heart about J. Edgar Hoover, he then described the Director in the most superlative terms.

"We have stopped that," the President said. "This Administration is against any kind of repression, any kind of action that infringes on the right of privacy. However, we are for, and I will always be for, that kind of action necessary to protect this country from those who would imperil the peace that all people are entitled to enjoy."

On June 5, 1971 the President breakfasted with Spiro Agnew to discuss the Vice President's forthcoming trip to Korea to attend the inauguration ceremonies of President Chung Hee Park. The trip had been broadened to include goodwill visits to nine other countries in Asia, Africa and Europe. Also at this session, at which the President passed along some last-minute thoughts, were Henry Kissinger, Ron Ziegler and Art Sohmer, the Vice President's administrative assistant.

Then there was a brief discussion of U.S. relations with the People's Republic of China. The President emphasized we must open up such relations but in a sophisticated, restrained way. Kissinger then relayed a story involving Graham Steenhoven, head of the table tennis team that had visited China. At a recent dinner, Steenhoven was asked how he felt about having played such a significant role in opening contact with China.

According to Kissinger, Steenhoven replied: "I did not break the Great Wall of China. President Nixon did that. I just walked through it."

The Vice President, turning to another subject, expressed reservations as to whether the Administration's economic policy was working, contending that leading indicators appeared to show that recovery was not coming about as quickly as anticipated.

Which was pretty much what Chairman McCracken reported on June 14 at a meeting of the Quadriad, also attended by Secretary Connally, Arthur Burns and George Shultz. McCracken told the President that while the economy was advancing, the pace continued

to be sluggish. Some further stimulus was necessary if a satisfactory pace of expansion was to be achieved. Also, McCracken stressed, some overt action on the wage-price-cost front was now called for.

Secretary Connally said he couldn't agree more.

Between the Secretary and the President, there had developed an extraordinary rapport. Both self-made men, each had come up the hard way from modest beginnings. In introducing Connally as his "clean-up man" at a meeting of the Citizens Committee on Government Reorganization, the President said:

"I brought him in from the Texas League. Sometimes he singles, sometimes he doubles, and he often gets a home run. Furthermore, when one comes at his head, he knows how to duck."

CHAPTER 26

When the ceremonies were over, after months of planning and preparation, Mrs. Richard M. Nixon retired to her upstairs quarters with some friends to watch a televised account of the proceedings. A well-known TV newscaster was giving a glowing account of the day's events. Mrs. Nixon was quite surprised. The network man was not known for any excessive friendliness towards the Nixon Administration.

For the First Lady it was a perfect ending for a near-perfect day. Earlier the rain had threatened to force the wedding of Tricia Nixon and Ed Cox inside from the Rose Garden to the East Room. That would have broken Tricia's heart and the President, after studying the unpromising weather advisories, decided to hold up the ceremony. The gamble paid off. Forty-five minutes later the rain stopped falling and the master of the house escorted his daughter to the Rose Garden altar. And, as the President was to tell a visiting group of broadcasters a week later, "Every network did a beautiful job covering my daughter's wedding. And, believe me, I checked all three!"

As the eyes of the nation were focussed on the Rose Garden that Saturday, June 12, 1971, a project on which a select group of New York Times editors and writers had worked for several months was nearing fruition. The first of a series of articles (including original documents) based on a classified Pentagon study of the Vietnam war was being readied for publication in the Sunday editions of the Times. As it later was determined, the Times had

decided to publish this material without seeking to declassify the documents in its possession through the use of established Government procedures.

Appropriately it was the Pentagon that first learned of the forthcoming Times articles. This was about 6:00 p.m. Saturday when the newspaper began putting its initial story on the news wire to subscribing clients. Secretary Laird, who was immediately informed, recognized quickly what was being disclosed.

Shortly after taking office in January 1969, Laird had learned of the existence of a forty-seven volume history of how the United States got involved in Indochina. It had been commissioned in the summer of 1967 by the then Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara who, privately disillusioned and guilt-ridden about the war, said he wanted to leave a record of what went wrong.

McNamara assigned a member of his staff, Leslie Gelb, to head the project. With the help of a team of at least thirty civilian and military officials, who were given access to the files of the Pentagon, Gelb produced the lengthy study in a year.

How good was it? Gelb, himself, noted that his team had only limited access to State Department and CIA materials, and absolutely none to the personal papers of the Presidents. "The result," he later wrote, "was not so much a documentary history, as a history based solely on documents...Pieces of paper, formidable and suggestive by themselves, could have meant much or nothing. Perhaps this document was never sent anywhere, and perhaps that one...was irrelevant. Without the memories of people to tell us,

we were certain to make mistakes...This approach to research was bound to lead to distortions and distortions we are sure abound in these studies."

Though his staff was "superb," Gelb conceded they were "not always versed in the art of research." He added, "Of course, we all had our prejudices and axes to grind, and these shine through clearly at times, but we tried, we think, to suppress or compensate for them."

"Writing history," Gelb concluded, "especially where it blends into current events, especially where that current event is Vietnam, is a treacherous exercise."

Like McNamara, Mel Laird had not read the study. His most immediate concern, however, was what he was going to say about it during his appearance on the CBS television program Face the Nation, at 11:30 a.m. Sunday. After consulting with Attorney General Mitchell by telephone, Laird decided to say -- if asked -- that the disclosure of secret documents endangered national security and the Justice Department had been asked to investigate.

Ironically, the question was not raised during the TV show.

Meanwhile, as the Attorney General had suggested, Laird's aides were busy all day Sunday trying to determine what had been stolen from the files and how serious the breach of security was. The main problem was that few Pentagon officials had even heard of the seven-thousand-page study, let alone had read it.

On Monday, the second article appeared in The New York Times. By this time, the Justice Department was fully involved. Under the direction of Robert Mardian, the assistant attorney general in charge of internal security, there were consultations on whether the Government should seek to halt publication of future documents. A hasty examination of the Vietnam report had disclosed that some of the materials pointed the finger to the identity of foreign nationals working with the CIA and other American agencies while other portions highlighted secret diplomatic negotiations, some of which were still in progress.

Attorney General Mitchell, meanwhile, met with the President and the Secretaries of State and Defense. The President, who had not even known of the existence of the Pentagon study, was provided with a quick fill-in. He had glanced at the two articles (plus documentation) already published by the Times. There was nothing in them, or in the Pentagon study (which went up to mid-1968), which in any way involved his Administration. In fact, the study already was being universally interpreted as a sharp indictment of both the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations -- so much so, that a common first reaction by many was to suspect that it had been leaked to the Times by the Nixon Administration. One of those who publicly accused the Administration of so doing was none other than Pierre Salinger, press secretary to the late President Kennedy.

As Mr. Nixon later recalled, all he had to do was to sit back and enjoy the discomfiture of the political opposition,

profiting from the disclosures of the misjudgements of two Democratic administrations that had gotten the country into Vietnam.

The President's immediate reaction was that a "massive breach of security" had taken place in the previous Administration and that something had to be done. Involved, he believed, was the confidentiality of our nation's dealings with other countries.*

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* On June 11, several days before the Times disclosures, the President explained to a dovish Republican Senator why he was opposed to publicizing the details of the intensive efforts to negotiate a political settlement in Vietnam. He cited the example of where a leak of information regarding a secret negotiation with the Russians almost stopped further progress in the SALT talks.

Also involved was the confidentiality of a President's dealings with his own advisers. It was Mr. Nixon's thinking that no President could be absolutely sure of receiving candid opinions if his aides feared that, sooner or later, what they wrote or said might be spread across newspaper headlines, out of context, exploited for political advantage, and used against them for retribution.

The President also noted the peculiar role of The New York Times in exposing the very Vietnam policies its editors had advocated during the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations. And he could remember the sigh of relief with which the Times had greeted the assassination of South Vietnam's President Ngo Dinh Diem.* There

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* On November 3, 1963, in an editorial entitled "Opportunity in

Vietnam," the Times asserted: "Fortunately, the new Vietnamese rulers are dedicated anti-Communists who reject any idea of neutralism and pledge themselves to stand with the free world....If the new regime succeeds in identifying itself with the aspirations of the people, it will have taken a long step toward repulsing further Communist inroads throughout Southeast Asia."

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were other Times editorials in the early years of the Johnson Administration calling for tougher measures against the Vietnamese Communists.

In view of all this, the President believed that the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations were taking a bum rap. None of his predecessors, he explained, had acted out of evil impulses or had conspired to drag the nation into an unnecessary war. Presidents Kennedy and Johnson had acted in what they believed to be the nation's best interests. And for many years they had done so with the blessing of The New York Times. This was not to say that mistakes had not been made, according to the President. One of them may well have been the often unwarranted use of "secret" stamps which prevented the public from learning much it should have known. But who had given the Times the right to declassify secret documents?

By Monday night, a Government concensus had developed in favor of filing suit for an injunction to prevent the Times from continuing further publication of the articles. However, there was lively dissent within the Administration against using the doctrine of "prior restraint" to interfere with a newspaper. It was argued

that the Nixon Administration would appear to be seeking to hide the mistakes and bad judgement of previous Presidents. Moreover, the suit would involve the Administration in a bitter argument over the Constitutional guarantee of freedom of the press. And, win or lose, the Administration would be hurt politically.

The President knew this. He was well aware that the press generally would mass against him. But, as he informed GOP Congressional leaders the morning of Tuesday, June 15, he had no choice but to approve the law suit. If he did not, he would be setting a precedent -- every time an official disagreed with the Government, he'd sneak secret papers from the files and give them to the press in hopes of changing policy.

Sure, the President went on, the Democrats look bad in the Times stories. And it was a fact that they had been involved in the big Vietnam decisions. And it was also a fact that many of them were now doing everything possible to thwart his efforts to extricate us in an orderly way from "the mess they had created." In that regard, it was curious that the Times, which had the secret documents in its possession for many months, had begun disclosing them just days before the Senate vote on the McGovern-Hatfield amendment which would require withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Vietnam by December 31. The effect of those articles was to increase mistrust of all Government, including the present one.

The Republican leaders agreed that the anti-war forces in the Congress had been buoyed by the leak of the Pentagon Papers. Also impressive had been the lobbying on the Hill of the Vietnam

Veterans Against the War. However, Minority Leader Scott predicted that McGovern-Hatfield would be defeated the next day.

If the amendment should pass, the President said, he would have no choice but to bring Ambassador Bruce and his team back from Paris, because the setting of an arbitrary withdrawal date by Congress would cripple any meaningful negotiating efforts. He added that those who voted what, in effect, would be lack of confidence in the President would have to take the consequences. "There is much more going on than many of you know," he stated. So, he went on, don't underestimate the power of the President; don't underestimate what can be done; don't underestimate the possibility that the negotiations may get off dead center.

Henry Kissinger said that, while there was a chance of success in Paris, it was counter-productive to speculate on the negotiations. We would like the enemy to negotiate with us and not with the Washington Post. There is a school of thought, he went on, which believes that the North Vietnamese conduct negotiations by dropping vague clues whose meaning we are supposed to guess. We are supposed to hunt around for the answers and when we miss one of their clues we go out and flagellate ourselves. The history of negotiations with the North Vietnamese is that they will wring out of us every concession they can realize and, in return, they will promise us "constructive talks." For example, the North Vietnamese have gone beyond the "deadline" for withdrawal. Now they are demanding an end to all military and economic aid to South Vietnam. What we want is to get them to talk to us, not to Chalmers Roberts.*

* A diplomatic correspondent of the Washington Post.

Nevertheless, Kissinger said, there were grounds for hope. Over three hundred thousand American troops had been brought home. Yet, the military situation was better now than when all those troops were serving in Vietnam. Casualties were way down. At the same time, there was evident war weariness in the North. Hanoi had suffered between seven hundred to eight hundred thousand deaths which, in terms of our population, would be between seven to eight million.

Moreover, Hanoi's leaders were perplexed by the international situation. With their Vietnamese suspicions and their Communist paranoia, they are deeply troubled about what is going on between the U.S. and China. There is nothing the Chinese can tell them that will convince them that no double-cross is in the offing. They have fought for twenty-five years and now they see great things happening around them; great decisions being made; and they fear they may be left out.

Turning to McGovern-Hatfield, the Presidential adviser contended that what the enemy most wanted was to be able to tell everyone all over Asia that the United States was leaving. For us to give the deadline away, therefore, was to give away the biggest bargaining card we have.

The President concluded the session by saying he was aware that the polls showed most Americans want to get out of Vietnam

quickly. But, he said, we weren't sent here to follow the polls.

In two key votes, both upholding the President, the Senate the next day defeated the McGovern-Hatfield and a companion measure that would have imposed a later deadline for a U.S. pullout from Indochina. McGovern-Hatfield was beaten fifty-five to forty-two. The milder substitute was defeated fifty-two to forty-four. The two votes represented an important, if relatively close, victory for the Administration.

Meanwhile, New York District Court Judge Murray Gurfein ordered The New York Times to halt publication of its Pentagon Papers series in order to give the Government a chance to prove its charges of dire injury. This did not stop the Washington Post from popping into print with its own account of the Vietnam story. In fact, this turned out to be one of the more peculiar incidents in the entire controversy. For the reader got the definite impression that the Post had based its stories on the Pentagon documents. Yet, in an affidavit filed later in Supreme Court, the Post's executive editor disclosed that its stories were based on a manuscript whose authors had had access to the documents, but not on the documents themselves, of which the Post at that time had only "two fragments." When the Post itself was enjoined from publishing the Vietnam materials, newspapers across the country began racing into print with bits and pieces of the story, much of it already published before in standard works on the long war.

"To a disinterested observer," commented Orr Kelly in the Washington Star, one of the few newspapers whose editors kept

their heads, "it must have seemed as though much of the nation's press was involved in a rather juvenile game of 'papers, papers, who's got the papers?' rather than in a serious effort to present their readers with a balanced and informative insight into this important period in the nation's history."

But there was another aspect to the frenzy which gripped much of the press, the President told John E. O'Neill, one of the leaders of the newly-formed Vietnam Veterans for a Just Peace. And that was that Hanoi's negotiators in Paris may be led to believe that the revelations of the alleged "duplicity" of every American President from Truman to Johnson would so stir American protest as to force him to surrender now. Certainly, said the President, if a negotiated peace was in our interest, then none of these recent events had helped our bargainers get one.

O'Neill had helped organize the Vietnam Veterans for a Just Peace to support the President's Vietnamization program as well as to counter the impression that John F. Kerry and his Vietnam Veterans Against the War, which had captured the fancy of the media, amounted to much more than "an embittered little group of one thousand." However, O'Neill, who at twenty-five had seen more Vietnam duty than Kerry, did not receive the same sort of media attention as did Kerry. Perhaps it was because he wasn't in the Social Register or because he hadn't gone to St. Paul's and Yale. O'Neill had to settle for Central Catholic High in San Antonio, Texas, and the U.S. Naval Academy.

The President, meeting with O'Neill on June 16, urged the young Texan to continue to speak out so that the American public would be made aware that people like Kerry do not represent most Vietnam veterans. Moreover, what O'Neill had been saying was "right," though not necessarily the "popular view." The President said he was aware of the rough treatment O'Neill had been receiving at the hands of the media, adding that he himself was no stranger to such treatment.

Responding, O'Neill said he didn't know how the President could put up with it. If the people were made aware of how their news was being written, they would turn off their TV sets and cancel their newspaper subscriptions. For example, the anti-war veterans led by John Kerry actually represented a tiny percentage of the total number of men who had served in Vietnam, yet the media had made it appear they represented a significant number.

The articulate O'Neill also told the President he had repeatedly challenged John Kerry to a nationally televised debate. (Eventually, the debate was arranged.)

Though judges in New York and Washington upheld the right of newspapers to publish what had beome known as the Pentagon Papers, the injunction remained in force on order of appeals courts in both cities to permit the issue to be decided by the United States Supreme Court. Meanwhile the identity of the individual who had filched the secret papers and had leaked them to the Times had become known. He was Daniel Ellsberg, a former obscure Pentagon

analyst who had served briefly on Henry Kissinger's NSC staff at the beginning of the Nixon Administration.

The President had never met Ellsberg. But he received a fill-in on his background. A former Marine Corps lieutenant, Ellsberg had served in a number of Government posts. His chief interest was in Vietnam and saving it from the Communists. For a time, Ellsberg served with Ed Lansdale as an assistant to the legendary American adviser in Saigon. Though a civilian, Ellsberg was wont to put on military fatigues and go out hunting Vietcong.

This aspect of Ellsberg's background fascinated the President. For as he told visitors June 23, Ellsberg had been a hawk, who while in Vietnam had "gone around with a machine gun shooting at anyone dressed in black pajamas." Somewhere along the line Ellsberg decided the war was wrong. He resigned from the Rand Corporation, where he had continued to do secret government work as a consultant, to become senior research associate at the Center for International Studies at the Massachusetts Institute for Technology. In turning the Pentagon documents over to The New York Times, Ellsberg knew what he was doing. As he told columnist Flora Lewis, he knew he risked "going to jail for a very long time." But he was prepared to pay that price. On June 28, Daniel Ellsberg was indicted.

The Times, of course, argued before the Supreme Court that an informed public had the right to know right now what individual diplomats and military men had recommended over the years of the Vietnam escalation. But the Times had not always held to this view. Thus, on December 12, 1962, the Times in an editorial titled

"Breach of Security," denounced "an article in the current Saturday Evening Post purporting to tell what went on in the executive committee of the National Security Council at the height of the Cuban crisis six weeks ago....The secrecy of one of the highest organs of the United States Government has been seriously breached ...How can advisers to the President be expected to give advice freely and easily and at all times honestly and with complete integrity if they have to worry about what their arguments will look like in print a few weeks later? What kind of advice can the President expect to get under such circumstances? How can there be any real freedom of discussion or of dissent; how can anyone be expected to advance positions that may be politically unpopular or unprofitable? Does no one in Washington recall the McCarthy era and the McCarthy technique?"

Stewart Alsop, who had co-authored the article, later noted that contrary to what the Times reported, "it contained no word from any NSC paper, or from any other secret document."

As had been expected, the Supreme Court decided that under the First Amendment the Government could not use prior restraint to halt publication of the Pentagon Papers. The six to three vote was generally hailed as a resounding victory for freedom of the press. And so it was -- up to a point. For five of the justices went out of their way to emphasize that the court's ruling in no way precluded the possibility of criminal prosecution -- not only of the man accused of making top secret information available to the press but of the newspapers for using that material. Justice

Byron White, a John F. Kennedy appointee who voted against prior restraint, observed that if publication of any of the material by the Times or other publications violated sections of the Criminal Code prohibiting the release of classified material, the papers "must face the consequences." White added: "I would have no difficulty in sustaining convictions under these sections on facts that would not justify the intervention of equity and the imposition of a prior restraint." And in his separate opinion, Chief Justice Burger stated he was "in general agreement with much of what Mr. Justice White has expressed with respect to penal sanctions concerning communication or retention of documents or information relating to the national defense."

The Chief Justice also made this point: "To me it is hardly believable that a newspaper long regarded as a great institution in American life would fail to perform one of the basic and simple duties of every citizen with respect to the discovery or possession of stolen property or secret Government documents. That duty, I had thought -- perhaps naively -- was to report forthwith, to responsible public officers. This duty rests of taxi drivers, justices and The New York Times. The course followed by the Times, whether so calculated or not, removed any possibility of orderly litigation of the issues. If the action of the judges up to now has been correct, that result is sheer happenstance."

The Washington Star, which approved of the Supreme Court decision, nevertheless noted that "the administration's position was more logical than that of the press." It added: "In theory,

the majority position is unassailable. The Constitutional guarantee of a free press means that the press must be allowed to publish whatever it believes is worthy of publication. It does not mean the press is free of the responsibility after publication. Newspapers are subject to obscenity laws and to the laws of libel, including criminal libel. There is no reason to suppose the Constitution can serve as an impervious shield against prosecution for wilfully or carelessly endangering national security. There is no logic in the argument that the press, alone among the country's institutions, stands above the law, invulnerable, answerable only to itself. A free press is not and should not be a press free from all legal responsibility. It should never become a refuge for incompetence or treason."

Thus ended a major confrontation between the Government and the press, a battle that on the face of it seemed almost certain to go the way it did. But the case of the Pentagon Papers was far from over. On December 30, 1971, Daniel Ellsberg was again indicted by a Federal grand jury on twelve criminal charges including conspiracy, theft of Government property and violation of espionage statutes. The new charges were considerably more severe than those previously leveled against him by the same grand jury. Also indicted on four counts was Anthony Russo Jr., a former colleague of Ellsberg at the Rand Corporation. Both men declared their innocence, Ellsberg contending he was not aware of having "violated any criminal statutes."

The unfortunate aspect of the case was that, at long last, it provided "evidence" to hysterical liberals that the Nixon Administration was anti-civil-libertarian. A long-winded Times editorial on the Supreme Court decision urged "the present Administration to re-examine its own attitudes toward secrecy, suppression and restriction of the liberties of free men in a free society." Of course, the Times conveniently overlooked its own past demands that high level Government deliberations remain secret. But that was during the Kennedy era when Adlai Stevenson was the victim of Presidential leaks. Also forgotten was the Times attitude when the late Senator Joseph McCarthy had appealed to Federal employees to provide him with secret documents. The Times then called it an "invitation to anarchy." A curious moral code, indeed, one that holds it wrong to give classified material to Joe McCarthy but a great public service to leak classified data to The New York Times.

"As in so many areas," commented James J. Kilpatrick, "it makes a difference whose Ochs is gored."

Of course, one of the problems Richard Nixon faced with the press was that he failed to pay homage to James Reston, whose oracular effusions in the Times are frequently mistaken for Gospel among opinion-makers. Thus Reston, who never had any trouble talking to JFK or Lyndon, was moved to say that "in plain fact, this is the most closed administration" in many years. The truth is otherwise. For no President has tried harder to acquaint the people with his plans and hopes. Richard Nixon's oral and printed output, via press, radio, television and official channels, runs about half a million

words a year. But, still, there could be little doubt the President does have communications problems.

And the basic reason was spelled out by Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the liberal Democrat formerly on the White House staff: "President Nixon has had the least generous press of anyone I have ever known in the White House. It has been one long presumption of malfeasance, sinister intent, trickery and double-dealing."

Nowhere was this better demonstrated than with the publication of the so-called Anderson papers early in January 1972. These were copies of "secret-sensitive" minutes of four White House meetings dealing with the Indo-Pakistan war which broke out in late 1971.* They had been illegally transmitted to Jack Anderson,

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* "Secret-sensitive" is a designation which falls between the official designations of secret and top secret.

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who had inherited the Washington Merry-Go-Round column from Drew Pearson.

All through December, Anderson had published columns disclosing policy discussions of the Washington Security Action Group (WSAG), composed of experts from the National Security Council, State Department, Pentagon and other Government agencies. According to Anderson, the documents from which he quoted demonstrated the Nixon Administration to be anti-Indian and pro-Pakistan.

The Anderson revelations were actually out of context. For one thing, between March and mid-December of 1971 there had been twenty-two WSAG meetings; seven meetings of the Review Group

which supplies the raw material for the National Security Council; and two full-dress sessions of the Council itself. In all, therefore there were thirty-one sessions devoted to the Indo-Pakistan crisis. If all the documents flowing out of these meetings had been made public, the overall picture of the crisis would have been quite different from that which emerged from the handful of WSAG papers which had fallen into Anderson's hands.

The Anderson papers, incidentally, were not official WSAG documents. They were notes hurriedly taken by subordinates who sat along the wall of the Situation Room behind their superiors who were trying to figure out how best to handle the crisis in South Asia. Much of the discussion dealt with contingency planning and one detects sympathy for the plight of the emerging nation of Bangladesh; it promises to become "an international basket case." The conferees came to no specific decisions. They agreed to prepare option papers for the President. Their discussion was candid, spontaneous and unreserved. They had no idea their words would soon be in the hands of an outsider.

Yet, on the basis of these stilted minutes, Anderson stated that Henry Kissinger had "lied" during a background briefing when he told newsmen that United States policy was not "anti-Indian." But, in the same briefing of December 7, 1971, Kissinger had also stated -- and this was completely overlooked by Administration critics -- that the United States "which in many respects has had a love affair with India, can only with enormous pain accept the fact that military action was taken in our view without adequate cause..."

In other words, Kissinger was not being anti-Indian in general; but only on a specific Indian policy, namely, its long-standing desire to wreak havoc on neighboring Pakistan. As President Nixon stated privately, it was difficult to comprehend contentions that the Administration should have supported India's military adventure. For the most part, those contentions came from liberal partisans who were simultaneously insisting that getting involved in Vietnam was all wrong. As the President noted, "some of our liberal friends" are always looking for wars to get involved in.

If ever there was a "can of worms," in the President's view, it was the bitter mutual hatred felt by Pakistan and India. It was a religious-based conflict which reaches back into misty emotions about Kashmir and irreconcilable Hindu-Moslem differences over the centuries. Not only were atavistic hatreds beyond most Americans' comprehension involved, but also the whole power relationship between China, Russia and the U.S. There was a serious danger of a direct confrontation between the big powers.

In his December 7 briefing, Kissinger reminded newsmen that the Nixon Administration had in the past year contributed $700 million in economic assistance to India. He also pointed out that the U.S. had "contributed $500 million for the relief of (East Pakistan) refugees and to ease suffering in India, and to prevent more refugees from coming into India." These were hardly actions by an Administration with an anti-Indian bias.

Concerning the allegation that the U.S. did nothing in the face of West Pakistan's crackdown on East Pakistan's autonomy-

minded Awami League, Kissinger observed that "the United States did not condone what happened in March 1971; on the contrary, the United States has made no new development loans to Pakistan since March 1971." At the same time, the U.S. suspended shipments of military supplies to Pakistan. "The only arms that were continued to be shipped to Pakistan were arms on old licenses in commercial channels, and those were spare parts. There were no lethal end-items involved." In other words, the U.S. cut off $35 million worth of arms while continuing to ship less than $5 million in spare parts that were in commercial channels under existing licenses.

It was true that the U.S. did not make any public statements on the tragic events in East Pakistan. On August 4, 1971, the President told a news conference: "We are not going to engage in public pressure on the Government of West Pakistan. That would be totally counter-productive. These are matters that we will discuss only in private channels."

Actually the Nixon Administration was working behind the scenes, trying to convince both India and Pakistan to reach a political settlement that would permit the East Pakistani refugees to return.

"At the request of the President, this was explained by me to the Indian Foreign Minister when I was in New Delhi in early July, and both indicated that they understood our decision in this respect and made no criticism of our decision," said Kissinger.

"Secondly, we consistently used our influence...to urge the Government of Pakistan in the direction of a political evolution

...The Government agreed that a timetable be established for returning Pakistan to civilian rule...by the end of December. We urged a mutual withdrawal of troops from the border, and when India rejected this, we urged a unilateral withdrawal of Pakistan troops from the border, and that was accepted by Pakistan and never replied to by India."

The United States urged Pakistan to extend amnesty to all refugees so they could return to East Pakistan without fear of reprisals. That was accepted by Islamabad.

The Nixon Administration went even further. American diplomats made contact with Bangladesh representatives in Calcutta to sound them out about meeting with Pakistani officials to discuss a political settlement. Eight such contacts were made in August, September and October.

"We approached President Yahya Khan three times in order to begin negotiations with the Bangladesh people in Calcutta," Kissinger said. "The Government of Pakistan accepted. We were told by our contacts in Calcutta that the Indian Government discouraged such negotiations. In other words, we attempted to promote a political settlement...."

Between them, Kissinger and Rogers conferred with the Indian Ambassador in Washington twenty-five times. Both men, speaking for President Nixon, informed the Ambassador "that political autonomy for East Bengal was the inevitable outcome of a political evolution, and that we favored it. The difference may have been that the Government of India wanted things so rapidly that it was no longer talking about political evolution, but about political collapse ....

"We told the Indian Prime Minister when she was here that we would try to arrange negotiations between the Pakistanis and members of the Awami League, specifically approved by (Sheikh) Mujibur, who is in prison. We told the Indian Ambassador shortly before his return to India that we were prepared even to discuss with them a political timetable, a precise timetable for the establishment of political autonomy in East Bengal. That conversation was held on November 19th."

Three days later, Indian forces crossed into East Pakistan.

In her November talks with the President at the White House, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had given no indication that military action was imminent, though she had indicated war with Pakistan, under the circumstances, was inevitable. She left no doubt that she hankered for the actual dismemberment of all of her hated neighbor including even West Pakistan. In fact, she complained to Mr. Nixon that in the British division of India, Pakistan had been most unjustly allotted "both Baluchistan and Pushtunistan."

For the President, it was an extraordinary experience. Here he was pleading for peace with a supposed disciple of the sainted Mahatma Gandhi, the leader of a nation supposedly devoted to pacifist ideals, yet he was unable to get across his plea that India should not stubbornly risk triggering off World War III. For, in the President's opinion, Mrs. Gandhi was engaging in a deadly game by seeking to play off Soviet power against the Communist Chinese.

Emboldened by her alliance with the Soviet Union (U.S. estimates were that Russia had provided India with $2.5 billion in arms since 1967), Mrs. Gandhi returned from Washington to give the signal which, she hoped, would settle once and for all the issues which had festered since the British divestiture of the subcontinent. In fact, India's deployments for an attack on Pakistan had begun even before Mrs. Gandhi had left for Washington.

As India's forces overwhelmed East Pakistan, the White House was provided with "conclusive proof" of India's intention to invade West Pakistan and crush the main body of the Pakistani army. The "hard intelligence" obtained by the CIA indicated that India would make her move as soon as she could shift her forces from East Pakistan -- an action calculated to destroy Pakistan as a state. This was the situation the President faced when he ordered elements of the Pacific fleet to steam towards the Indian Ocean. And, through Henry Kissinger, he allowed it to be hinted he might not be able to go to Moscow for an already-announced summit conference.

On December 9, the President directed Henry Kissinger to discuss the matter with India's Ambassador to Washington, L.K. Jha. The Ambassador replied three days later. He could offer no assurances that India would not cross into West Pakistan. By this time, the President had personally intervened in an effort to resolve the crisis. In the strongest terms, the President warned the Kremlin of the possible dire consequences of any further rash actions on India's part. The Soviet leaders were thus faced with the choice of an ugly showdown with the United States or telling the Indians to stop their army in its tracks.

On December 12, the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, Vasily V. Kuznetsov, flew to New Delhi to talk to Mrs. Gandhi. The purpose of his hurried mission was to warn the Indians against attacking West Pakistan. As a consequence, Mrs. Gandhi declared a general cease-fire on December 16. The President let the Soviets know that they deserved "credit" for helping bring the Indo-Pakistan conflict to a halt.

As its "Man of the Year," the President told Time in a year-end interview: "The basic point in South Asia was the principle that any nation has a right to its integrity, and that the attempt of its neighbors to engulf it with the support of a superpower from outside will be resisted. That was the principle at stake."

Of course, publication of the Anderson papers -- and all the sensationalism they evoked -- tended to overshadow the President's efforts to keep the peace in the historically-troubled subcontinent. And Mr. Nixon's critics had a field day suggesting a "credibility gap" when none really existed. As Time put it, "Anderson's charges notwithstanding, he did not catch the Administration in a gross deception." Anyone who read a newspaper knew where the President stood. Secretary Rogers had early in the game blamed India and the "tilt" towards Pakistan, ordered at the President's urgent behest by Kissinger, had been clear on the face of events. In fact, the President's ever-ready Senatorial critics had already seized on those events to condemn his South Asia policy.

Moreover, hardly anything that occurs on the subcontinent is central to international affairs. As the President views the

emerging era, there will be five major power centers -- the United States, Europe, Japan, Russia and China -- each pursuing its own interests, which will, in a process of shifting alignments, balance each other and prevent a preponderance of any group. In the classic theory of power politics, such a system should make for stability on a global scale for the first time in history.

As for the argument that the U.S. suffered a setback in South Asia, the President's views were best expressed by a senior White House official: "We didn't lose India because we never 'had' India in the first place. The Indians have so consistently opposed U.S. policies and interests over the years that our relationship hasn't benefited us in any political sense. So what have we lost? In any event, the Indians will be looking to us for much of what they need for future development that they cannot get from the Russians."

In the President's opinion, criticism of his South Asia policies will have little effect on Election Day. And there could be no arguing the fact that, from the viewpoint of most Americans, the President did not do too badly. How do you argue with the fact that, when everything is said and done, not one American life was lost?

CHAPTER 27

Astonishingly, in the end, 1971 proved to be Richard Nixon's year. It had not begun that way. The year had opened with unemployment at its highest level since 1961, business in the doldrums, consumer prices continuing to climb, half a dozen Democratic hopefuls jostling to challenge the White House, and a South Vietnamese army preparing to invade Laos. The polls indicated that the President's popularity was at a low ebb and the pundits were confidently discussing the inevitability of a one-term presidency. On July 12, The New York Times editorialized that "his re-election is in doubt," largely because he had "systematically moved the Republican party's center of gravity to the right."

Three days later the President made his stunning announcement that he would visit China. With this one stroke, he regained the initiative. Not only had he ended the quarter-century of vitrolic estrangement between two of the great powers, but he had won worldwide acclaim and had begun to transform the political scene at home. Though there was scattered protest from the right, a Harris poll found the American public approving the China trip by a margin of sixty-eight to nineteen percent.

But, as the President told Al Chamie, national commander of the American Legion on July 27, he was going to China without any great illusions. Chamie had praised the President for his "boldness" and "courage" on China. Noting that he had received a lot of flak from Legion members on the subject, Chamie had urged them to withhold criticism until they could see the outcome. The

President assured Chamie he did not intend to be a "patsy," adding that "no one is going to blow smoke in my eyes."

At the same time, Chamie relayed greetings from Golda Meir. The Legion commander had visited Israel and was impressed with this tiny bastion of freedom in the Middle East. He urged the President to provide whatever arms Israel requested. The President assured Chamie he was keeping a watchful eye on the military balance in the Middle East to assure Israel would not fall behind. It had, in fact, been a year of unprecedented U.S.-Israeli cooperation in military and intelligence matters.

At home, the state of the economy remained Mr. Nixon's number one domestic problem. On the last weekend of June, the President and his top advisers held a long, searching discussion at Camp David. The meeting was held against the background of a rising clamor for tax cuts and tougher wage-price restraints. George Shultz, who had catapulted from a career in industrial relations to a kind of deputy Presidency as head of the Office of Management and Budget, argued strongly for retention of the "steady as you go" policy. What was at stake was long-term stability, not short-term gain, he argued. Any further prodding of the economy now would be excessive and trigger a new burst of inflation.

The President appeared to buy the argument. But out of the Camp David meeting came one surprise development. Mr. Nixon formally designated Secretary Connally, the only Democrat in his Cabinet, as his "chief economic spokesman." At Camp David, the President had stressed the necessity for the Administrations speaking with one voice to restore business and consumer confidence.

As that voice, Connally promptly set out to put things straight. The economy, he announced, was moving along pretty much as expected -- gradually upward. He saw no cause for alarm. He also saw no need for a tax cut to juice up business activity. And while the unemployment figure was an annoyance, it was not critical. At the same time, he said there would be no controls on prices and wages.

Connally, however, had his doubts about the economic "game plan" which he expressed to the President privately. In his talks with business leaders around the country, the Secretary had found an increasing pessimism. Sure, they told Connally, there were signs of an upturn, but recovery was not proceeding fast enough.

"Let's talk about it," the President said.

For several hours at a time throughout the early part of the summer, they did talk about it. They talked about the cruel dilemma the country was facing -- business stagnation and rising unemployment on the one hand and inflation on the other. Never before in economic history had those two forces converged at the same time.

Neither the President nor his Treasury Secretary kept any notes of their fateful conversations. No one was present as they sketched out the options available to the President. So secret were their deliberations that not one rumor of their doubts about the game plan seeped out of the White House. In fact, a deliberate effort was made to make it appear that no major economic changes were in prospect. One reason was that the President was not

quite certain whether he should bite the bullet. Thus, on July 6 he told a group of newspaper executives in Kansas City, Missouri, that "you cannot have wage and price controls without rationing. They do not work in peacetime." And White House aides disclosed their displeasure with Arthur Burns for publicly dissenting from the President's policies. The Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board kept urging a get-tough incomes policy. Asked by Bill Safire how he could call for tough wage-price controls, in direct contradiction of his past writings on the subject, Burns replied: "There's a time in life when you realize that everything you've written is not chiseled into granite."

On the other hand, Dr. Milton Friedman, leader of the prestigious monetarist school of economic thought, announced the President's economic game plan was working; that inflation had been slowed, although less than had been desired; and that the recession -- one of the mildest in U.S. history -- was about over.

On top of such conflicting counsels, the Democrats went on the offensive, denouncing the floundering U.S. economy and the seeming inability of the Administration to put it right. And almost in unison the Democrats called for among other stern measures, immediate institution of stiff wage-price controls. Leaders of labor were making similar demands. On July 11, George Meany was asked on Meet the Press what he would do about the economy if he were Mr. Nixon. The AFL-CIO President replied: "I can tell you this: If I was in his position, I would impose controls at this time. I don't see any other way that this situation is going to get under control."

Republican Congressional leaders were worried, too, and at a White House session they voiced their concern to the President. This came after an economic briefing from George Shultz who, after going through a vast array of statistical data, voiced his judgement that 1971 would be a good year and 1972 a very good year. The OMB Director warned against pessimism. He said that such economic doom-sayers as Eliot Janeway were seldom held to account when events proved them wrong.

However, a number of Senators and Congressmen replied that they were not getting such rosy reports from the folks back home. The Administration's stance of "aggressive passivism" was not getting across to the people, they said. Moreover, the unemployment figures had begun to cause concern.

The President took up the subject of unemployment. He said that never in our history, since World War II, "have our Democratic friends had unemployment in the four percent area without war. We are trying to get unemployment down without war. If the 1,300,000 men who were in the armed forces at the beginning of this Administration were still in the armed forces, or in defense plants, then unemployment would probably be in the vicinity of four and one-half percent. We would have no problems in this particular area and everybody would be saying, 'Isn't it great, we don't have unemployment.' But others, probably the same people, would be saying at the same time, 'It sure is bad that we are losing three hundred men a week in Vietnam.' So I wouldn't be put on the defensive on that issue."

Whether merited or not, the general feeling in the country was that the economy was not moving fast enough. Total output was rising but not as much as had been hoped. "On the other hand," commented the Washington Post on July 24, "things are not so bad that those out of power can allow themselves the emotional release of yelling at the Administration for making such a mess....No one envies the President or his economic advisers. Indeed, any economist who claims to have a sure prescription for reducing unemployment without adding to inflation is either lying or does not understand the situation. This particular set of circumstances -- the slow recovery with such persistent inflation -- has not risen before and economists are actively debating what it means..." The Post urged the President to revive wage-price guideposts, conceding, however, "it is not clear that guideposts would do very much good....All in all, it is a difficult situation in which to shine up one's image as a problem solver and leader of men. If we were the President we would go to Peking."

In fact, it was at the time the President disclosed his plans to visit Peking that he had about decided to institute controls as well as other temporary activist measures. Chairman McCracken had put it this way: "There may come a time for an economic 'trip to Peking.'" That time came -- but sooner than anybody expected. The President's original plan was to await the return of Congress, then in mid-summer adjournment, before making the big announcement. Only his top advisers knew of the President's decision -- Connally, McCracken and Shultz.

Though he was the adviser most associated with the stand-pat game plan, Shultz was placed in charge of contingency planning for the new program. He assigned a group of Government technicians to gather information and work out details. But he split the assignments in such a way that no technician could see more than a tiny part of the entire fabric. Several technicians, however, complained their work appeared to be futile in view of the President's repeated public assurances that the economy was on course. Shultz managed to assuage these restless subordinates after thirteen Republican Senators announced legislation to create a federal wage-price guideline board that would seek voluntary restraint from industry and labor. Shultz then told his troubled employees that their work was to prepare the Administration's response to the bill.

The President, meanwhile, dropped a hint of coming events when, at a news conference August 4, he said he might consider a wage-price review board if he became convinced such a policy would not lead to "stifling the economy." At the same time, the President sought to downplay reports of a rift between him and Arthur Burns, saying that the Fed Chairman had been "most responsible" on monetary and fiscal policy. By this time Burns had been informed of the President's plans -- and that closed the circle of insiders.

Burns, meanwhile, laid out what proved to be the theoretical basis of the anti-inflation program in testimony before a Congressional Committee. He explained that the original Nixon game plan relied on the rules of classical economics. But the classical

rules no longer worked because a power shift at the union-management bargaining table had put the unions in command. Therefore, Federal intervention was essential because market economics had been aborted.

Other than this, the President did not tip his hand. Meeting with a top group from the Republican National Committee on August 9, Mr. Nixon commented favorably on his Vice President's recently-completed round-the-world trip and unfavorably on the press coverage of that trip that had taken Spiro Agnew to Asia, Africa and Europe. The President had been particularly disturbed by a Newsweek story of Agnew's visit to a hunting lodge in Kenya where, according to the magazine's reporter, the Vice President, his private physician and his pretty, red-haired secretary watched two rhinos copulating.*

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* Actually there were about thirty-five persons present at Treetops, a favorite spot for visiting dignitaries and tourists to watch wild life. Later, when asked about the rhinos, Agnew laughed and said it was like watching Senator George McGovern welcoming Mayor John Lindsay into the Democratic party.

The President also said he was pleased with the speeches delivered by Barry Goldwater and Nelson Rockefeller calling for party unity at an RNC meeting several weeks before. He said that Goldwater had emerged with increased stature as a result of the disclosures in the Pentagon Papers. Moreover, the President was

pleased that Barry had been invited in the first place. Since the 1964 election, the Senator from Arizona had not once been invited to address the National Committee.

On Thursday, August 12, the President spent a few minutes with Arnold R. Weber, a former University of Chicago professor who had joined the Administration as an Assistant Secretary of Labor. A close friend of George Shultz, he followed him into the White House as associate director of the Office of Management and Budget. He had now decided to return to the university and "revalidate my credentials." And in the Oval Room, the President of the United States was bidding him goodbye. The President, of course, was aware of Weber's liberal credentials. As Weber was leaving, the President called out: "Don't forget to tell those professors that this Administration also believes in truth and justice."

"I will, Mr. President," Weber called back.

Weber never got the chance to pack his bags. The next afternoon he was at Camp David. The President had called together all his top economic counselors to discuss the nation's economic problems. For weeks there had been a staggering amount of politically damaging economic news. Secretary Stans said there might be a trade deficit for the whole year, something that had not happened in this century. The stock market was in another downspin, and the index of "leading indicators" of economic activity declined after seven months of struggling upward.

But, as Tom Wicker pointed out in The New York Times, "All of this difficulty cannot merely be charged to Mr. Nixon; steel

imports, for instance, in anticipation of an American steel strike, were a major factor in the second-quarter trade deficit. And the whole country continues to pay heavily in inflated dollars for the Johnson Administration's reluctance properly to fund the Vietnam war. Moreover, unemployment is increased by thousands of the servicemen Mr. Nixon is bringing home from Vietnam."

Meanwhile, European money traders, believing devaluation was inevitable, frantically cashed in dollars for gold and other foreign currencies. On the important Frankfurt, West Germany, exchange, the dollar declined to its lowest level since currency rates were realigned after World War II. And Undersecretary for Monetary Affairs Paul A. Volcker put in a call to Secretary Connally, who had begun a much-needed vacation in Texas. It was Friday, August 13, and Volcker reported that more than a billion dollars had shifted on the European monetary markets the day before, another half-billion that very morning. The dollar was in trouble and gold reserves were dwindling. The troubled British wanted confirmation that some three billions held in reserve would not be devalued. Fearing a possible panic, Connally flew back to Washington -- and on to Camp David.

The climactic Camp David meeting was attended by what was considered to be the bare minimum number of persons. Included were the President, Connally, Volcker, McCracken, Burns, Weber, Ehrlichman, Haldeman and Shultz. Also, speechwriter Bill Safire; Herb Stein of CEA; Caspar W. Weinberger, deputy director of OMB for budget; Peter G. Peterson, adviser for international economic matters;

Kenneth Dan, assistant director of OMB; Michael Bradfield, a Treasury Department attorney; Rose Mary Woods, the President's personal secretary; and Marge Acker, Miss Woods' assistant. Strict secrecy prevailed for nearly three days. Phone calls outside the compound were kept to a minimum. At the President's orders, calls were restricted to those who needed specific pieces of information. No personal calls, for example, were to be made, even to wives.

On leaving for Camp David via helicopter from the White House grounds, Bill Safire asked Herb Stein, "What's cooking this weekend?" Stein, an historian as well as an economist, replied: "I don't really know, but I have a feeling that this may well be the most important weekend in economic history since March 4, 1933." That was the date of the inauguration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and marked the beginning of the New Deal. Stein, an ardent foe of wage-price controls, later recalled, "I felt a sense of exhileration. I left all sorts of conventional notions behind."

At Camp David, the President outlined the problems and his proposed solutions in a crisp, off-the-cuff speech. Then he told his audience of carefully selected advisers: "Where do we go from here? What do we do now? You get off your butts and go to work."

Then Secretary Connally detailed the steps. He said action would have to be fast since, as he later put it, "much of the problem was psychological; much of the solution had to be psychological." Friday night, the group broke into subcommittees: budget and taxes headed by Shultz; wages and prices headed by Weber; and

international monetary matters by Connally. The subcommittees worked into the early morning hours, meeting in the three-room Laurel Cabin next to the President's Aspen Lodge. For all the wrench in policy the meetings were remarkably harmonious.

Safire, meanwhile, worked on the draft of a speech which the President would deliver on Sunday. The next day Safire discovered that the President had awakened at 4:30 a.m., scribbled out six pages of text on White House stationery, then dictated the first version of the speech into a Dictaphone, making adjustments in his notes as he went along. All this material was turned over to Safire for polishing.

Most of Saturday was devoted to getting the necessary papers ready -- the executive orders for the wage-price freeze and the import surcharge as well as additional material for the President's speech. Herb Stein had prepared summaries of the discussions that were so trenchant that, with slight editing, they were later handed out to the press as fact sheets explaining each Presidential action. By Sunday morning all final details were settled and most of the participants flew back to Washington by 1:00 p.m. The President decided to remain at Camp David to put the finishing touches on his speech. Late Sunday afternoon, he helicoptered back.

It had been a hot, muggy Sunday in Washington. Ron Ziegler, John Scali, Al Haig and other Presidential staffers were playing tennis on the White House courts against Bob Pierpoint, Herb Kaplow, Tom Jarriel and others of the correspondents corp. The President's

son-in-law, Ed Cox, also played in a doubles match -- as Tricia watched from the sidelines. Among the visitors watching the matches were Jeannine Cusson of the Rive Gauche Restaurant; this writer and his wife, Patricia, and a guest down from New York for a few days, Joan Marsh.

At about 3:00 p.m. the phone rang. A secret service agent motioned to Ziegler. The word was soon out that the President had asked the three networks for time that night. "It's going to be a major speech," Ziegler told me.

Which was putting it mildly. For in his surprise twenty-minute speech at 9:00 p.m., the President unveiled a stunning turnabout in economic strategy -- a bold new program which in its way was as dramatic and momentous as his recent China initiative. The President announced a set of economic measures to deal with the nation's domestic and international economic problems -- including a ninety-day freeze on all wages, prices and rents. He also, in effect, opened the way for devaluation of the dollar (which took place December 18) by announcing that the United States temporarily would stop exchanging foreign-held dollars for gold, thus allowing U.S. currency to "float" in the international money markets. He coupled this with imposition of a temporary ten percent surcharge -- in effect a tax -- on imports into the U.S., which he said was designed to help relieve the nation's worsening deficit in international trade. And he outlined a package of tax breaks designed to stimulate the economy, along with a set of Federal budget cutbacks to curb inflation.

The President was not indulging in hyperbole when he described his scheme as "the most comprehensive new economic policy to be undertaken by this nation in four decades." At another point, he said, "Every action I have taken tonight is designed to nurture and stimulate the competitive spirit, to help snap us out of the self-doubt, the self-disparagement that saps our energy, and erodes our confidence in ourselves." Then, he predicted: "We are going to move forward to the new prosperity without war as befits a great people -- all together..."

The reaction to the speech was overwhelmingly favorable. The President had apparently succeeded in defusing his critics on the economic homefront even as he moved to wind down the war in Vietnam. There was no doubt that he had left his political opponents stranded and gasping for air. In fact, as he addressed the nation Sunday night, one of those opponents, Senator Henry Jackson, was distributing the text of a Monday speech calling for "vigorous economic growth that will require the wise use of economic tools ranging from tax cuts to wage-price controls." And only the previous Monday, Senator Muskie had promised the AFL-CIO in Texas to introduce "a comprehensive program to combat unemployment and control inflation," including tax cuts and a government board to set wage-price guidelines.

For months, Hubert Humphrey had called on the Administration to create a wage-price board. He had argued that the President had been following "the economic policy of no policy." On one occasion, the former Vice President did plead guilty to the charge

that the Johnson-Humphrey Administration had touched off the inflation which plagued the economy. In a speech before the National Economics Club on February 24, 1971, Humphrey said there would not have been any inflation in 1965 "had it not been for the increase in military expenditures. In retrospect, it is now clear that fiscal policy should have been sharply reversed in 1966 and we should have continued to exercise monetary restraint even after the [income tax] surcharge was enacted in 1968."

Now, with one exception, the Presidential hopefuls on the Democratic side were either forced to praise the President or sound a sour-grapes complaint of "Why did he wait so long." The exception was Senator George McGovern who promptly termed the President's new program "economic madness." Criticism from the right came from monetarist Milton Friedman who observed that "wages and prices are symptoms, not causes, of inflation," and called the freeze "purely cosmetic." Friedman's old adversary, Pierre Rinfret, retorted that Friedman's "approach had been tried for the past three years" and it didn't work. "The President has taken a giant step in economic affairs," Rinfret added. "He is striding where others have feared to tread. His actions befit the office of the most powerful man in the world. Nixonomics are great economics."

"And," as John Kenneth Galbraith wrote in New York, "a further truth had better be faced by my fellow Democrats. Twice in recent weeks the President has taken the initiative. First on the approach to China and now on the economy. On both matters the

Democrats were proceeding with exemplary caution where they were not sitting in solid concrete. China, so far as it was being discussed at all, was being approached with the dynamism one associates on this subject with Dean Rusk and men whose mothers had been frightened by Mao Tse-tung. The Democrats in Congress can claim real credit for authorizing the price and wage freeze that Mr. Nixon invoked. Not all expected it to be used quite so dramatically. It is entirely possible that on both China and the price-wage freeze Mr. Nixon will stumble. Certainly a lot of people are hoping that he will. I find myself wishing him well on both matters and hoping rather that his inclination to play a long hand (for things that make sense) will commend itself to Democrats."

George Meany, however, didn't think so. Still bellowing at the age of seventy-eight, the AFL-CIO President, who only a few weeks before had publicly advocated wage-price controls, now opposed them. "We just won't cooperate," said Meany. As Pierre Rinfret observed: "It's incredible how adroitly and easily he can change his mind once he's got what he asked for."

The position of Organized Labor was that the freeze was inequitable; that, for example, there was no machinery for enforcing the price freeze while wages were effectively frozen because employers had complete control over paychecks. "By its very nature," said The New York Times, "a freeze is bound to be inequitable. But it provides the breathing time the country requires to set up more durable machinery for economic stability on a basis of fairness."

The White House let it be known that it felt George Meany was "out of step" with the rank and file of the labor movement. And the pollsters showed that to be true. George Gallup, for example, reported on August 29, 1971 that "two of every three adults (65 percent) in union member families hold a favorable opinion of the President's program, not far behind the proportion of adults in non-union households (75 percent) who express support." This, of course, was in sharp contrast with the position of the labor leaders, most of them septuagenarians still locked into the class struggle of a bygone day.

Then on October 7, the President went on television again to outline Phase II, the program that would follow when the ninety-day freeze expired November 13. Boards would be created to limit increases in wages, prices and rents. The aim would be to reduce the annual rise in consumer prices to the rate of two to three percent by the end of 1972. No formal controls were established on profits. And employees would not be able to receive retroactive pay benefits for the ninety days of the freeze. The program represented the most comprehensive controls on the economy since the Korean war.

And even before Phase II went into operation, Phase III -- the dismantling of the complicated economic control machinery -- was under consideration. In typical, long-range Nixon fashion, the President's economic planners began working on plans to release the nation from uncomfortable restrictions when they became intolerable, unworkable or unnecessary. From the beginning, the

President made it clear he was not creating a huge bureaucracy with a vested interest in continuing controls. Hopefully, the President's aim was to end controls in advance of the 1972 election.

George Meany, who had not been consulted on any of this, reacted with typical gut-fighter instincts, counter-attacking with a no-holds-barred campaign that was continued despite an illness that kept him hospitalized for three weeks towards the end of the year. First he directed his fire against Arnold Weber, who first had been drafted to oversee the ninety-day wage-price freeze and then, in Phase II, had been named as one of the five public members of the Pay Board.

Meany publicly assailed Weber as a hatchet-man who was doing all the Administration's dirty work. To which the Bronx-born Weber, a registered Democrat and the son of a labor leader, replied: "The only hatchet man I ever knew was the kosher butcher down the street."

Meany had gone to the hospital with a heart condition after he had unwillingly played host to Mr. Nixon at the AFL-CIO Convention held in the traditional non-proletarian environs of Bal Harbour, Florida. Instead of showing Mr. Nixon the courtesies normally shown to Presidents, the aging labor leader treated him as "just another guest." For example, he ordered the band out of the hotel ballroom so that "Hail to the Chief!" would not be played. And he sat the President in a back row. Previously, Meany had passed the word to his minions to sit on their hands in "silent contempt" during the President's visit.

Across the country on television newscasts that night, many Americans, regardless of party, took umbrage at the spectacle of their President being treated ~~like dirt.~~ As a consequence, the President emerged from the episode as a gutsy guy determined to do what he considered right not only for labor but for all the American people. In his remarks at the convention, Mr. Nixon made ~~it~~ perfectly clear that Phase II of his new economic program would proceed with or without the cooperation of Organized Labor. He took up the challenge hurled the day before when Meany said that labor would only continue its participation on the new Pay Board under certain conditions. If the President did not want labor membership "on our terms," Meany went on, then he "knows what he can do."

The President, quoting these words, told his labor audience, "Well, you know President Meany is correct. I know exactly what I can do and I'm going to do it." And he added: "It is my duty to make this program succeed in the best interests of all the American people and I fully intend to do so."

By speaking at the convention, the President brought into sharp focus the intemperate nature of Organized Labor's demands. In effect, the labor movement wanted a freeze on everything but their ever-zooming wage settlements, the basic cause of inflation.

"But," reported financial columnist Hobart Rowen in the Washington Post of January 9, 1972, "despite labor's loud objections for public (and union member) consumption, Meany and his associates will probably be forced by public opinion to rock

along with the wage-price control program in the clear knowledge that the jerry-built system is better than nothing; and that it is in labor's interest as well to cut the inflationary cycle."

As Herb Stein (who succeeded McCracken as Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers on January 1, 1972) observed, union members are consumers, too.

Secretary Connally was more than ever in the public eye. There was considerable speculation that the tall, colorful Texan would become the President's vice presidential runningmate in 1972. Spiro Agnew, himself, joked about these rumors. At the annual Governors Conference in San Juan in September, the Vice President told of the Texas-accented voice that kept interrupting his phone calls saying, "Your four years are up. Would you please signal when you're through?" Agnew also noted that four former Governors were prominent in the Nixon Administration -- "one as Vice President, another as Secretary of Housing, another as Secretary of Transportation, and another in a holding pattern."

Several days later, this writer interviewed the Vice President in his office one floor above the President's hideaway quarters in the Executive Office Building. The trip to San Juan had gone very well. Agnew's speech had been well received; and, for once, the press clippings were overwhelmingly favorable. Yet, in talking with Agnew, one could detect that he hadn't been overly happy in the Vice Presidency. For one thing, he had not been fully accepted in the Senate, over which it was his chief duty to preside. He confessed he had gotten off to a bad start when, in the early

days, he was "carrying the lobbying ball for the Administration" on the ABM. "I was a brand new boy in the club and some of the resentment came from my failure to realize the hypersensitivity of some members regarding my suggestions on what had to be done. That hurt my relations with a lot of liberal Senators, though a lot of that has since been repaired."

Waxing philosophical about the role of the Vice Presidency, Mr. Agnew noted that throughout history those who occupied the number two spot invariably complained. For example, John Nance Garner, an F.D.R. Vice President, contended the office was "not worth a bucket of spit." As Agnew put it: "Most of the responsibilities are designated by the President, so everything depends on the President." In other words, there isn't much for a Vice President to do on the Administrative side, except to promote Administration policies both at home and abroad. "I think the reason many of my predecessors said terribly demeaning things about the office is that Vice Presidents are often forgotten in some things where their pride is offended. Some of them have felt hurt, even paranoid. This is a difficult office because the Vice President frequently is a man who can make decisions and then when he comes in he finds he has no power to make decisions. Nevertheless, I have been lucky because President Nixon has used me very effectively -- in many ways -- to present his positions on things that he didn't want to say himself." And that, of course, included the Vice President's role during the 1970 campaign which, he noted, was "orchestrated" out of the White House.

"The President gives me a lot of guidance," Agnew went on, "but sometimes I don't ask him. I'd rather leave him the option of saying, 'I didn't know what that crazy Vice President was doing.'"

As for the President's new China policy, Agnew was all for it. What he was opposed to, he told me, was the "euphoria" which had greeted the development back in April of "ping-pong diplomacy," particularly as manifested in the media.

On October 12, 1971, the President announced he would visit Soviet leaders in Moscow the following May after his trip to Peking. Among the topics he would discuss, he said, were the continuing arms limitation talks, the troubled Middle East, and other areas which present the hope of "significant progress" by talks at the highest level. The visit would have the added purpose of demonstrating to the Russians that the U.S. considered the Soviet Union to be of equal importance to Red China in its design to achieve world detente. In making his announcement, Mr. Nixon emphasized that neither trip was being taken for the purpose of exploiting the existing differences between the two giant Communist powers.

At a Cabinet meeting the next day, the President explained that his plan to visit Moscow had not developed out of the blue. It had been under discussion for two years. "We felt and they agreed," the President said, "that we shouldn't hold a meeting at the summit until progress in other areas indicates it would be useful." Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet Foreign Minister, had discussed the summit a year ago. "This time he brought a formal invitation, and we accepted." The summit was being held in Moscow because it was our turn to return the state visit paid us by Chairman Khrushchev.

The record of U.S.-Soviet agreements during his Administration was not insignificant, the President said. He cited the Seabed Treaty; the completion of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty; the bacteriological warfare agreement; and the treaty to take steps against accidental nuclear explosions. In addition, there were the historic new Berlin accords which helped defuse a major flash point of disagreement between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.

"Any one of these would have been hailed as the second coming" if achieved by another President, Mr. Nixon said.

The President said he did not intend to take a large delegation with him to Moscow. "It will be a working visit," he emphasized. What will be discussed will depend on the situation at that time. Of course, Vietnam and the Middle East would probably be high on the agenda. Also, questions dealing with arms controls. "We are concentrating on reaching agreements on limiting offensive and defensive weapons," he went on. Also of great interest to the Soviets is the area of trade.

As for our allies, anything involving them will be discussed with them in detail, the President went on. In fact, most of our allies favored the President's forthcoming visits to the Communist capitals.

The President then warned his Cabinet officers against euphoria. Our differences with the Communist powers are very deep, he said, and they may well be irreconcilable. All we have agreed to do in both cases is to discuss those differences at the highest level, and possibly in the case of China to talk about a means of

discussing them when they arise. We are on a very high wire vis-a-vis the Soviet Union and China, the President warned. It is true that each views the other as a greater enemy than the U.S. But the U.S. -- to deal with either -- must deal evenhandedly, not playing off one Communist power against the other. And that we intend to do, the President said.

The President said he had been reading some "political stuff" the other day -- and one of the Democratic candidates had said something to this effect: "We hear about the 'new prosperity.' What was wrong with the old prosperity?"

"The answer," the President said, "is war." For obvious reasons, our Democratic friends never point out that the prosperity they gave the nation was accompanied by deaths on the battlefield. We have to go back fifteen years to find prosperity -- with unemployment below five percent -- without war.

Turning to Mel Laird, the President said: "I understand the casualties are pretty low this week."

"They'll be announced Thursday as seven," the Defense Secretary replied.

"One is still too many," the President told his Cabinet officers, "but remember when we first sat around this table, it was up to three hundred and fifty a week."

Asked by the President the reason for the low figure, Laird said: "The South Vietnamese are still suffering large casualties. They're doing the fighting. They're taking over."

In his interview with Time at the end of December, Mr. Nixon remarked that "the issue of Vietnam will not be an issue in the campaign, as far as this Administration is concerned..." Two weeks later he announced "the withdrawal of an additional 70,000 troops from Vietnam over the next three months. This means that our troop ceiling will be down to 69,000 by May 1....There will be another announcement that will be made before May 1 with regard to a further withdrawal...." By election day in November, therefore, it appeared likely that the number of Americans in South Vietnam may number as few as twenty-five to thirty-five thousand -- the size of the residual force he implied in a January 2 television interview with Dan Rather.

At the same time the President could take comfort from the fact that the U.S.-sponsored cease-fire in the Middle East had lasted into 1972. For one thing Egypt's President Anwar Sadat disentangled himself from his repeated declarations of resumed war with Israel. Nasser's successor had gone through the motions of ordering an assault on Israel to begin early in 1972. So long as that threat existed there could be no renewal of the peace talks with Israel which Mr. Nixon so ardently desired. Then on January 13, 1972 Sadat got himself off the hook at the expense of the Soviet Union. In a long, rambling speech, the Egyptian leader said he had cancelled his nation's assault on Israel because the U.S.S.R. was too busy helping India against Pakistan to have the time to help Egypt. This, of course, meant that the road once again was open to diplomacy.

However, Sadat made very clear his distress that President Nixon had agreed to resume delivery of military aircraft to Israel. The arrangement had been made following a visit to the White House by Prime Minister Golda Meir on December 2, 1971, where for two hours Mrs. Meir and the President spoke very privately and frankly. They were alone. No notes were taken. They shook hands after they reached an agreement. Once again the President had made it clear to Mrs. Meir that the United States would not permit the destruction of Israel. However, he did appeal to the Prime Minister for more flexibility on the part of her Government toward negotiations with the Arabs. Mrs. Meir was also reassured that the President in his forthcoming trip to Moscow would not agree to any Middle East settlement that would be counter to Israeli interests.

Cairo propagandists contended that the President's friendliness toward Israel -- as demonstrated by the shipment of Phantom jets to the tiny Jewish nation -- was calculated to win votes among the important Jewish minority in the United States. The truth was that the President did not expect to win any new votes on that issue; the overwhelming majority of American Jews traditionally vote Democratic.

Ironically, Mr. Nixon's stock was much higher among the Jews of Israel. On January 12, 1972, the Washington Star reported that a poll taken by Public Opinion Research of Israel Ltd. showed that Mr. Nixon was the third biggest "hero" in that country, topped only by Mrs. Meir and Defense Minister Dayan. Mr. Nixon was the only non-Israeli named by those who were polled.

Then the President embarked on a round of mini-summit conferences with major allies that was unprecedented in its intensity. These were a necessary prelude to the already-scheduled summit meetings in Peking and Moscow. The surprise announcements of these Presidential trips had left some U.S. allies bewildered, hurt and apprehensive; and reassurance about American intentions was very much in order. Also important was a show of Western unity to strengthen the President's hand as he met with the Chinese and Russian leaders.

First was a brief pre-Christmas visit at the White House by Prime Minister Trudeau who, upon shaking hands with Secretary Connally on a reception line, jokingly began to count the number of his fingers. "I still have all of them," he laughingly told the President. This, of course, was a reference to the ten percent surcharge which Canada particularly resented, since it relies so heavily upon U.S. markets. But the Canadian leader joyfully left the White House with the first news that the currency crisis might be nearing its end. And, just as important, considering the sensitivity of many Canadians, Trudeau flew back to Ottawa convinced (he said) of President Nixon's respect for his country's national feelings.

Then the President flew off to the Azores for a meeting with French President Pompidou, who was insisting on the devaluation of the dollar. After the first day of talks, Secretary Connally sounded as if a stalemate was in the offing. "If we can't resolve it...," he told newsmen, "then I think we ought to agree that we can't agree."

The possible deadlock did not appear to trouble the President unduly. He listened to the Armed Forces Radio coverage of the Washington Redskins' victory over the Los Angeles Rams before retiring at 4:00 a.m. After a final huddle with M. Pompidou, the President read a joint communique which said there should be a "prompt realignment of exchange rates through a devaluation of the dollar and revaluation of some other currencies." This, of course, foreshadowed the first devaluation of the dollar since Franklin D. Roosevelt slashed its value by forty-one percent in 1934. The Azores statement made headlines around the world. In Paris, an excited French radio commentator crowed: "This is the island of Elba for the emperor dollar."

A week later, the commentator was to change his tune. The Group of Ten ministers, representing America's principal trading partners, met in Washington at the Smithsonian's "old red Castle," a multi-turreted replica of a twelfth century Norman monastery, to bargain over the extent of devaluation and the rules for future trading. Out of the two-day meeting came a pact which was hailed with relief by all sides. The President termed it "the most significant monetary agreement in the history of the world." Who came out ahead? "The whole free world has won," the President said.

But, when the chips were down, Europe and Japan had made far more sweeping concessions than they had expected. As Newsweek put it, the President had won a "colossal gamble." In the bargaining with the non-Communist world's top financial officials, the President sought to recapture some of the economic advantage that the U.S. had

lost to Europe and Japan over the years. "And," according to Newsweek, "that is what America's principal trading powers conceded last weekend in the working agreement that ended the long monetary crisis."

The Paris daily France Soir put it this way: "If one looks coldly at the result of this big monetary battle between the U.S. and the rest of the world, one can only state that the Americans have won practically down the line."

Then, in the balmier setting of Bermuda, the President announced the lifting of the import surcharge. At the same time, he and Prime Minister Heath went on to seal the fate of the "special relationship" between both countries. Then, on to Key Biscayne, where the President had a friendly session with Chancellor Willy Brandt of West Germany. Early in the New Year, the President flew to San Clemente for the most crucial of all these consultations, his meeting with Prime Minister Eisaku Sato of Japan. More than any of America's friends, Japan had been sent reeling by the successive "Nixon shocks" of the China initiative, the new economic policy, textile quotas and the devaluation of the dollar.

The talks went well. The President assured Sato there would be no more shokkus; that in his talks in Peking he would make no agreement that affected Japan; and that the U.S. would be out of Okinawa sooner than had been previously announced.

As he had told all the other heads-of-state with whom he had conferred, Mr. Nixon told Sato that he expected only modest progress in China: some steps to expand trade, tourism and diplomatic

contacts. In all of his conversations, the President had emphasized he had no intention of selling out the interests of our allies in any deals with either China or Russia. All the leaders appeared reassured by the President's words. In fact, the atmosphere in which the mini-summit meetings was conducted augured well for the future. There was promise of easier dialogue and more conscientious consultation.

"In sum," commented Time, "it was a year of brilliant beginnings for Nixon in international affairs, a year in which the U.S. clearly regained the initiative and displayed both imagination and skill."

Domestically, the President did well, too. After a slow start, he succeeded in getting out of the Democratic-controlled Congress most of the things he believed he needed to head into the 1972 election year. True, the President failed to get his six "great goals" of the "New American Revolution" through Congress. But, he fully expected to get some of those goals -- welfare reform and revenue sharing, specifically -- in the new year. And though he had been beaten on the SST issue, he won a loan for Lockheed Aircraft, a tax bill to stimulate the economy, a full year's extension of wage-price controls and the freedom to withdraw from Vietnam at his own pace. He came out ahead on other issues, too, such as school busing, moving toward an all-volunteer Army, and the nomination of Earl Butz as Secretary of Agriculture. Senate confirmation of Butz was close, but the President, believing he had nominated an extremely capable man for one of the toughest jobs in his Cabinet, swore in the new man that very afternoon.

When the Congress tried to take the initiative on the domestic front, it found itself blocked. The Congress, for example, passed a child development program with provisions for child care centers which the President, in a stinging veto, dismissed as fiscally irresponsible, administratively unworkable and a form of Federally-sponsored communalism. The veto was sustained in the Senate.

The President also stared down the Democrats in an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation over a plan for Federal financing of Presidential elections. This was a plan which would have provided up to $20 million to the major party candidates and up to $6 million to George Wallace. Without any hearings, the Democrats had attached the one-dollar tax checkoff amendment to the tax bill. The Republicans called the amendment a "raid on the treasury" and the President threatened to veto the entire tax bill because of it. Chairman Wilbur Mills of the House Ways and Means Committee, who had said he was for the amendment, backed away from it at the last minute. This, of course, was a severe blow to the Democratic party, which had inherited an $8 million debt from the turbulent 1968 campaign.

That same Thursday, December 2, the President also did something which won him the rare plaudits of Mary McGrory. As Ms. McGrory put it, Mr. Nixon "did something for the common people of Washington, the ecologists, and the forces of progress in the House."

The issue had to do with the construction of the subway system which would link Washington with its suburbs. The $3 billion project had become bogged down in an argument over the relative merits of freeways and a bridge over the Potomac. As Ms. McGrory reported, the President "took command of the pro-subway troops, defied highway-happy William Natcher of Kentucky, chairman of the District Appropriations subcommittee, defied his own leader Gerald R. Ford, and the Democratic leader Carl L. Albert, and insisted on a floor fight..."

The issue was clearly drawn. It was between the President and the House leadership. Whereupon the House voted one hundred and ninety-five to one hundred and seventy-four to back the President. As a result, $72 million was released from the House-imposed freeze. As Ms. McGrory noted, the President "won the plaudits of House liberal Democrats, who were mortified by the old guard stand of Speaker Albert. Two Democratic Presidents fought Natcher. Richard Nixon beat him."

After winning a majority in a chamber where he had only minority support, the President confessed himself "well pleased."

The President was also "well pleased" when the Senate confirmed his two nominees to the Supreme Court -- Lewis F. Powell and William H. Rehnquist. Both men were regarded as "strict constructionists" in line with the President's thinking that the most important long-term legacy he will leave to the country is a remade Supreme Court less activist in its socio-legal approach and content with interpreting the Constitution as it is written.

Powell, a Virginia Democrat and former president of the American Bar Association, had only one vote cast against him. Senator Fred Harris of Oklahoma, a self-styled "populist," had voted against Powell because he was an "elitist," something above the common man.

Rehnquist, an Arizona Republican who had served under John Mitchell as an Assistant Attorney General, had a more difficult time. The Senate, which had defeated two of Mr. Nixon's previous nominees, approved Rehnquist by a vote of sixty-eight to twenty-six. Not all liberals, however, had voted against Rehnquist. Voting for confirmation were Eagleton and Symington of Missouri; Pastore and Pell of Rhode Island; Stevenson of Illinois; Proxmire of Wisconsin; and Montoya of New Mexico.

All in all, it had been a good year in Congress for a Republican President. And he won high marks from the leader of the opposition in the Senate, Mike Mansfield. In an interview with U.S. News & World Report, the Majority Leader gave forthright answers to some pertinent questions:

Yes, President Nixon has increased his prestige because of his foreign policy -- including his forthcoming visits to Peking and Moscow; and in progress in the SALT talks.

Yes, President Nixon had changed the direction of the war in Vietnam from in to out. Yes, he had substantially reduced the number of men in the armed forces and was bringing these American boys home.

Yes, he is on the right track in the field of domestic policy, engaging in reasoned controls to combat inflation.

"So," said Senator Mansfield, "I think that, over-all, Mr. Nixon has done a good job, and it's made him stronger, and according to the latest polls, it appears that the people think so, too."

Probably one of the President's greatest achievements in his first three years in office was to help cool national passions. Racial tensions generally were subsiding; the campuses, for the most part, had returned to the pursuit of learning; and the spectre of revolutionary outbreaks was lifted. He had scaled down expectations and had given the nation a greater sense of realities. But, at the same time, he was troubled about the unwillingness of the nation to embark on new enterprises, as demonstrated by the Congressional defeat of his SST proposal.

Talking to me about that defeat, the President termed the "America needn't try so hard" argument dangerous and unworthy. The tendency for a nation to "drop out of the race" and coast, cropping up in any one area, could spread contagiously into all areas of national life, he added. Then he quoted DeGaulle's dictum that "France is never her true self unless she is engaged in some great enterprise," an alarm that was sounded for France too late. The President made it clear he intends to sound that alarm for America before it is too late.