national security taps had been removed—that the Supreme Court ruled that national security taps on American citizens must be authorized by a court-ordered warrant if the subject had no "significant connection with a foreign power, its agents or agencies."

In the early years of my administration I saw the government's ability to function effectively in international affairs being undermined by leaks which I felt were a violation of law as well as of the code of honorable behavior. Particularly where leaks involving Vietnam were concerned, as long as Americans were fighting and dying there I had no patience with the argument that the people who leaked information did so because they opposed the war on moral grounds. So even though I disliked wiretapping and felt that it was at best a technique of only limited usefulness, it seemed to be our only chance to find out who was behind the leaks, and to stop them.

When our efforts to discover the source of the leaks failed, we began conducting our foreign policy planning in smaller groups. It is an ironic consequence of leaking that instead of producing more open government, it invariably forces the government to operate in more confined and secret ways. So it was that the widely reported impression of a Nixon administration "paranoia" about secrecy developed. Secrecy unquestionably exacts a high price in the form of a less free and creative interchange of ideas within the government. But I can say unequivocally that without secrecy there would have been no opening to China, no SALT agreement with the Soviet Union, and no peace agreement ending the Vietnam war.

VIETNAM: PUBLIC OFFERS AND SECRET OVERTURES

During the first months of the administration, despite the Communist offensive in February and despite the stalemate at the Paris talks, I remained convinced that the combined effect of the military pressure from the secret bombing and the public pressure from my repeated invitations to negotiate would force the Communists to respond. In March I confidently told the Cabinet that I expected the war to be over in a year. We had taken the initiative in Paris and proposed the restoration of the DMZ as a boundary between North and South Vietnam and advanced the possibility of a simultaneous withdrawal of American and North Vietnamese troops from the South. For his part, President Thieu offered to begin talks with the North Vietnamese on the question of a political settlement, and to permit free elections.

But the North Vietnamese yielded nothing. They insisted that political and military issues were inseparable, that American troops must be withdrawn unilaterally, and that Thieu must be deposed as a precondition to serious talks.

In mid-April we increased the diplomatic pressure. Kissinger showed Dobrynin a page of three points that I had initialed. In diplomatic usage, this was a sign that I considered them to be extremely important. Their message was unmistakable:

1. The President wishes to reiterate his conviction that a just peace is achievable.
2. The President is willing to explore avenues other than the existing negotiating framework. For example, it might be desirable for American and North Vietnamese negotiators to meet separately from the Paris framework to discuss general principles of a settlement If the special US and DRV negotiators can achieve an agreement in principle, the final technical negotiations can shift back to Paris.
3. The USG is convinced that all parties are at a crossroads and that extraordinary measures are called for to reverse the tide of war.

Kissinger told Dobrynin that U.S.-Soviet relations were involved because, while we might talk about progress in other areas, a settlement in Vietnam was the key to everything.

Dobrynin said that we had to understand the limitations of Soviet influence on Hanoi, and he added that the Soviet Union would never threaten to cut off supplies to their allies in North Vietnam. He promised, however, that our proposals would be forwarded to Hanoi within twenty-four hours.

After weeks passed with no response, we decided to take the initiative once again. In a televised speech on May 14 I offered our first comprehensive peace plan for Vietnam. I proposed that the major part of all foreign troops—both U.S. and North Vietnamese—withdraw from South Vietnam within one year after an agreement had been signed. An international body would monitor the withdrawals and supervise free elections in South Vietnam. I warned the enemy not to confuse our flexibility with weakness. I said, "Reports from Hanoi indicate that the enemy has given up hope for a military victory in South Vietnam, but is
counting on a collapse of will in the United States. There could be no greater error in judgment."

There was no serious response from the North Vietnamese, either in Hanoi or Paris, to my May 14 proposals. I had never thought that peace in Vietnam would come easily; for the first time I had to consider the possibility that it might not come at all. Nonetheless, I decided to continue on the course we had planned, in the hope that the enemy would decide to take up our proposals and join us in the search for a settlement.

Early in the administration we had decided that withdrawing a number of American combat troops from Vietnam would demonstrate to Hanoi that we were serious in seeking a diplomatic settlement; it might also calm domestic public opinion bygraphically demonstrating that we were beginning to wind down the war.

Mel Laird had long felt that the United States could “Vietnamize” the war—that we could train, equip, and inspire the South Vietnamese to fill the gaps left by departing American forces. In March Laird returned from a visit to South Vietnam with an optimistic report about the potential of the South Vietnamese to be trained to defend themselves. It was largely on the basis of Laird’s enthusiastic advocacy that we undertook the policy of Vietnamization. This decision was another turning point in my administration’s Vietnam strategy.

President Thieu was among those who objected to the proposed plan for American withdrawals from South Vietnam. I privately assured him through Ambassador Bunker that our support for him would be steadfast. In order to dramatize this pledge, I proposed that we meet on Midway Island in the Pacific. Thieu readily accepted, and we met there on June 8.

After our meeting we both made brief statements to reporters. I announced that, as a consequence of Thieu’s recommendation and the assessment of our own commander in the field, I had decided to order the immediate redeployment from Vietnam of approximately 25,000 men. This involved some diplomatic exaggeration, because both Thieu and Abrams had privately raised objections to the withdrawals.

I said that in the months ahead I would consider further troop withdrawals, based on three criteria: the progress in training and equipping the South Vietnamese armed forces; the progress of the Paris talks; and the level of enemy activity.

Although Thieu was somewhat mollified by the Midway meeting, he was still deeply troubled. He knew that the first American withdrawals would begin an irreversible process, the conclusion of which would be the departure of all Americans from Vietnam.

To make sure the message of Midway was not lost on Hanoi, I spelled it out when we arrived back at the White House. I told the people gathered on the South Lawn to welcome us that the combination of my May 14 peace plan and the Midway troop withdrawal left the door to peace wide open. “And now we invite the leaders of North Vietnam to walk with us through that door,” I said.

At the end of June it looked as if we might be getting a response of sorts from Hanoi. There seemed to be a lull in the fighting, and our intelligence indicated that some North Vietnamese units were being withdrawn from South Vietnam. Le Duc Tho, the Politburo member who was the Special Adviser to the North Vietnamese delegation at the Paris talks, suddenly returned to Hanoi, and there was speculation that he had been called back to receive new negotiating instructions.

This military lull continued through early July. Although the evidence was still entirely circumstantial, and although the dangers of appearing overeager were as great as ever, I decided to try once again to cut through whatever genuine doubts or misunderstandings might still be holding Hanoi back. I decided to “go for broke” in the sense that I would attempt to end the war one way or the other—either by negotiated agreement or by an increased use of force.

One reason for making this decision at this time was my feeling that unless I could build some momentum behind our peace efforts over the next several weeks, they might be doomed to failure by the calendar. Once the summer was over and Congress and the colleges returned from vacation in September, a massive new antiwar tide would sweep the country during the fall and winter. Then, with the approaching dry season in Vietnam, there was almost sure to be a renewed Communist offensive during the Tet holiday period in February. By early spring the pressures of the November 1970 elections would make congressional demands for more troop withdrawals impossible to stop and difficult to ignore.

After half a year of sending peaceful signals to the Communists, I was ready to use whatever military pressure was necessary to prevent them from taking over South Vietnam by force. During several long sessions, Kissinger and I developed an elaborate orchestration of diplomatic, military, and publicity pressures we would bring to bear on Hanoi.

I decided to set November 1, 1969—the first anniversary of Johnson’s bombing halt—as the deadline for what would in effect be an ultimatum to North Vietnam.

Since November 1 was only three and a half months away, there was no time to waste. On July 15 I wrote a personal letter to Ho Chi Minh. Once again Jean Sainteny acted as our courier. I met with him at the White House so that he would be able to talk at firsthand about my strong desire for peace. But I also told him to say that, unless some seri-
ous breakthrough had been achieved by the November 1 deadline, I would regretfully find myself obliged to have recourse “to measures of great consequence and force.”

My letter to Ho Chi Minh was sent to Sainteny by secret courier and on July 16 he delivered it to Xuan Thuy, head of the regular North Vietnamese delegation in Paris, for transmittal to Hanoi. In it I tried to convey both the sincerity and the urgency of our desire for a settlement:

I realize that it is difficult to communicate meaningfully across the gulf of four years of war. But precisely because of this gulf, I wanted to take this opportunity to reaffirm in all solemnity my desire to work for a just peace...

As I have said repeatedly, there is nothing to be gained by waiting...

You will find us forthcoming and open-minded in a common effort to bring the blessings of peace to the brave people of Vietnam. Let history record that at this critical juncture, both sides turned their face toward peace rather than toward conflict and war.

With this letter I felt that I had gone as far as I could until the North Vietnamese indicated that they too were interested in an agreement. Now we would have to wait to see how Ho Chi Minh responded. As far as I was concerned, my letter put the choice between war and peace in his hands.

In a few days word was flashed to us that the North Vietnamese were proposing a secret meeting between Kissinger and Xuan Thuy.

On July 23, I flew to the South Pacific for the splashdown of Apollo XI. This was to be the first leg of an around-the-world trip that included stops in Guam, the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, South Vietnam, India, Pakistan, Romania, and Britain. In honor of Apollo’s accomplishment, we gave the trip the codename Moonglow.

The trip provided the perfect camouflage for Kissinger’s first secret meeting with the North Vietnamese. It was arranged that Kissinger would go to Paris, ostensibly to brief French officials on the results of my meetings. While there he would meet secretly with Thuy.

The first stop after the Apollo splashdown was on the island of Guam. Shortly after we arrived I conducted an informal press conference with the reporters covering the trip. It was there that I enunciated what at first was called the Guam Doctrine and has since become known as the Nixon Doctrine.

I stated that the United States is a Pacific power and should remain so. But I felt that once the Vietnam war was settled, we would need a new Asian policy to ensure that there were no more Vietnams in the future. I began with the proposition that we would keep all our existing treaty commitments, but that we would not make any more commitments unless they were required by our own vital interests.

In the past our policy had been to furnish the arms, men, and matériel to help other nations defend themselves against aggression. That was what we had done in Korea, and that was how we had started out in Vietnam. But from now on, I said, we would furnish only the matériel and the military and economic assistance to those nations willing to accept the responsibility of supplying the manpower to defend themselves. I made only one exception: in case a major nuclear power engaged in aggression against one of our allies or friends, I said that we would respond with nuclear weapons.

The Nixon Doctrine announced on Guam was misinterpreted by some as signaling a new policy that would lead to total American withdrawal from Asia and from other parts of the world as well. In one of our regular breakfast meetings after I returned from the trip Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield articulated this misunderstanding. I emphasized to him, as I had to our friends in the Asian countries, that the Nixon Doctrine was not a formula for getting America out of Asia, but one that provided the only sound basis for America’s staying in and continuing to play a responsible role in helping the non-Communist nations and neutrals as well as our Asian allies to defend their independence.

When we landed in Bucharest, Romania, on August 2, I became the first American President to make a state visit to a Communist satellite country.

President Nicolae Ceaușescu is a strong, independent leader who had cultivated good relations with the Chinese in spite of the fact that he had to walk a very fine line lest the Soviets decide to intervene in Romania as they had in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968. So far he had walked that line with consummate skill.

I had been briefed to expect a courteous reception, but the size and spontaneous enthusiasm of the crowds exceeded all our expectations. At one point Ceaușescu and I were literally swept up by the dancing in the streets.

Romania had good diplomatic relations with the North Vietnamese, and I knew that anything I said would be repeated to them, so I used one of my meetings with Ceaușescu to reinforce my message to Hanoi. I said, “We cannot indefinitely continue to have two hundred deaths a week in Vietnam and no progress in Paris. On November 1 this year—one year after the halt of the bombing, and after the withdrawal of some of our troops and several reasonable offers for peaceful negotiations—if there is no progress, we must re-evaluate our policy.”
The story of Kissinger's secret meetings with the North Vietnamese, which began on August 4, 1969, and extended over the next three years, is an extraordinary one, full of classic cloak-and-dagger episodes, with Kissinger riding slouched down in the back seats of speeding Citroëns, eluding inquisitive reporters, and putting curious embassy officials off the scent.

The first conversation took place in Jean Sainteny's Paris apartment in the fashionable Rue de Rivoli, where Kissinger met with Xuan Thuy and Mai Van Bo.

Kissinger opened by saying that he wanted to convey a message from me personally. He reminded them that November 1 would be the first anniversary of the bombing halt. During this time the United States had made what we considered significant moves: we had ended troop reinforcements, we had observed a partial bombing halt and then a total bombing halt, and we had already withdrawn 25,000 combat troops and offered to accept the result of free elections. As far as we could see, there had been no significant response. Now, in order to expedite negotiations, I was ready to open another channel of contact with them. "But at the same time," Kissinger added, "I have been asked to tell you in all solemnity, that if by November 1 no major progress has been made toward a solution, we will be compelled—with great reluctance—to take measures of the greatest consequences." He pointed out that in their propaganda and in the Paris discussions, the North Vietnamese were attempting to make this "Mr. Nixon's war." "We do not believe that this is in your interest," he said, "because if it is Mr. Nixon's war, then he cannot afford not to win it."

Xuan Thuy replied with a relatively restrained restatement of Hanoi's most extreme position: he called for the complete withdrawal of all American forces and observance of the National Liberation Front's ten points, which in effect provided for total Communist domination over South Vietnam. He insisted on maintaining the patent fiction that there were no North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam. He also continued to demand that we overthrow President Thieu before any agreement could be reached.

Finally Kissinger decided that he had said all he could to representatives who were not actually empowered to negotiate. Exercising his tremendous skill, he brought the conversation around to a mellower tone, saying, "We would prefer to have the Vietnamese as friends rather than as enemies. I believe that we must make an effort to find a solution between now and November 1."

The three men shook hands and departed separately to avoid attracting any attention.

Having put the Nixon Doctrine on record and having begun to put pressure on Hanoi, I decided it was time to assume the offensive in the public forum of the Paris peace talks. The diplomats and reporters who had become accustomed to Cabot Lodge's usually complacent demeanor were surprised when he rose from his chair on August 7, looked directly at the Communist delegates, and said, "We have done all that we can do by ourselves to bring a negotiated peace in Vietnam. Now it is time for you to respond." The press called it his toughest talk since taking over in January as chief U.S. negotiator.

Ho Chi Minh's reply to my July letter arrived dated August 25. In it, he referred to "the war of aggression of the United States against our people" and said that he was "deeply touched at the rising toll of death of young Americans who have fallen in Vietnam by reason of the policy of American governing circles."

In response to my statement that we would be willing to discuss any proposal or program that might lead to a negotiated settlement, he said that the ten-point program of the NLF had "earned the sympathy and support of the peoples of the world." He concluded:

In your letter you have expressed the desire to act for a just peace. For this the United States must cease the war of aggression and withdraw their troops from South Vietnam, respect the right of the population of the South and of the Vietnamese nation to dispose of themselves, without foreign influence.

Considering the tone of my letter to him, and even taking into account the stridency of communist jargon, there was no doubt that Ho's reply was a cold rebuff.

After receiving this unpromising reply, I knew that I had to prepare myself for the tremendous criticism and pressure that would come with stepping up the war.

On September 3, Ho Chi Minh died. There were rumors of a struggle over the succession for several days before Premier Pham Van Dong emerged as the Hanoi Politburo's leading figure. Veteran Vietnam watchers were at a loss to predict what effect this would have on the war.

In the middle of September I announced the withdrawal of another 35,000 troops by December 15. In my statement I pointed out that the withdrawal of 60,000 troops was a significant step and that "the time for meaningful negotiations has therefore arrived." This announcement was
intended to let the new leaders of North Vietnam know that I was not assuming that they were bound by Ho's reply to my letter. Two days later, in a speech at the opening of the UN General Assembly, I said that “the time has come for peace. And in the name of peace, I urge all of you here—representing 126 nations—to use your best diplomatic efforts to persuade Hanoi to move seriously into the negotiations which could end this war.”

On September 20 Kissinger received a letter from Sainteny, who had been in Hanoi for Ho Chi Minh's funeral and, while he was there, had had a long conversation with Pham Van Dong. The new Premier was notably unvituperative in his references to the United States. When Sainteny stressed that he knew how eager I was for peace from his own conversation with me, Dong said, “I see that they have convinced you. But we, we are not able to take them at their words: only acts will convince us.”

Since this conversation had taken place before my mid-September troop withdrawal, I felt that I had supplied the deed to prove our words. Once again the choice lay with Hanoi.

In the weeks remaining before November 1, I wanted to orchestrate the maximum possible pressure on Hanoi. I was confident that we could bring sufficient pressure to bear on the diplomatic front. But the only chance for my ultimatum to succeed was to convince the Communists that I could depend on solid support at home if they decided to call my bluff. However, the chances I would actually have that support were becoming increasingly slim.

There had been serious riots and disorders on more than a score of college campuses during the winter and spring of 1969, the causes of which covered a wide spectrum of frustrations of which Vietnam was by no means the predominant one. Students at Berkeley demanded an autonomous College for Ethnic Studies. Black students seized the administration building at Duke and demanded a nongraded black education program and money for a black student union. One hundred black students, armed with rifles and shotguns, held the student union at Cornell University and demanded that disciplinary reprimands to three black students be revoked. The faculty first refused and then capitulated on the issue. The University of Pennsylvania administration decided to avoid a confrontation with student war protesters by taking down American flags and putting them in storage.

I was disgusted—and I said so—by the capitulation of professors and administrators to students using force. I praised those who held firm—like San Francisco State College's Dr. S. I. Hayakawa, who ripped out the wires of a public address system set up by radicals in violation of campus regulations, and Rev. Theodore Hesburgh of Notre Dame, who announced he would give protesters who substituted “force for rational persuasion” fifteen minutes, and then suspend them from the university; five minutes after that, if they continued the disturbance, they would be expelled.

During the first months of my presidency Vietnam was not the primary issue in campus demonstrations largely because Johnson's bombing halt had suspended the most actively controversial aspect of the war, and my announced plans to establish an all-volunteer Army and our reform of the draft, which made it less threateningly disruptive, also helped in this regard.

I knew that this situation was bound to change. As the fall term began on college campuses, and as Congress returned from its summer recess, newspapers and television began reflecting signs of a new level of intensity in the antiwar movement. There was talk of holding a “Moratorium,” a nationwide day of protest, on October 15, right in the period most crucial to the success of my November 1 ultimatum.

In a press conference on September 26, in answer to a question about the Moratorium and other public protests against the war, I said, “Now, I understand that there has been and continues to be opposition to the war in Vietnam on the campuses, and also in the nation. As far as this kind of activity is concerned, we expect it. However, under no circumstances will I be affected whatever by it.”

I was fully aware of the furore that this statement would cause. But having initiated a policy of pressure on North Vietnam that now involved not only our government but foreign governments as well, I felt that I had no choice but to carry it through. Faced with the prospect of demonstrations at home that I could not prevent, my only alternative was to try to make it clear to the enemy that the protests would have no effect on my decisions. Otherwise my ultimatum would appear empty.

We continued to keep up the diplomatic pressure on the Soviets. On September 27, Kissinger told Dobrynin that the apparent failure of all our requests for Soviet help toward ending the war made it very difficult for us to carry on more than basic diplomatic relations between our two countries.

I telephoned Kissinger in the middle of this discussion, and we talked for a few minutes. When they resumed their conversation, Kissinger said, “The President just told me in that call that as far as Vietnam is concerned, the train has just left the station and is now headed down the track.”

Dobrynin tried to ease the atmosphere with a diplomatic turn of phrase. “I hope it’s an airplane rather than a train,” he said, “because an airplane can still change its course in flight.”
Kissinger replied, "The President chooses his words very carefully, and I am sure he meant what he said. He said, 'train.'"

As another part of our efforts to apply pressure on Hanoi, I ordered a survey of non-Communist nations shipping to North Vietnam. We found that Cyprus, Malta, Singapore, and Somalia were among the countries with registered ships going to Hanoi. When the first two governments refused to cooperate with us, I ordered their foreign aid programs cut off. Singapore and Somalia agreed to cut down the shipping under their flags.

I met with the Republican congressional leadership and told them that the next sixty days would be of the utmost importance for the ending of the war. "We are going to need unity more than we have ever needed it before," I said. "I can't tell you everything that will be going on, because if there is to be any chance of success, it will have to be done in secret. All I can tell you is this: I am doing my damnedest to end the war. I am approaching the whole question with only two operating principles: I won't make it hard for the North Vietnamese if they genuinely want a settlement; but I will not be the first President of the United States to lose a war."

Later the same day I moved the pressure on Hanoi up a notch when I met with nine Republican senators and planted a story that I knew would leak. I did not have to wait long. In eight days Rowland Evans and Robert Novak ran a column saying that I was considering blockading Haiphong and invading North Vietnam. I wanted this rumor to attract some attention in Hanoi. Although I never knew for sure that it did, I do know that it attracted the attention of Mel Laird. He and Bill Rogers immediately urged that before taking any drastic action I consider the very low American casualty rates over the last few months and the improved performance of the South Vietnamese as a result of our stepped-up Vietnamization program.

VIETNAM MORATORIUM

The antiwar forces on the campuses, in Congress, and in the media had coalesced around the Vietnam Moratorium scheduled for October 15 in Washington. The plan was to hold similar demonstrations in different cities on the fifteenth of each month until the war was over.

By the first week of October, the pent-up fury reached full force. There were antiwar speeches, teach-ins, and rallies. The controversy over my Supreme Court nomination of Judge Clement Haynsworth, the debate over welfare reform, the defeat of a Republican incumbent by an antiwar Democrat in a special election in Massachusetts, the vocal impatience of some civil rights leaders with the pace of our integration policy—all prominently in the news—created the impression of an administration reeling under siege. These factors were lumped together in the media and labeled a crisis of leadership. The headline in Newsweek was Mr. Nixon in Trouble, and Time devoted its National Affairs section to describing Nixon's Worst Week: "It did not take an alarmist of Chicken Little proportions to discern that bits of sky were falling on the Nixon administration."

 Pronouncements of no-confidence and predictions of political paralysis were widespread. On October 7 David Broder wrote in the Washington Post that "it is becoming more obvious with every passing day that the men and the movement that broke Lyndon Johnson's authority in 1968 are out to break Richard Nixon in 1969. The likelihood is great that they will succeed again." A few days later Dean Acheson warned against the attempt being made from so many sources to destroy Nixon. In an exclusive interview in the New York Times he said, "I think we're going to have a major constitutional crisis if we make a habit of destroying Presidents."

My deliberate refusal to acknowledge these dire predictions itself became an element of the supposed crisis. Time reported, "Nixon seemed unconcerned and aloof from it all," and the magazine's Washington bureau chief, Hugh Sidey, found my attitude "perhaps as alarming as the events themselves in the most trying time Nixon has yet had in office."

My real concern was that these highly publicized efforts aimed at forcing me to end the war were seriously undermining my behind-the-scenes attempts to do just that. Weeks later, in a meeting with Cabot Lodge, the North Vietnamese ambassador recited statements made by leading Senate doves. The New York Times reported that Le Duc Tho, "with a wide grin," told an American visitor about Senator Fulbright's accusation that I was trying to prolong the war with Vietnamization. Although publicly I continued to ignore the raging antiwar controversy, I had to face the fact that it had probably destroyed the credibility of my ultimatum to Hanoi.

On October 13 Ron Ziegler announced that I would make a major address to the nation concerning Vietnam on Monday, November 3.

This announcement was generally interpreted as either an attempt to undercut the October 15 Moratorium, then only two days away, or as a sign that the Moratorium had already been successful in forcing me to reconsider my Vietnam policy. In fact, I hoped that the announcement of a major speech for two days after the November 1 deadline would give Hanoi second thoughts about fishing in our troubled domestic waters.

On October 14, I knew for sure that my ultimatum had failed when
Kissinger informed me that Radio Hanoi had just broadcast a letter from Premier Pham Van Dong to the American people. In it Dong declared:

This fall large sectors of the U.S. people, encouraged and supported by many peace- and justice-loving American personages, are launching a broad and powerful offensive throughout the United States to demand that the Nixon administration put an end to the Vietnam aggressive war and immediately bring all American troops home. . . . We are firmly confident that with the solidarity and bravery of the peoples of our two countries and with the approval and support of peace-loving people in the world, the struggle of the Vietnamese people and U.S. progressive people against U.S. aggression will certainly be crowned with total victory.

May your fall offensive succeed splendidly.

To indicate the seriousness with which I viewed this blatant intervention in our domestic affairs, I asked Agnew to hold a press conference at the White House. He called Dong’s letter an “incredible message” and read excerpts of it for the cameras. He said, “The leaders and sponsors of tomorrow’s Moratorium, public officials, and others leading these demonstrations should openly repudiate the support of the totalitarian Communists would become contemptuous of us and even more determined to escalate the war.

A quarter of a million people came to Washington for the October 15 Moratorium. Despite widespread rumors that some of the more radical left-wing organizations would provoke violent confrontations with police, the demonstrations were generally peaceful.

Opinion within the administration was divided over how to respond. Kissinger urged that I do nothing at all and let the protest run its course, lest I upset our foreign policy strategy. John Ehrlichman, however, was upset by our apparent indifference to the sincere fervor of many of the protesters and urged that I declare a National Day of Prayer on October 15 as a show of tacit support for the underlying goal of peace.

The Washington Post praised the protesters and said that the Moratorium was “a deeply meaningful statement” of the anguish they felt about the war. Elsewhere, however, reservations were expressed. The Washington Star, for example, said, “What counts is whether the demonstration, regardless of intention, does in fact give encouragement to Hanoi and thereby presumably prolongs the war.” As if in answer to that point, the Vietcong Radio said that the Communists had gained “strong encouragement” from the Moratorium.

The Vietnam Moratorium raised, for the first time by no means the last time in my administration, a basic and important question about the nature of leadership in a democracy: should the President or Congress or any responsible elected official let public demonstrations influence his decisions?

I had strong opinions about this question, and I decided to address it head on. I asked that one letter be selected from all those we had received criticizing my press conference statement that I would not be affected by the protests and that a reply be prepared to it.

The letter the staff chose was from a student at Georgetown University. In it, he stated, “It has been my impression that it is not unwise for the President of the United States to take note of the will of the people; after all, these people elected you, you are their President, and your office bears certain obligations. Might I respectfully suggest that the President reconsider his pre-judgment.”

I replied, “If a President—any President—allowed his course to be set by those who demonstrate, he would betray the trust of all the rest. Whatever the issue, to allow government policy to be made in the streets would destroy the democratic process. It would give the decision, not to the majority, and not to those with the strongest arguments, but to those with the loudest voices. . . . This fall large sectors of the U.S. people, encouraged and supported by many peace- and justice-loving American personages, are launching a broad and powerful offensive throughout the United States to demand that the Nixon administration put an end to the Vietnam aggressive war and immediately bring all American troops home. . . . We are firmly confident that with the solidarity and bravery of the peoples of our two countries and with the approval and support of peace-loving people in the world, the struggle of the Vietnamese people and U.S. progressive people against U.S. aggression will certainly be crowned with total victory.

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I considered the question period that followed Agnew’s remarks a disgraceful performance on the part of the White House press corps. As if it were our fault that Dong had written this letter, one reporter asked, “Mr. Vice President, let us take the bull by the horns. Isn’t seizing upon this letter a last-minute attempt to dampen down the Moratorium by the administration?”

The media generally either played down the Dong letter or indicated that the administration had unreasonably fastened upon it as an excuse for the repression of legitimate dissent.

I had to decide what to do about the ultimatum. I knew that unless I had some indisputably good reason for not carrying out my threat of increased force when the ultimatum expired on November 1, the Communists would become contemptuous of us and even more difficult to deal with. I knew, however, that after all the protests and the Moratorium, American public opinion would be seriously divided by any military escalation of the war.

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THE SILENT MAJORITY

After the Moratorium attention immediately began to focus on my speech. Most doves in the media and Congress assumed that I had been so impressed—or so frightened—by the Moratorium that I had decided to announce major new troop withdrawals in order to blunt the impact of the next Moratorium scheduled for November 15. An AP wire story on October 20 stated that I might offer a cease-fire in the speech, and some papers reported this in front-page headlines. Flora Lewis, writing in the Boston Globe, stated categorically that I would announce the withdrawal of 300,000 men during 1970 and that I had ordered the Pentagon to work out the necessary schedules. Dan Rather, on a special CBS news report on the Moratorium, claimed that I was considering stepped-up troop withdrawals, fewer B-52 raids, a reduction in fighting, and perhaps even a cease-fire before the end of the year. In the Senate, Hugh Scott called for a unilateral cease-fire. Since he was Minority Leader, his statement was widely interpreted as a White House trial balloon. Hubert Humphrey predicted that I would announce a major program for the “systematical and accelerated withdrawal of U.S. forces” from Vietnam.

How far off the mark these predictions and expectations were can be seen in notes I made for the November 3 speech in the early morning hours of October 22:

They can’t defeat us militarily in Vietnam. They can’t break South Vietnam. Include a paragraph on why we are there. They cannot break us.

As the November 1 deadline approached, three factors strongly influenced my thinking about the ultimatum. The first was that American casualty figures in Vietnam had been reaching new lows. I knew that these reductions might be a ploy on the part of the Communists to make escalating the fighting that much more difficult for me. The second factor was the possibility that the death of Ho Chi Minh might have created new opportunities for reaching a settlement that deserved a chance to develop.

The third factor was a conversation I had on October 17 with Sir Robert Thompson, the British expert on guerrilla warfare. “What do you think of the ‘option to the right’?” I asked. “What would you think if we decided to escalate?”

Thompson was clearly not in favor of escalation because it would risk a major American and worldwide furore and still not address the central problem of whether the South Vietnamese were sufficiently confident and prepared to defend themselves against a renewed Communist offen-

sive at some time in the future. His estimate was that, continuing the current U.S. policy and assuming South Vietnamese confidence that we would not pull out, victory could be won within two years. He thought that our only chance for a negotiated settlement in the meantime would be if it were clear to Hanoi that we were there for the duration. I asked if he would go to Vietnam and make a personal study of the situation there for me and report as soon as possible.

When I asked Thompson whether he thought it was important for us to see it through in Vietnam, he said, “Absolutely. In my opinion the future of Western civilization is at stake in the way you handle yourselves in Vietnam.”

In view of these three factors, and recognizing that the Moratorium had undercut the credibility of the ultimatum, I began to think more in terms of stepping up Vietnamization while continuing the fighting at its present level rather than of trying to increase it. In many respects Vietnamization would be far more damaging to the Communists than an escalation that, as Thompson had pointed out, would not solve the basic problem of South Vietnamese preparedness, and that would stir up serious domestic problems in America.

It was important that the Communists not mistake as weakness the lack of dramatic action on my part in carrying out the ultimatum. We would be able to demonstrate our continuing resolve to the North Vietnamese on the battlefield, but I thought that the Soviets would need a special reminder. Therefore when Ambassador Dobrynin came to the White House for a private meeting on the afternoon of October 20, I decided to use the encounter to make our position absolutely clear to the Soviet leadership.

Kissinger accompanied Dobrynin to the Oval Office, and after greetings were exchanged the ambassador said that he had received an aide-memoire from his government, with instructions to read it to me. “Go ahead, Mr. Ambassador,” I said.

“I am instructed to frankly inform the President that Moscow is not satisfied with the present state of relations between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.,” he began. “Moscow feels that the President should be frankly told that the method of solving the Vietnam question through the use of military force is not only without perspective, but also extremely dangerous... If someone in the United States is tempted to make profit from Soviet-Chinese relations at the Soviet Union’s expense, and there are some signs of that, then we would like to frankly warn in advance that such line of conduct, if pursued, can lead to a very grave miscalculation and is in no way consistent with the goal of better relations between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.”

Dobrynin seemed a little uncomfortable with my silence when he had finished reading from the paper. After a moment I leaned back in my
chair and opened the center drawer of my desk. I took out a yellow pad and slid it across toward him.

"You’d better take some notes," I said.

He took the pad and put it on his lap.

"You have been candid, Mr. Ambassador, and I will be equally so. I, too, am disappointed in U.S.-Soviet relations. As of today, I have been in this office for nine months. The babies should have been born by now. Instead, there have been several miscarriages."

Taking some of the major issues—the Middle East, trade, European security, Berlin—I analyzed point by point the problems with each. Most arose from Soviet intransigence or jockeying for position.

Turning to China, I said, "Anything we have done or are doing with respect to China is in no sense designed to embarrass the Soviet Union. On the contrary, China and the United States cannot tolerate having a situation develop in which we are enemies, any more than we want to be permanent enemies of the Soviet Union. Therefore, we expect to make moves in trade and exchanges of persons and eventually in diplomacy. I want to repeat that this is not directed against the Soviet Union. Within ten years, China will be a nuclear power, capable of terrorizing many other countries. The time is running out when the Soviet Union and the United States can build a different kind of world."

Having put in the hook this far, I pulled it hard. "The only beneficiary of U.S.-Soviet disagreement over Vietnam is China," I said, "and therefore this is the last opportunity to settle these disputes."

Before Dobrynin could interrupt, I moved on to Vietnam. "Prior to the bombing halt, which, as you are aware, will be one year old on November 1, Ambassador Bohlen and Ambassador Thompson and Ambassador Harriman pointed out to President Johnson that the Soviet Union could not do anything as long as we were bombing a fellow socialist country. They said that the Soviet Union would be very active with its help if we stopped. The bombing halt was then agreed to, but the Soviet Union has done nothing to help."

At this Dobrynin raised his hand as if to be called on, but I waved it down. "Of course, we now have an oblong table at the talks in Paris, and I know the Soviet Union contributed something to that, but we do not consider that a great achievement. All the conciliatory moves for the past year have been made by us."

I said that I had concluded that perhaps the Soviet Union did not want to end the war in Vietnam. "You may think that you can break me," I said. "You may believe that the American domestic situation is unmanageable. Or you may think that the war in Vietnam costs the Soviet Union only a small amount of money while it costs us a great many lives. I do not propose to argue with this kind of assessment. On the other hand, Mr. Ambassador, I want you to understand that the Soviet Union is going to be stuck with me for the next three years and three months, and during all that time I will keep in mind what is being done right now, today. If the Soviet Union will not help us get peace, then we will have to pursue our own methods for bringing the war to an end. We cannot allow a "talk-fight" strategy to continue without taking action."

"Let us be frank, Mr. Ambassador," I continued. "All you have done is repeat the same tired old slogans that the North Vietnamese used six months ago. You know very well they can lead nowhere. It is time to get discussions started, because, I can assure you, the humiliation of a defeat is absolutely unacceptable to my country. I recognize that the Soviet leaders are tough and courageous. But so are we."

I stopped only a moment and then went on. "I hope that you will not mind this serious talk," I said. "If the Soviet Union found it possible to do something in Vietnam, and the Vietnam war ended, then we might do something dramatic to improve our relations, indeed, something more dramatic than could now be imagined. But until then, I have to say that real progress will be very difficult."

Dobrynin waited to see if I would go on. This time I did not.

"Does this mean that there can be no progress?" he asked.

"Progress is possible," I replied, "but it would have to be confined essentially to what is attainable in diplomatic channels. The war can drag on, in which case we will find our own way to bring it to an end. There is no sense in just repeating the proposals of the last six months."

I wanted no reply to this, so I brought the meeting to a close by saying, "The whole world wants us to get together. I, too, want nothing so much as to have my administration remembered as a watershed in American and Soviet relations. But let me repeat that we will not hold still for being diddled to death in Vietnam."

With that I rose, shook his hand, and escorted him to the door. Kissinger came back in after he had seen Dobrynin to his car. "I wager that no one has ever talked to him that way in his entire career!" he said. "It was extraordinary! No President has ever laid it on the line with this kind of assessment."

I received much conflicting advice concerning what I should say on November 3. Rogers and Laird urged me to concentrate on the hopes for peace, Rogers emphasizing the Paris talks and Laird stressing the prospects of Vietnamization. The majority of the White House staff, the
Cabinet members, and the congressional leaders I consulted advocated that I use the speech to establish beyond any doubt my sincere desire for peace.

Kissinger was advocating a very hard line. He felt that if we backed off, the Communists would become totally convinced that they could control our foreign policy through public opinion. And Dean Acheson sent word that any announcement of withdrawal schedules would put us at a disadvantage in negotiations.

Speculation about the speech reached fever pitch as the date approached. I welcomed this because I knew that the more it was talked about, the bigger the audience would be.

I kept my own counsel, and very few people knew the way my thinking was really going or the surprise I was planning for the antiwar agitators who thought that their street marches could force me to make foreign policy the way they wanted.

I went to Camp David for a long weekend on October 24 and worked twelve to fourteen hours a day writing and rewriting different sections of the speech. Haldeman cleared most of my schedule during the following week so that I could continue the work uninterrupted.

By Friday the speech had gone through twelve drafts, and I was ready to take it to Camp David for a final review. Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield had written down his thoughts in a memorandum, and he asked that I read it before I made any final decisions about what I would say.

I read Mansfield’s memorandum later that night. He began by stating: “The continuance of the war in Vietnam, in my judgment, endangers the future of this nation.” He said that it was more than just the loss of lives or the waste of money and resources that concerned him. “Most serious,” he wrote, “are the deep divisions within our society to which this conflict of dubious origin and purpose is contributing.”

He said that he would give articulate public support to “any or all of the following decisions if in your responsibility you decide that they are necessary, as well they may be, to a rapid termination of the war in Vietnam.” He then listed actions that amounted to a unilateral cease-fire and withdrawal. “I know that a settlement arrived at in this fashion is not pleasant to contemplate,” he wrote, “especially in view of the dug-in diplomatic and military positions which, unfortunately, were assumed over the past few years.” The memo was signed, “With the greatest respect.”

I realized that with this memorandum Mansfield was offering what would be the last chance for me to end “Johnson’s and Kennedy’s war.” I interpreted his references to it as a “conflict of dubious origin” and to the military positions “unfortunately” assumed over the past few years as signals that he would even allow me to claim that I was making the best possible end of a bad war my Democratic predecessors had begun. I knew that the opponents of the war would irrevocably become my opponents if my speech took a hard line. But I could not escape the fact that I felt it would be wrong to end the Vietnam war on any terms I believed to be less than honorable.

I worked through the night. About 4 A.M. I wrote a paragraph calling for the support of “the great silent majority of Americans.” I went to bed, but after two hours of restless sleep I was wide awake, so I got up and began work again. By 8 A.M. the speech was finished. I called Haldeman, and when he answered, I said, “The baby’s just been born!”

The message of my November 3 speech was that we were going to keep our commitment in Vietnam. We were going to continue fighting until the Communists agreed to negotiate a fair and honorable peace or until the South Vietnamese were able to defend themselves on their own—whichever came first. At the same time we would continue our disengagement based on the principles of the Nixon Doctrine: the pace of withdrawal would be linked to the progress of Vietnamization, the level of enemy activity, and developments on the negotiating front. I emphasized that our policy would not be affected by demonstrations in the streets.

At least in part because of the very different expectations that had been built up around this speech, my strongly expressed determination to stand and fight came as a surprise to many people and therefore had a greatly increased impact. I called on the American people for their support:

I have chosen a plan for peace. I believe it will succeed.

If it does succeed, what the critics say now won’t matter. If it does not succeed, anything I say then won’t matter... And so tonight—to you, the great silent majority of my fellow Americans— I ask for your support.

I pledged in my campaign for the presidency to end the war in a way that we could win the peace. I have initiated a plan of action which will enable me to keep that pledge.

The more support I can have from the American people, the sooner that pledge can be redeemed; for the more divided we are at home, the less likely the enemy is to negotiate at Paris.

Let us be united for peace. Let us also be united against defeat. Because let us understand: North Vietnam cannot defeat or humiliate the United States. Only Americans can do that.

Very few speeches actually influence the course of history. The November 3 speech was one of them. Its impact came as a surprise to
me; it was one thing to make a rhetorical appeal to the Silent Majority—it was another actually to hear from them.

After the speech I had dinner by myself in the Lincoln Sitting Room. I did not listen to the TV commentators, but the rest of the family did, and they were livid with anger. They said that the comment and analyses broadcast by the network news correspondents criticized both my words and my motives. Instead of presenting impartial summaries of what I had said and cross sections of political and public reaction, most of the reporters talked about the speech they thought I should have given. Tricia came in and said, “They talked as if they had been listening to a different speech than the one you made.”

But there were signs that the critics and the commentators were unrepresentative of public opinion. The White House switchboard had been lighted up from the minute I left the air. The calls continued for hours, and soon the first waves of telegrams began to arrive. After I took calls from Cabinet officers, staff, and others—including Dean Acheson—I began to realize that the reaction to the speech was exceeding my most optimistic hopes.

I was too keyed up to sleep very well that night. The various reports of the public response to the speech excited me; the reports of the television coverage rankled me. Later I made a note: “Before November 3 a majority of the press expected RN to cave, and those who did not expected him to have a violent reaction to the demonstrations. He surprised them by doing neither. The RN policy is to talk softly and to carry a big stick. That was the theme of November 3.”

By morning the public reaction was confirmed. The White House mail room reported the biggest response ever to any presidential speech. More than 50,000 telegrams and 30,000 letters had poured in, and the percentage of critical messages among them was low. A Gallup telephone poll taken immediately after the speech showed 77 percent approval.

There was no mistaking that the Silent Majority speech had hit a responsive chord in the country. In fact, for the first time, the Silent Majority had made itself heard.

The outpouring of popular support had a direct impact on congressional opinion. By November 12, 300 members of the House of Representatives—119 Democrats and 181 Republicans—had cosponsored a resolution of support for my Vietnam policies. Fifty-eight senators—21 Democrats and 37 Republicans—had signed letters expressing similar sentiments.

The November 3 speech was both a milestone and a turning point for my administration. Now, for a time at least, the enemy could no longer count on dissent in America to give them the victory they could not win on the battlefield. I had the public support I needed to continue a policy of waging war in Vietnam and negotiating for peace in Paris until we could bring the war to an honorable and successful conclusion.

During the weeks after November 3 my Gallup overall-approval rating soared to 68 percent, the highest it had been since I took office. Congressional reaction was so positive that I took the unprecedented step of personally appearing before both the House and Senate and addressing them separately to thank them for their support.

At the same time I was under no illusions that this wave of Silent Majority support could be maintained for very long. My speech had not proposed any new initiatives; its purpose had been to gain support for the course we were already following. I knew that under the constant pounding from the media and our critics in Congress, people would soon be demanding that new actions be taken to produce progress and end the war.

One result of the unexpected success of the November 3 speech was the decision to take on the TV network news organizations for their biased and distorted “instant analysis” and coverage. Unless the practice were challenged, it would make it impossible for a President to appeal directly to the people, something I considered to be of the essence of democracy.

A few days after the speech, Pat Buchanan sent me a memorandum urging a direct attack on the network commentators and a few days later he submitted a speech draft that did so in very direct and articulate language. Ted Agnew’s hard-hitting speeches had attracted a great deal of attention during the fall, and I decided that he was the right man to deliver this one. I toned down some of Buchanan’s rhetoric and gave it to Agnew. We further moderated some sections that Agnew thought sounded strident, and then he edited it himself so that the final version would be his words. He decided to deliver the speech in Des Moines, Iowa, on November 13.

When the advance text arrived at the networks, there was pandemonium; all three decided to carry the speech live. For thirty minutes, Agnew tore into the unaccountable power in the hands of the “unelected elite” of network newsmen. He said, “A small group of men, numbering perhaps no more than a dozen anchormen, commentators, and executive producers, settle upon the film and commentary that is to reach the public. They decide what 40 to 50 million Americans will learn of the day’s events in the nation and in the world.” Referring to my November 3 speech, he said that my words had been unfairly subjected to “instant analysis and querulous criticism.”

The national impact of Agnew’s Des Moines speech was second only to that of my November 3 speech. Within a few hours telegrams began arriving at the White House; the switchboards were tied up all night by
people calling to express their relief that someone had finally spoken up, and within a few days thousands of letters began pouring in from all over the country.

The networks purposely ignored the widespread public support Agnew's words received and tried to label the speech as an attempt at government "repression." The president of CBS, Frank Stanton, called it "an unprecedented attempt by the Vice President of the United States to intimidate a news medium which depends for its existence upon government licenses." The president of NBC, Julian Goodman, said that Agnew's "attack on television news is an appeal to prejudice." George McGovern reflected left-wing and liberal congressional reaction when he said, "I feel that the speech was perhaps the most frightening single statement ever to come from a high government official in my public career."

Some voices were raised on Agnew's side. Jerry Ford said that if the media distorted the news, they should be called to account: "I don't know why they should have a halo over their heads," he said. George Christian, President Johnson's last Press Secretary, said that LBJ had been concerned about the very questions Agnew raised, but he had been afraid to make a speech about them because he knew it would be interpreted as an attack on freedom of the press.

Even some of our severest critics admitted that Agnew's complaints were not unfounded. Writing in the Saturday Review, for example, British journalist Henry Brandon stated, "The Vice President made a few telling points. Instant commentary based on a hasty reading of a speech without much time for contemplation is hazardous and can lead to rash conclusions or unfair criticism."

After the tremendous success of my November 3 speech, an element of desperation entered into the planning of the November Vietnam Moratorium, known as the New Mobe. We received alarming reports that several militant groups involved in the New Mobe now felt that only a violent confrontation could adequately dramatize their concerns. Because of the radical background of some of the New Mobe organizers, many congressmen who had supported the October Moratorium managed to be unavailable for comment before the New Mobe began and out of town while it was going on.

On November 15 the New Mobe arrived. In San Francisco, while some of the crowd of 125,000 yelled "Peace!" Black Panther leader David Hilliard insisted, "We will kill Richard Nixon. We will kill any one that stands in the way of our freedom."

In Washington, 250,000 demonstrators surged into the city, causing the Washington Post to rhapsodize: "To dig beneath the rhetoric is to discover something extraordinary, and quite beautiful. Those who were here... are here in support of what is best about this country." At the Washington Monument, Dick Gregory brought the crowd to its feet when he said, "The President says nothing you kids do will have any effect on him. Well, I suggest he make one long distance call to the LBJ Ranch." And later in the day came scattered episodes of violence. A group of protesters battled with police as they made their way through the streets knocking out windows. At the Justice Department protesters shouting "Smash the state!" stormed the building, tore down the American flag, burned it, and raised the Vietcong flag in its place.

I had never imagined that at the end of my first year as President I would be contemplating two more years of fighting in Vietnam. But the unexpected success of the November 3 speech had bought me more time, and, bolstered by Sir Robert Thompson's optimistic estimate that within two years we would be able to achieve a victory—either in the sense of an acceptable negotiated settlement or of having prepared the South Vietnamese to carry the burden of the fighting on their own—I was prepared to continue the war despite the serious strains that would be involved on the home front. Two years would bring us to the end of 1971 and the beginning of the 1972 campaign, and if I could hold the domestic front together until then, winning an honorable peace would redeem the interim difficulties.

As 1970 began, I envisioned a year of limited and even diminishing battlefield activity. I also envisioned the continuation of Kissinger's activity in the secret channel. I was rather less optimistic than Kissinger regarding the prospect of a breakthrough in the secret negotiations but I agreed that we must continue to pursue them as long as there was even a possibility they would be successful. Kissinger and I agreed that at the very least they would provide an indisputable record of our desire for peace and our efforts to achieve it.

I was disappointed but not surprised by the apparent ineffectiveness of our attempts in 1969 to get the Soviets to apply pressure on North Vietnam. But I understood the pressures placed on Moscow by the rivalry with Peking for ascendancy in the Communist world, and I felt that the important thing was to keep the Soviets aware that while we might recognize their inability to decrease their support of Hanoi or to apply pressure on the North Vietnamese to negotiate a settlement, we would not tolerate any major increase in aid or belligerent encouragement. Not surprisingly, the greatest incentive for Soviet cooperation in Vietnam was our new relationship with the Chinese, but that would not become a major factor until the middle of 1971.

I do not know whether or how I would have acted differently if at the end of 1969 I had known that within less than four months I would be forced to order an attack on the Communist sanctuaries in Cambodia, or...
that the next two years would once again bring America to the brink of internal disruption over Vietnam. At the same time I would have to walk a constantly higher tightrope trying to support our allies and our fighting men while not pushing the increasingly powerful antiwar forces in Congress into passing legislation that would cut off funds for the war or require our withdrawal.

All this lay ahead. As I sat in my study in San Clemente on New Year’s Day thinking about these problems, I actually allowed myself a feeling of cautious optimism that we had weathered the worst blows from Vietnam and had only to hold firm until time began to work in our favor. I suppose that in some respects the Vietnam story is one of mutual miscalculation. But if I underestimated the willingness of the North Vietnamese to hang on and resist a negotiated settlement on any other than their own terms, they also underestimated my willingness to hold on despite the domestic and international pressures that would be ranged against me.

1969: PRESIDENT AND CONGRESS

I was determined to be an activist President in domestic affairs. I had a definite agenda in mind, and I was prepared to use the first year of the presidency to knock heads together in order to get things done. “The country recognizes the need for change,” I told the first meeting of my new Urban Affairs Council, “and we don’t want the record written that we were too cautious.”

But it didn’t take long to discover that enthusiasm and determination could not overcome the reality that I was still the first President in 120 years to begin his term with both houses of Congress controlled by the opposition party. I sent over forty domestic proposals to Congress that first year, including the first major tax reform package since Eisenhower's first term, a proposal to reorganize foreign aid, a message on electoral reform, the first presidential message in our history dealing with the explosive problems of population growth, and some twenty proposals dealing with crime and drug and pornography control. Only two of these proposals were passed: draft reform and our tax bill. Legislation that would take the Post Office Department out of politics and turn it into a non-partisan corporation soon followed. We won some tactical legislative victories over the Democratic opposition, but it soon became clear that my attempts to get Congress to approve creative and comprehensive proposals were going to be resisted.

Three major congressional battles that first year illustrated the kind of problems I would face in my dealings with Congress throughout my first term. There was the cliff-hanging one-vote margin of victory on my request for an anti-ballistic missile (ABM) system, underscoring the uncomfortably narrow bipartisan coalition I had on dependent on when it came to foreign policy and defense issues. Then there were the battles over the Supreme Court vacancies: with the Haynsworth nomination at the end of 1969 and the Carswell nomination at the beginning of 1970, Congress, in an unprecedented partisan display, refused to confirm two successive presidential Supreme Court nominees. Finally, our bold attempt to reform the federal welfare system—the Family Assistance Plan—illustrated the problem of the Senate’s tendency to fracture into special interest groups. As George Shultz later summed it up, “He who walks in the middle of the road gets hit from both sides.”

It was clear to me by 1969 that there could never be absolute parity between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. in the area of nuclear and conventional armaments. For one thing, the Soviets are a land power and we are a sea power. For another, while our nuclear weapons were better, theirs were bigger. Furthermore, absolute superiority in every area of armaments would have been meaningless, because there is a point in arms development at which each nation has the capacity to destroy the other. Beyond that point the most important consideration is not continued escalation of the number of arms but maintenance of the strategic equilibrium while making it clear to the adversary that a nuclear attack, even if successful, would be suicidal.

Consequently, at the beginning of the administration I began to talk in terms of sufficiency rather than superiority to describe my goals for our nuclear arsenal. Putting an end to the arms race meant working out trade-offs with the Soviets, and I wanted us to have the most bargaining chips from the outset in order to get the best deal. I said that Congress must not send me to the negotiating table as the head of the second strongest nation in the world.

This is where the ABM came in. The Soviets had indicated that they were willing to reach agreement on defensive arms limitation. Most of the liberals in Congress, the media, and the academic community tended to take them at face value in this regard and feared that a congressional vote for an ABM system would destabilize the existing arms balance and compel the Soviets to increase their own construction programs, thus losing a precious opportunity and moving the arms race up another notch.

I thought they were wrong. I thought the Soviets' primary interest in opening arms negotiations at that point was that without an ABM we would be in a disadvantageous negotiating position. Our intelligence re-