Nixon administration failed to fulfill the Pakistani military regime's great expectations. Pakistan, actually an American ally, lost half of its territory.

The final word came in January when we began work with Kissinger on the details of the summit. Admitting that he had been unduly nervous about Soviet intentions during the Indo-Pakistan War, he virtually admitted that he had taken some "unreasonable steps" at the time. He acknowledged that our assurance about India's intentions at the critical moment was a breakthrough in ending the war. For him, that was an extraordinary confession—but not one that he made in public.

### IV. To the Summit

*Kissinger and I Start Work on the Summit*

On January 17, 1972, Brezhnev sent Nixon a message proposing we begin practical work on the agenda for their summit meeting in Moscow. The most pressing issues, Brezhnev said, were Berlin, European security, Vietnam, the Middle East, SALT, and our economic relations—a very broad agenda indeed.

Vietnam played a special role. Nixon and Kissinger had been stressing its importance from their very first meeting with us. But the real dialogue developed slowly. Both sides shared a desire to end the war, but the terms that would be acceptable to each were completely different. More than that: they depended heavily on what Hanoi was prepared to do. Meanwhile, Washington and Moscow continued to stay in touch throughout the conflict. Both expected little from the discussion of the war during the summit but still wanted to continue their dialogue. Nixon hoped to use Moscow, whenever possible, as a mediator between Washington and Hanoi. Even as he announced the Moscow summit in October, he characteristically ordered an increase in the bombing of North Vietnam because he evidently feared being accused by the right of compromising with the Communists. The North Vietnamese broke off their dialogue the next month, and in January Nixon asked me to send Brezhnev a message to pass to Hanoi that the American government was prepared to resume the dialogue.

It was only to be expected that the State Department and Secretary of State Rogers would become involved in preparations for the summit. Rogers therefore planned a number of meetings with me.

This prompted Kissinger to talk with me early in February about what he termed "a very sensitive subject." I was intrigued. He said he wanted to inform me in strict confidence exactly what the secretary of state knew about Soviet-American relations, especially the exchanges between the Soviet ambassador and the White House, because the secretary was "far from knowing all." He asked me to keep this in mind when talking with Rogers.
and avoid the issues with which he was not familiar. Even Brezhnev's personal messages to Nixon were edited before they were shown to Rogers, and any references to the confidential channel were cut out. Some messages were not shown to him at all. They included messages about some sensitive details of the summit agenda that had been discussed only in the exchange of personal letters between Nixon and the Soviet leadership. On the other hand, all the bilateral questions for the summit preparations were under the control of the State Department and Rogers in full measure.

This was quite a surprise to me and a unique situation in my diplomatic experience, in which the president's assistant secretly informed a foreign ambassador as to which high-level information on our relations with the president's secretary of state had access, and which he did not. When I met Rogers the next day, it was clear that he was indeed in the dark about my confidential talks with Kissinger. (We conducted more than 130 conversations during 1972.) Apparently, the White House was going to keep all major questions related to the summit to itself, without initiating the State Department into its secrets. While facing Rogers in this bizarre arrangement, I felt rather uneasy. Did it help or hinder Nixon's diplomacy? I don't know. But he preferred to maintain maximum secrecy and was especially concerned about leaks to the press and Congress.

There was also Nixon's classic anti-communism. This led to hostile outbursts by officials, whether actually encouraged by the White House, we never knew, but also not prevented by the president.

Brezhnev sent Nixon a message at the end of February expressing some irritation at the "double standards" applied by the United States to its relations with the Soviet Union. It pointed out that while a "lively, constructive dialogue" was under way in the confidential channel, members of Nixon's own administration such as Defense Secretary Melvin Laird were spouting anti-Soviet statements. "How shall we take it?" Brezhnev asked. "Surely, it is impossible to do business on two different planes. It is impractical. It is not realistic. There should be a uniform approach to the main issue."

When I passed this to Kissinger, I gave him some more illustrations. Kissinger did not dispute them but emphasized that we must depend only on the statements made by the president himself. A week later, Kissinger gave me a conciliatory response from Nixon to Brezhnev's message, promising to be careful.

**Tripartite Diplomacy**

Nixon's visit to China was undoubtedly a major achievement of the personal diplomacy of the president and Kissinger. It marked the formal beginning of a tripartite diplomatic strategy involving the United States, the Soviet Union, and China that had surfaced for the first time to the public with the invitation of an American ping-pong team to compete in China in April of 1970. An agreement to receive Kissinger was concluded secretly in May of 1971, and Nixon's trip was announced in July. The president was in China from February 21 to 28, 1972. Needless to say, his visit did not "change the world," despite what Nixon said with his characteristic hyperbole at a Beijing banquet. Nor did it completely normalize diplomatic relations between the United States and China (the exchange of missions did not take place until 1973 and formal recognition not until 1979).

Yet it was even more than a breakthrough in Chinese-American relations. It had major international implications in the way Washington and Moscow dealt with each other. No longer would they regard themselves as the only two heavyweights at the opposite ends of a tug-of-war. A third force had been added to the equation, offering the other two the challenges and risks of greater maneuver. China was also altogether too willing to play this game. Nixon told congressional leaders in private after he returned from his trip that he believed the Chinese leadership was motivated by two factors: first, their eagerness to bring China to the level of a global power, and second, their unfriendly relations with the Soviet Union.

When he had returned from accompanying the president to China, Kissinger confessed to me that they had failed to agree with the Chinese on Vietnam. The president made it clear that if North Vietnam showed some flexibility and understanding, Hanoi would essentially get what it wanted over two or three years. Nixon implied the possibility of some changes in the political structure of South Vietnam sought by Hanoi, which could not be ceded now without loss of American prestige. He warned the Chinese that Hanoi could not win the war for all its military efforts, even though the North Vietnamese could prolong it indefinitely. History has shown that Nixon was wrong. He was ultimately forced to back down first under enormous pressure from the American people, who increasingly opposed the war.

After Nixon's return from China, Kissinger arranged for us to dine at the White House. When I arrived I had a pleasant surprise: the president himself was joining us to participate in the summit preparations. He began by observing that his principal political activity for the next two months would be preparation for what he hoped would be a successful Moscow summit. He stressed his satisfaction with the frankness of his exchanges with Brezhnev and said that, in contrast to his talks with the Chinese, his Moscow conversations would not have to start at the level of A-B-C's and could tackle important issues at once because Soviet-American relations were already well advanced.
I asked Nixon to give me his thoughts about the summit. The president agreed and then, pointing at Kissinger, who sat next to him and had so far been silent, "Here is Henry, whom I trust completely. Whatever he says comes directly from me. There is no man in the administration who can speak on my behalf with greater authority. It is true, Bill Rogers is an old friend of mine and has all necessary authority as secretary of state. But he is locked together with a great bureaucratic machine. His staff cannot be controlled, nor can it keep things in strict confidence. That is why I do this kind of thing through Kissinger."

Nixon said that there were two questions of great importance and complexity to be discussed with the Soviet leaders: SALT and the Middle East. The United States was yet to speak out on the second question, and would do so through Kissinger. But the strategic arms talks, like it or not, would be a measure of our future relations, especially in the judgment of American public opinion. If we could reach agreement on that, it would be taken as a good sign showing that our relations were on a new and sounder basis. But if we failed, people would regard the summit as a flop, the more so because the second important question of the Middle East could only be subject to a preliminary secret agreement between us: it was too emotional an issue inside the United States for public discussion. I agreed with him.

It was time to take political decisions, Nixon continued. He was ready to establish parity in strategic weapons, though this concept was not especially popular with some influential groups in the United States. So, he said, "let us approach the situation from political positions without neglecting the interests of our countries' defense." He wanted an agreement virtually immediately lest both sides decide to move ahead with the construction of new strategic systems that could determine the pattern of the arms race for the rest of the decade.

The conversation with the president made a favorable impression in Moscow, especially his readiness to agree to strategic parity with the Soviet Union, which had long been a goal of the Soviet leadership. Brezhnev replied with a message on the summit agenda in which he included Europe, West Berlin, the Middle East, and Vietnam. He said Moscow had considered the SALT question in detail. He noted that both sides had drawn closer on ABMs and land-based missile launchers, and that the Soviet Union was studying the American proposal for a freeze on submarine-launched missiles.

As I handed the message to Kissinger, he said the president was becoming increasingly aware that his meeting with the Soviet leaders would probably be one of the most significant events in his political career. That was of course in part a diplomatic nicety, but at the same time it represented a growing acknowledgment by the Nixon administration of the importance of Soviet-American relations. As if to confirm this, Kissinger raised another "sensitive question." After the Moscow summit, the president was going on to Iran, and after that he had been invited to visit Poland. Considering that "Eastern Europe was within the sphere of special Soviet interests," Kissinger said, the president wanted to consult the general secretary in advance privately because his visit to Warsaw would follow hard upon the trip to Moscow. Brezhnev had nothing against the trip, especially as Nixon demonstrated his consideration for our sensitivities.

Vietnam and the Summit

On April 3 Kissinger requested an urgent meeting. He was unusually agitated. On behalf of the president, he wanted to inform the Soviet leadership that North Vietnam had launched large-scale military operations across the demilitarized zone, penetrating ten to fifteen miles to the south. The president, Kissinger said, will therefore have to take military countermeasures, and he hoped that Moscow would not regard them as hostile to its own interests, nor would they affect our relations on the eve of the Moscow summit.

Kissinger added that the advancing North Vietnamese troops were "armed 90 percent with Soviet-made weapons," and the North Vietnamese command had gambled nearly all its regular troops on the offensive.

A few days later, on Sunday, April 9, I was invited to a White House showing of newreels covering Kissinger's two secret visits to China that had been filmed by Chinese cameramen and sent as a gift by Zhou Enlai. Present also were Kissinger's father and mother, a nice couple who had specially come from New York, and Kissinger himself. My wife and I were the only guests. The film was shown in the Situation Room. After the show Kissinger and I had a brief conversation, face-to-face. He again raised the question of the latest developments in Vietnam and implied that the president would very much like to get "a word" from Hanoi through us, especially whether they would meet Kissinger privately, in which case the White House would show some restraint in retaliating for the North Vietnamese attack. Obviously, the president would not mind if we acted as mediator.

The evening left an odd, somewhat irrational impression: nice people in a nice room watching a nice newsreel against a background of bloody battles raging thousands of miles away in the jungles of Vietnam. Somehow, this implicated us all.

The next day we met again in the White House for a grand public ceremony to sign a treaty banning bacteriological weapons in the presence of the diplomatic corps, government officials, and reporters. I signed on behalf of the Soviet Union (I still have the pen). Afterward Nixon took me aside to say
that he stood behind what Kissinger had told me about Vietnam the day before. He only wanted to add that in going through the crisis, he wanted our two governments to keep themselves under control so as to do the least possible damage to Soviet-American relations. Although the president was not specific, I came away with the feeling that the White House was preparing to launch dramatic new actions against North Vietnam.

Some days later Kissinger informed me that, in view of the dangerous aggravation of the situation in Vietnam, the president believed Kissinger should pay a short visit to Moscow to meet Gromyko and Brezhnev. Kissinger would then fly from Moscow to Paris for a private meeting with Hanoi's representatives. The Moscow visit would take place in complete secrecy, without even the knowledge of the American Embassy, and Kissinger would stay in Moscow wherever the Soviet side could accommodate him.

The Nixon administration was attempting to draw Moscow into the diplomatic game with Vietnam. Moscow apparently was willing to become engaged, hoping it could help settle the conflict. When I informed Kissinger on April 13 that we agreed to receive him on his secret mission, he said he was also willing to meet the North Vietnamese in Moscow if they wanted (they said they preferred Paris). He briefed me on the basic American position, but the leadership in Hanoi did not let us know where it stood.

Two days later Kissinger turned to me again on behalf of Nixon. He did not try to conceal his anger. Without explanation, he said, the North Vietnamese had just informed the Americans they had retracted their agreement to meet with him. Meanwhile they continued their military operations south of the demilitarized zone, which prompted the president to order bombing raids on military targets in the Hanoi-Haiphong area. The bombing would be halted if Hanoi agreed to a meeting on April 24 or 27. Kissinger warned that the United States would have to resort to “resolute measures” if Hanoi went on to seek a military solution and “tried to topple another American president” after chasing Lyndon Johnson from office. After several days of meetings and a feverish exchange between Hanoi and Washington via Moscow over the date of Kissinger's meeting with the North Vietnamese, he finally told me he was prepared to leave for Moscow to discuss the Vietnam crisis and prepare for the summit. I accompanied him.

Kissinger left for Moscow by plane on April 20. In deep secrecy, I drove in the dead of night in an embassy car to a prearranged place, where a station wagon from the White House was waiting for me. It took me to a military airfield near Washington. Kissinger also arrived secretly. On our way to Moscow we made a refueling stop at a NATO air base in Britain. Kissinger told me, half-joking, half-serious, not to get out of the plane for exercise because they would faint if they saw the Soviet ambassador walking around their super-secret base. To preserve the secrecy of our mission, he did not get out either.

In Moscow Kissinger met Brezhnev and Gromyko. The idea of meeting with Nixon in Moscow while American bombs were exploding incessantly in Vietnam did not appeal to the Soviet leadership in the least, and it strongly urged Nixon to show restraint and caution. Kissinger said the United States was trying to show restraint but the “superaggressive” actions of the Vietnamese might force the administration to “more drastic action.”

On the summit itself, the discussion focused first on SALT; as I have already mentioned, an agreement also was reached to freeze the construction of new missile-launching submarines.

In accordance with Kissinger’s request for total secrecy, he was accommodated at a separate mansion in the Lenin Hills and attended only by Soviet staff. Neither the American Embassy nor the ambassador himself knew about Kissinger’s stay until the final day, when he chose to speak to the American ambassador, who was taken to the government guest house to find Kissinger there, much to his surprise.

The day after his return to Washington, Kissinger told me the president was “very satisfied” with the results of his Moscow discussions and wanted to continue narrowing our differences to ensure a successful summit. One more thing: the president wondered if he would be able to attend a Sunday church service in Moscow. Not that he was all that religious, but for domestic political reasons; his church attendance in Moscow would be nationally televised at home and would make a favorable impression while he was visiting the capital of what some Americans called “godless communism.” I said we had absolutely no objections to Nixon going to any church in Moscow.

As the summit approached, it became clear that Vietnam could kill it. Early in May, three weeks before the date scheduled for the meeting, a lively exchange of messages was under way between Brezhnev and Nixon. On May 1 Brezhnev sent Nixon a message calling for restraint in Vietnam, especially in aerial bombardment, because of its explosive effect on Soviet-American relations. Kissinger replied that the president believed—and deep inside I shared that view—that Hanoi was out to take advantage of the summit for its own purposes: first of all its military goals, but also the diplomatic goal of simultaneously provoking both Moscow and Washington against each other. “One can only wish their efforts will not be crowned with success,” Kissinger intoned.

The next day, the president let Brezhnev know that the talks with the North Vietnamese had been “highly disappointing.” Kissinger said Le Duc...
Tho, the chief North Vietnamese negotiator, had told him bluntly that Nixon should stop discussing Vietnam with Moscow and negotiate directly and exclusively with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. “The man was as defiant as if he had won the war after all,” Kissinger said.

Brezhnev sent another message about Vietnam on May 6 again appealing for restraint on the eve of the summit. Kissinger commented soberly: “It can be safely stated that our exchange on Vietnam has not advanced the matter by an inch. We have no claims on the Soviet side in that respect. The United States will do all it can for a summit to take place and produce good results. But we will have to act in Vietnam as required by the military and political situation.”

Kissinger also confirmed that the United States had tried to obtain help on Vietnam from the Chinese, who turned aside the request with the observation that it was not Beijing but Moscow that had a stake in the military operations in Vietnam. The Soviet Union, they told Kissinger, wanted to put pressure on Washington for concessions on Europe and the Middle East as part of its bargaining at the summit. This of course was nonsense because we couldn’t deliver Vietnam in the first place.

On May 8 Nixon went on nationwide television with a solemn announcement of grave military measures to cut off North Vietnam’s arms supply. The approaches to North Vietnamese ports would be mined and blockaded, the rail network would be bombed, and air and sea strikes against military targets would continue. The address also devoted considerable attention to relations with the Soviet Union. Nixon pointed out that the North Vietnamese invasion was possible only because of military supplies from the Soviet Union and other countries, but he also enumerated recent advances in Soviet-American relations and concluded with something like an appeal to Moscow to put its relations with Washington ahead of those with Hanoi.

An hour before the address I was called to the White House, where Kissinger handed me a personal message to Brezhnev from Nixon. The president referred to North Vietnam’s intransigence in negotiations and its military operations against South Vietnam and declared his determination “to deprive the aggressor of the means of perpetrating his aggression.” He said the military measures he was about to announce would be abolished as soon as an internationally supervised cease-fire was established in all of Indochina. The message also contained a more detailed call for the preservation of our relations at that “moment of statesmanship,” an appeal upon which Kissinger elaborated on the president’s behalf.

I sharply criticized the military actions as a crude violation of international law, including freedom of the seas. Kissinger tried to justify them, adding that Soviet vessels would not be attacked. On the whole, the conversation was rather tense, especially when I insisted and managed to have one offensive passage deleted from the draft of Nixon’s announcement. Frankly, I began worrying about the summit.

Two days later I was instructed to make a strong protest to Kissinger “against the criminal activity of the U.S. Air Force” that had killed some crewmen on Soviet vessels in North Vietnamese waters. We also demanded that the United States guarantee the safety of Soviet vessels and Soviet sailors’ lives. The protest was communicated immediately to the president.

Kissinger was back ten minutes later. He said the president had asked me to deliver to Brezhnev his deep personal regret, especially for the casualties, an offer to pay damages, and his assurance that he was ordering the military command to prevent any recurrence.

The Politburo discussed the delicate situation in Vietnam several times. It was caught in a dilemma between wanting to stop the American bombing and wanting to go ahead with a summit meeting with the president who had ordered the attacks. It could not decide, so there were intense Soviet-American exchanges. On the next day I delivered Brezhnev’s reply to Nixon’s letter announcing the military escalation against North Vietnam. Brezhnev’s letter was filled with criticism and entirely devoted to Vietnam and its perils for our relations. “Mr. President, at this dramatic moment for Soviet-American relations and for the world situation as a whole, I and my colleagues expect the American side to do all in its power to prevent irreparable damage to our relations in the present and the future.”

Ominously, the letter avoided any mention of the summit, which Kissinger noticed at once.

“Now, what about the Moscow summit? The general secretary does not say anything about that,” Kissinger repeatedly posed that question in various forms during our conversation. Finally he asked if we had any objections to the White House publishing the statement that it had received a reply from the Soviet leadership confirming that the summit meeting was still on.

I said there were no grounds for such a statement, as the summit had not been directly discussed in the exchange of letters.

Kissinger then asked if he could at least tell the president that the Soviet government confirmed its readiness to hold the summit as scheduled. I had to say again that, as was evident from the messages exchanged, we had not touched upon the question at all.

Kissinger assured me the president was really anxious to have the summit on the date we had already fixed. On Nixon’s behalf he asked me to inform Brezhnev that most drastic measures would be taken to avoid any accidents to Soviet vessels in North Vietnamese ports or on the open sea.
Besides, the United States was prepared to reduce the bombing of North Vietnam during the meeting and completely halt the bombing of Hanoi. All these assurances did not allay our apprehensions about the summit, which we both felt.

In Moscow, the summit literally hung in the balance. The Politburo continued its crucial discussion about whether to receive Nixon in Moscow while the United States was bombing a de facto Soviet ally. The military leadership headed by Marshal Grechko opposed the meeting, and so did President Podgorny. Suslov, the chief ideologist, and many prominent party figures were undecided, while Kosygin and Gromyko favored a summit.

Brezhnev hesitated, although for personal reasons he was eager to have his first meeting with an American president. Besides, he was well aware that if he refused to receive Nixon our relations would be adversely and profoundly affected.

The debate was decided finally by the following argument. The leadership in Hanoi, while our ideological allies, doggedly avoided informing us about their long-term plans in Southeast Asia or their policy toward the United States, notwithstanding our considerable military and economic aid. As a result, their actions often were a surprise to us and put us in difficult positions. Actually they did not pay much attention to how they affected our relations with Washington. On the contrary, they did not mind spoiling them. We learned much more from the Americans about their negotiations with Hanoi than we did from the Vietnamese. All that aroused irritation in Moscow. The final verdict of the Politburo was to go ahead with the summit, because its members recognized that the alternative would amount to handing Hanoi a veto over our relations with America.

There were also other factors contributing to the decision that had nothing to do with Vietnam. First of all, the agreements with the Federal Republic of Germany were to be ratified several days before Nixon's arrival, and a cancellation of the summit could exacerbate relations and block the ratification, giving weight to the arguments to the ultra right in West Germany who opposed the agreements. Moscow was fully aware of this. Moreover, it also realized that refusing to receive Nixon would complicate our relations with the American administration for a long period, putting off the summit indefinitely, jeopardizing the ABM and SALT agreements, and promoting another round of the arms race. And in any case our refusal to meet with Nixon would not help the Vietnamese people; on the contrary, the United States would increase its military pressure even more, including the bombing of North Vietnam.

Just to be on the safe side, the Soviet leaders secretly decided to place the question before the Plenum of the Party Central Committee, which met in May. That meeting of about two hundred members of the party and government leadership approved the decision to proceed with the summit, which turned out to be of major significance in the history of our diplomacy. It consolidated the policy of peaceful coexistence and opened the way to promoting our relations with the United States, notwithstanding our ideological differences with the West and our commitment to the dogma of "international solidarity" with the "victims of imperialism." That was probably the first time that ideological considerations gave way to common sense on so important a subject, although they did not vanish entirely and would be felt in other issues.

Both Nixon and Kissinger realized that it was not easy for Moscow, the leader of the socialist camp, to agree to a meeting while their forces were bombing our allies in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and had well-founded fears that the Soviet Union might scrap the summit. So, when I brought in the final reply to the White House, Kissinger, hiding his and Nixon's concern by a joke, proposed to bet a case of champagne that he would guess our answer.

I accepted. On a slip of paper, he wrote what he thought our answer was and covered it with his hand. I told him then that we were ready to proceed on the agreed date, with no amendments. His forecast read: "The summit is not canceled but postponed, with the date to be fixed and agreed on later." I still have this piece of paper as a souvenir of that remarkable moment. Of course, Henry never liked to lose a bet, but in this case we were both satisfied with the final outcome, having worked so hard to prepare for the summit. Detente in Soviet-American relations had stood a serious trial successfully, but Kissinger still owes me the champagne.

The crisis surmounted, Kissinger and I spent the following week almost entirely in businesslike meetings daily to agree on summit arrangements and complete as much as possible of the prepared agreements and texts. We made amicable private deals, too. He would tell me he was prepared to accept a certain wording proposed by Gromyko, but on condition that he would only make it official in Moscow when he met Gromyko—"just to please him." He kept his promise. Moreover, Kissinger made concessions to Gromyko on the wording of some agreements, shifting toward habitual Soviet phraseology in order to reach general agreement on major questions. He knew that phraseology would be important to Gromyko when he reported to the Politburo, but it was not crucial for the Americans as long as the essence of the matter was acceptable.

In the final stage of preparations for Nixon's Moscow visit, the president himself took the extraordinary step of inviting me to stay overnight at Camp
David on May 18 to discuss all details thoroughly. Nixon was relaxed. It was an important and pleasant meeting. We were completely alone. Moscow instructed me to point out to the president that we believed the summit of an important and pleasant meeting. We were completely alone. Moscow instructed me to point out to the president that we believed the summit of an important and pleasant meeting. We were completely alone.

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This was not just the rhetoric of diplomacy. Moscow still harbored fears that Nixon would spring some new shock tactic against Vietnam, although the Soviet leaders recognized that he was just as interested in the success of the summit as they were. Besides, the very fact that Moscow had agreed to receive Nixon gave him a certain satisfaction because it put Hanoi in something like diplomatic isolation. But the Americans also feared that Hanoi might launch a major land operation during the summit, as Mrs. Nixon told my wife Irina while they were discussing the program for her visit.

At Camp David, Nixon showed me the cabins—I thought of them as "dachas"—where he expected to lodge the Soviet leaders "when they pay a return visit next year." Then he took me to his personal study. There were several thick files on the Soviet Union on the desk, with two folders marked "Brezhnev" on the top. One folder contained recorded conversations between Brezhnev and Kissinger, the other was a selection of Brezhnev's main public statements starting with the Twenty-Fourth Congress of the Communist Party, where he laid out his policies of economic growth and international accommodation.

In the course of our long conversation we discussed in detail the main issues for the summit. To do him justice, he formulated his approach to the issues and to possible agreements clearly and expertly.

Nixon told me he believed that the confidential contacts between the White House and the Soviet ambassador in Washington would become even more frequent after the agreements that we expected to be sealed in Moscow. He added that they were considering installing a direct secret telephone line between my office in the embassy and Kissinger's office in the White House. This second hot line, which required no dialing and was not dependent on the ordinary telephone network, was installed after Nixon's visit to Moscow, and Kissinger and myself used it all the time. Its very existence has been kept secret until now.

The Summit in Moscow

The presidential plane landed at Vnukovo airport at 4 P.M. on May 22 for a state visit of eight days. Nixon was accompanied by Rogers, Kissinger, and other officials. It was drizzling when Nixon landed. Podgorny and Kosygin handled the official welcome properly, but the general atmosphere was rather half-hearted. The streets of Moscow were deserted, and no welcoming crowds had been turned out to cheer the president.

At the outset, the American delegation was not sure how Brezhnev was going to treat them. They apparently feared that he would start lecturing them, especially Nixon, for bombing Vietnam. That could put Nixon in an embarrassing position, and indeed the whole meeting in jeopardy—which was what happened in 1960 when Khrushchev wrecked the Paris summit by lecturing Eisenhower about spy planes overflying the Soviet Union. The American concern was palpable during the first face-to-face meeting between Nixon and Brezhnev in the Kremlin, which lasted over an hour. Only a Soviet interpreter was present. Both delegations waited apprehensively outside. Rogers was on his guard and so was Kissinger, albeit less so. They anxiously asked the Soviet participants in the neighboring hall just what Brezhnev was telling Nixon. But the widespread fears proved unfounded. The conversation went off very well. It opened the way for further successful negotiations in Moscow, which were also joined by Podgorny and Kosygin. Nixon also made short trips to Kiev and Leningrad.

The meeting turned out to be a significant event in Soviet-American relations, demonstrating the desire of both sides to start a process of detente. The talks covered political, economic, scientific, and technical ties, and strategic arms limitation. A communiqué marking a solid advance in our relations was published May 31, the day after Nixon’s departure. Of all the documents produced at the summit, I would emphasize two: one on the conduct of our relations and the other on arms control.

On May 29, in the solemn atmosphere of the Grand Kremlin Palace on the final day of the summit, Brezhnev and Nixon signed a joint document entitled “The Basic Principles of Relations between the Soviet Union and the United States of America.” It was adopted at Soviet initiative and was an important political declaration laying the foundations of the new political process of detente in our relations. The Soviet leadership attached special significance to the document because it set forth publicly and jointly the main principles of international conduct we had long been striving to have recognized. First of all, it noted that there was no other basis for mutual relations in the nuclear age other than peaceful coexistence. It also acknowledged the “principle of equality as a basis for the security of both countries.”
Broadly speaking, the summit and its documents symbolized the mutual recognition of parity between the Soviet Union and the United States as two great powers.

That mattered to the Kremlin leaders not only in terms of their prestige, but also in putting Soviet-American relations on a more stable basis. The document was widely publicized in the Soviet Union where it was often cited even when the new Cold War returned under Ronald Reagan. Although the principles proclaimed in Moscow were sound, the main weakness was that of many such declarations of principle no matter how important: it did not provide for any control of its observance and had no safeguards to ensure compliance. Nor was anything done about that in later years.

The document did not get much publicity in the United States. The administration did not give it much prominence, probably because it was a product of Soviet perseverance, and the administration itself was not sure that American public opinion was prepared for it. In any case the document came into being essentially because of Kissinger’s conciliatory attitude. He was the only American negotiator to participate in its drafting, while Rogers was ignorant of its very existence until the last moment. In public Kissinger later defended it as a philosophical concept but not as a guide to concrete situations.

I am inclined to agree with Kissinger. The administration did not give away much by signing the document. True, it recognized our equality, but practically only in the field of mutual security and armaments. As for other locutions such as “peaceful coexistence,” these did not do any special harm to the American side but were very dear to the hearts of the Soviet leaders, primarily for domestic reasons. The declaration thus created the impression among the Soviet population that its government at last had prevailed over the United States on this important principle, which had long been reluctant to accept it even though we had presented it as a fundamental issue of war or peace. And Nixon himself was seen in a more favorable light by the Soviet public.

The overall importance of the joint document lay in creating a friendlier atmosphere in our relations, an atmosphere of cooperation as opposed to pure confrontation, which soon became known as the era of detente. It created the basis and cleared the way for a number of agreements during the Nixon administration.

Another basic achievement of the Moscow summit was the signing of the SALT I agreements, including the agreement to limit ABM systems of both sides and a provisional agreement on certain steps toward limiting strategic offensive weapons for the first time, the result of many months of talks. The provisional agreement provided for a period of five years to continue the negotiations on far-reaching arms reductions. The SALT I agree-
but on the whole, Kissinger seemed to enjoy genuine freedom at the negotiating table. The two of course coordinated their tactics, although it was not always easy for him in Moscow because Nixon had been accorded the rare privilege for a foreign visitor of staying in the Kremlin Palace. For fear of listening devices, the president felt unable to consult with Kissinger in his Kremlin apartment. Instead, they locked themselves in the president’s own limousine, which had been flown to Moscow and parked inside the Kremlin.

The Soviet side practiced its own division of labor. Kosygin led on economic questions. Brezhnev was in charge of military and political questions, with Gromyko actively supporting him in diplomatic details. Negotiations thus were often reduced to a two-way discussion between Gromyko and Kissinger in the presence of their bosses, who periodically interfered.

When the negotiations on strategic arms limitation reached an impasse, Brezhnev instructed Leonid Smirnov, deputy prime minister for military industry, to help Gromyko. Smirnov was thoroughly familiar with strategic arms and conducted negotiations with Kissinger, who could not help noticing that Gromyko usually stated the Soviet official position but Smirnov was entrusted with concrete bargaining. Smirnov knew all about weapons but had no experience in diplomatic negotiations, the complete opposite of Gromyko.

To finalize the SALT agreement, it took an additional, closed meeting of the Politburo during the negotiations with Nixon.

Both sides paid much attention to international issues although few specific questions were resolved in wide-ranging discussions on the Middle East, Korea, Cuba, and security and detente in Europe. We came one step closer toward a European security conference with Nixon’s agreement on timing; he agreed that it could be held the following year.

Brezhnev pointedly told Nixon that the Chinese leadership was out to sow discord in international relations and exploit the differences between the Soviet Union and the United States, and other countries as well. Nixon confined himself to just a few phrases about China’s positions on individual issues. The Soviet side pointed out that it was important to reiterate that both sides continued to recognize and observe their 1962 agreement on Cuba. Nixon had no objection, and it was so reported to Fidel Castro. In the communiqué, both sides restated their positions on war in Vietnam, but it was hardly discussed at plenary sessions.

So as not to spoil the good, businesslike atmosphere of the negotiations, the Politburo decided to give one unpublicized dinner for Nixon at a state dacha outside Moscow to discuss Vietnam with him in private. They tried to make Nixon change or adjust his attitude to the Vietnamese, but since they had nothing new to offer, needless to say they had no success. But it was nevertheless important for them to be able to report their efforts to Hanoi and other socialist countries, thus clearing their conscience before the Vietnamese.

Nixon was to spend one day seeing the sights of Leningrad. He arrived at Moscow airport, where a special Soviet plane was waiting for him and Kosygin, who came to see him off. They got into the plane and chatted for ten to fifteen minutes waiting in vain for the pilot to appear. Kosygin ordered him summoned. He finally appeared, red with embarrassment, and reported that one of the engines was out of order; they had to change planes. Kosygin, highly embarrassed, began swearing at the pilot.

Nixon asked him what was going on. Kosygin explained and said the pilot would be punished for failing to prepare the plane for the flight. Nixon appealed to him to calm down, saying the pilot should be rewarded rather than disciplined. The puzzled prime minister wondered just what he was to be rewarded for. The president recounted a similar situation in Africa. The American pilot noticed that one of the engines was not working well but did not report the trouble, hoping it would make it through the short flight. But the engine failed and the plane had to make an emergency landing in the desert, a narrow escape for Nixon. “That is why,” Nixon said, “I suggest your pilot be rewarded for his courage in speaking the truth.” The pilot was clearly thankful for the intercession. Kosygin tempered justice with mercy and ordered a reserve plane.

In Leningrad Nixon was deeply moved when he lay a wreath at the Piscarev cemetery, where about a million Leningrad residents had been buried during the German siege of the city for almost three terrible years of shelling and starvation during World War II. He was especially shaken by the diary of a little girl who recorded the deaths of her family members, one by one, of starvation. She entered the death of her mother, then died herself.

Kissinger also had his share of personal attention. Since his stay in Moscow coincided with his birthday, the Kremlin confectioners prepared a big birthday cake. When he emerged from his room in the morning, he was handed the cake by the KGB general in command of the Kremlin security guard. Soviet and American officials wished him many happy returns. Kissinger congratulated him personally. Back in Washington, his staff members handed him their gift, a wooden bear playing soccer (Kissinger was one of the few fans in America and perhaps the most celebrated one). Presents were also exchanged at the highest level. Brezhnev gave Nixon a hydrofoil. The president took his wife, daughter, and son-in-law for his first ride in this Soviet boat the day after his reelection in the waters near his Florida home in Key Biscayne, and it was so safe and seaworthy that the Secret Service made
an exception to its presidential safety rules and allowed him to drive it himself. Nixon had been informed in advance that Brezhnev liked to drive big, fast cars at top speed, so he gave his host a new Cadillac.

After Nixon’s departure for Iran on May 30 the Politburo held a special session to discuss the visit. Its assessments were positive, and the Soviet leadership found itself far less biased against Nixon, whom they had long regarded as a Cold War crusader with deep-rooted anti-Soviet views, with whom any agreement on major questions seemed practically impossible. But the agreements reached in Moscow showed him as businesslike and pragmatic and marked a serious turn in our relations.

“You can do business with Nixon,” was how Brezhnev summed up his impressions. “It is time to prepare for a return visit to the United States.”

Brezhnev also formed a good opinion of Kissinger, who had managed with his characteristic style and charm to find the right approach to him during the negotiations in Moscow. Gromyko did not share Brezhnev’s admiration for “the smart Henry.” He appreciated Kissinger as a professional diplomat but disliked him as a person, partly because Kissinger was popular with the world press and basked too often and easily in its attention to suit the dour Gromyko.

I personally regarded the summit as a major success for changing our relations and instilling detente as policy. It was a policy, I must confess, with which we linked many high hopes. But not having entirely shaken off the shackles of the Cold War, I must confess that I could not help wondering just exactly what had happened in Moscow. Was it the beginning of a real relaxation of tensions between the two most powerful nations in the world? Or just another episode in the confrontation that had locked them together in mutual suspicion and animosity for a generation? Did it mean that the relaxation of tensions between the two most powerful nations in the world? Or just another episode in the confrontation that had locked them together in mutual suspicion and animosity for a generation? Did it mean that the

Indeed, after the summit, such Soviet-American meetings became an important consolidating link in our relations and prevented them from going out of control. When I returned to Washington on June 8, Kissinger handed me a personal message from Nixon to Brezhnev in which the president, like Brezhnev himself, indicated he was already thinking about the next meeting. After discussing a number of questions left unresolved at Moscow, Nixon wrote, “With so many important differences remaining between us, the road to the next summit will undoubtedly not be easy. But now we know how to prepare for it and we can accelerate the process.” In his reply, Brezhnev fully shared the president’s positive assessment and wrote, “A sound basis has been laid for a radical improvement in Soviet-American relations. Our principal aim now is to implement our agreements consistently.”

But Kissinger told me that from then until November, Nixon would have to focus on his campaign for reelection. His foreign policy positions were solid enough, except of course for Vietnam, which no doubt would lie at the center of the election debate. Kissinger gave me to understand that in order to move toward a solution for Vietnam, the president would not mind playing his game with the Chinese, using the successful Moscow summit as his trump card to exercise more pressure on the Vietnamese.

Shortly afterward Kissinger returned to Beijing at the invitation of the Chinese. We were also informed of the president’s specific instruction halting the bombing of Hanoi and its port of Haiphong, and of a reduction of U.S. air activity over North Vietnam in conjunction with the forthcoming visit of Soviet President Podgorny to Hanoi, about which we had informed Washington. Podgorny tried to search for a compromise solution to the war. But our attempt to act as a go-between had little effect. Brezhnev soon wrote to Nixon that Podgorny had outlined the American position on ending the war to the Vietnamese leadership. But it continued to focus on the direct talks with the Americans in Paris and told Podgorny to inform Washington that Hanoi’s chief negotiator, Le Duc Tho would soon return to the negotiating table in Paris.

Kissinger fared no better in Beijing. He briefed me after his return. It was clear that he had failed to reach an agreement with the Chinese on Vietnam. The Americans had to resume their direct negotiations with North Vietnam without having any clear idea of their prospects as the November presidential elections were nearing.

Basking in Detente

I was on a business trip at our consulate in San Francisco when Kissinger telephoned me on July 12 and told me that Nixon would like to invite me and my wife to stay at the Western White House in San Clemente to rest for a few days. We drove down the Pacific Coast along the picturesque California Highway 1, which passed through a number of small towns. It was a pleasant journey. Like so many Americans, we were especially charmed by the town of Carmel, with its writers and artists. We stopped there for half a day.

When we arrived at San Clemente, Nixon showed us around his picturesque Mexican-style house, Casa Pacifica, set on the shore and overlooking the sea, and the offices where he and his White House staff worked. He
showed me his direct communications links with Washington, the U.S. military command in the United States, and vital regions of the world and with the most important embassies. Nixon could contact anyone by phone within two to three minutes and could receive facsimiles of documents. At that time it was all very new and impressive. Mrs. Nixon also showed my wife around the house. My wife and I both liked it, and I thought the place would be fine for private talks between Nixon and Brezhnev the next year.

In this informal atmosphere, I had a long conversation with the president and Kissinger. We started with a review of the results of the Moscow summit, whereupon Nixon proceeded to the main subject. He said our governments now should focus their attention on preparations for another important step, the next summit in Washington. Of course, he had to win the election first, and he said, "I'd rather not look an irresponsible braggart, but I think I'll manage to defeat McGovern." (Senator George McGovern of South Dakota, running as a peace candidate with strong liberal support, was his Democratic opponent and proved even easier to defeat than Nixon's modest claim indicated.)

After that, Nixon spoke confidentially about the next summit. He proposed a meeting in May or June 1973, with the date announced well in advance. He expressed the opinion that this would have a positive effect on international developments later on. With advance preparation, important agreements would be signed by the United States and the Soviet Union, although hardly as many as the record number at the Moscow summit. As part of the summit, he proposed that Brezhnev come to the United States on an extensive tour for a first-hand look at the country. Finally, success in Moscow had demonstrated to the president that a whole series of summits would be feasible. He suggested that they be held regularly and said that if reelected he would not mind continuing the exchange of visits on an annual basis after the meeting in the United States for 1973.

Work could start, Nixon said, in September with a visit to Moscow by Kissinger, and this was Nixon's immediate agenda: Europe presented no major difficulties, and he agreed to an East-West conference on European security, which was sought by many European countries and supported by Moscow. Confident that the SALT treaty would be ratified, he suggested we start exchanging ideas through our private channel on the second stage. The United States was also sounding out its allies on limiting conventional weapons. The trade and economic discussions begun in Moscow should be continued because they showed promise, he said, but they might encounter difficulties in the Congress. He also wanted to consider further joint steps on the Middle East and Vietnam, the latter especially because of its paramount importance in view of the election campaign just starting.

Nixon also asked me to communicate a personal invitation for Marshal Grechko, our defense minister, to visit the United States at his convenience and meet the U.S. military. Nixon believed it was important to establish links between the two defense departments, but Moscow proved unprepared for that, mostly because of the conservative attitude of Grechko himself.

I vividly remember the conversations with Nixon in the informal setting of San Clemente on the Pacific shore. The atmosphere was quite different from our official meetings in the White House. Personal interaction was much easier. The president himself was at ease. He spoke freely, joked, and was prepared to share his personal views on foreign policy with unusual candor. His scenario for future Soviet-American relations was vast and imaginative. His critics claim he was thinking of something very close to a Soviet-American condominium. I do not know anything about that, but his program of annual summits and regular interaction at the highest levels of our governments not only would have charted the relations between us but would have profoundly affected all international relations whenever the two superpowers threw their weight on the same side of any issue.

The whole idea never got very far because of the scandal over the Watergate burglary, which at that moment was no more than an offshore cloud on our horizon. But it was also too much to swallow for his domestic opposition, which was already accusing him of trying to create an imperial presidency.

Business apart, Kissinger and I arranged for a short vacation of a day and a half. We lay on the beach and even managed to get a couple of hours sleep right on the sand under the warm California sun. The sight would have shocked the Washington diplomatic corps, to say nothing of Nixon's right-wing political opponents: the president's assistant for national security and the Soviet Ambassador, wearing nothing but bathing trunks, sleeping side by side, with a security guard keeping a watchful eye on their papers and personal effects.

Kissinger took us to Hollywood where we visited some of the movie studios, watched film-making and stunts. Kissinger seemed to be popular with the stars, and my wife and I, who were fascinated by this unknown world, were presented with folding chairs as if we were famous directors. They are still in our Moscow apartment to remind us of our Hollywood adventure.

At one studio we were invited to lunch by Alfred Hitchcock, the celebrated master of suspense, who proposed doing a suspense film set in the Kremlin. He argued that the picture would be a formidable success. I did not question its potential for success, but I voiced doubts that the Moscow leadership would fully appreciate the depth and originality of the idea. "The time
is not ripe yet," I intoned. Not that I could tell him exactly how long it would take for that to happen. But we understood each other.

That night we had dinner with a number of well-known movie actors led by Bob Hope, the great comedian. Most of them turned out to be very agreeable and intelligent people, far removed from their media stereotypes. Hope, a witty man with a great number of anecdotes and funny stories up his sleeve, could not possibly be as clever when encountering a new and unfamiliar subject, and his edge over other guests would become less conspicuous; indeed he confessed to me that he had a whole team of writers working up his funny stories for him.

Kissinger also invited my wife and me to a small, neighborhood Mexican restaurant, where we tried our first Margaritas, which they made with thirteen ingredients. The three of us consumed two sizable pitchers of this formidable cocktail. It was a nice party, especially because not a single word was said about politics.

On my return to Washington I received a letter from Nixon for Brezhnev summing up the ideas he had advanced at the San Clemente meeting with me and expressing thanks to the Soviet leadership for helping restart the Paris talks between the United States and Vietnam following Podgorny's trip to Hanoi. The letter emphasized the role of the confidential channel in the creation of "a new spirit of cooperation, now characteristic of our relations and promising further progress in the forthcoming period."

_Moscow, Washington, and the End of the Vietnam War_

A thaw also seemed to be developing when negotiations resumed with the Vietnamese in Paris. Kissinger told me Le Duc Tho had been less harsh and reckless in his attacks on the United States, which Kissinger attributed in part to the favorable effect of Podgorny's trip to Hanoi. By mid-October he told me the negotiations had advanced considerably and there was a real chance of reaching a final agreement even before November 7, election day in the United States. He told me in strict confidence that he and Le Duc Tho had agreed on the preliminary text of an arrangement to end the war. Nixon instructed Kissinger to send the fourteen-page confidential draft with his comments to Brezhnev for information. The Vietnamese had not even informed us of its existence.

On October 15, Kissinger handed me an urgent letter to Brezhnev from Nixon asking about Soviet arms-supply policies "in view of the fact that the Vietnam negotiations have entered a crucial phase." Nixon wanted to know whether the Soviet Union would continue to send military supplies to North Vietnam if the United States concluded a peace settlement that restricted American military aid to South Vietnam.

I voiced my personal view that it would be premature to link the negotiations between the United States and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam to any unilateral commitments by the Soviet Union as if they were the only crucial prerequisite for an accord. We were not participating in the negotiations. We could not consider ourselves bound by any pledges to the White House about its negotiations with the Vietnamese. "But it does not mean," I stressed, "that we are unwilling to promote an early settlement in Vietnam. Quite the reverse, we are doing our utmost." Kissinger confined himself to the observation that the president appreciated our efforts.

Between October 19 and 23 there was a busy exchange of messages between Moscow and Washington about Vietnam. Kissinger meanwhile conducted intensive negotiations with the North Vietnamese in Paris. The American side was keeping us informed confidentially and in detail about the talks, thus depriving the North Vietnamese of the opportunity of manipulating the scarce data they actually did give us.

On the eve of the election in the United States Hanoi assumed a tough posture. Kissinger returned to Washington on October 23 and told Moscow that Hanoï's final response sounded very threatening—but Kissinger offered "guarantees to Hanoi and its friend, the Soviet Union, that even after the election the president would keep his word and honor the Paris agreements."

Then came messages between Nixon and Brezhnev on Vietnam. Brezhnev's attitude was: "There is conclusive evidence that a final settlement on Vietnam is nearer today than at any moment in the past. We cannot have minor considerations of procedure or prestige gaining the upper hand and ruining the whole business."

This was all happening around the time of Kissinger's famous and probably ill-advised statement in the month before the election over nationwide television saying, "We believe that peace is at hand." Many believed it was duplicitously designed to help Nixon get reelected, and this was probably so. But at the same time, an agreement really seemed close—although exactly how close was really part of the negotiating endgame. The Americans insisted that their Saigon ally should approve the peace terms, and that implied a delay of at least until the end of November since Saigon was trying to stall an agreement in hope of derailing it. Hanoi wanted to reach an agreement before the presidential election to avoid further difficulties if a new president were elected.

After the election Kissinger flew to Paris for a new meeting with Le Duc Tho. Nixon had already told me when I called to congratulate him on his re-election that he felt the primary task facing him was to conclude an agree-
ment finally ending the Vietnam War, and he hoped it would be signed not later than the next month. He also expressed his appreciation for the role played by the Soviet leadership in exchanging information and applying diplomatic pressure for settlement. But peace was still not at hand.

The next month saw difficult negotiations and disputes between Washington and Hanoi, accompanied by frequent appeals by Nixon and Kissinger to the Soviet Union, urging us to influence the North Vietnamese. Kissinger would even show me shorthand records of his conversations with Le Duc Tho. Information given by the Americans did not always coincide with that provided by the Vietnamese and vice versa; both sides did not always give us important details. But the Americans informed us far more fully and confidentially, which allowed us to talk more candidly with the Vietnamese about concrete questions and advise them to reach a settlement without undue delay. This they did not like, and kept urging us to press the American side. Both sides were dissatisfied with our intercession. Each wanted much more pressure to be applied to the other side, which made our role neither easy nor especially effective, because we had no desire to become deeply involved and take sides in the controversial negotiations.

At 10 A.M. on December 1, I received a call from Nixon in person. He said he wanted to inform Brezhnev and his colleagues of his assessment of the Paris talks, which were now entering a crucial stage. He began by thanking the Soviet leadership for their close attention and informal assistance. Speaking with emotion, he implied that he hoped the Soviet Union would help him overcome “the last impasse” in the talks with Hanoi. Two weeks later Kissinger told me that Nixon had instructed him to suspend his meetings with Le Duc Tho until they could determine whether Hanoi was ready to agree or was still demanding new concessions. Kissinger handed me a paper giving the American view of the negotiations and a document entitled “The Outstanding Questions at the Paris Talks.” He also gave me a complete draft of the proposed peace agreement that had been discussed with Le Duc Tho and some records of his meetings with the North Vietnamese negotiator. He asked me not to inform the Vietnamese that he had given me the documents.

Three days later, just before my departure for Moscow to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Soviet Union, Kissinger handed me a private message from Nixon to Brezhnev. Optimistic about our relations and especially about Brezhnev’s trip to the United States in the coming year, the message obviously was intended to encourage Brezhnev to exercise more pressure on Hanoi. But the timing was bad: all the leaders of the socialist countries were present at the festivities in Moscow, and there was already much talk about “fraternal solidarity with Vietnam.” The Vietnamese were extremely clever at exploiting it. Ho Chi Minh understood that we were in ideological bondage—not just Suslov but all the others—and they continued to use it during the war’s final stages. They told every leader in Moscow that the Americans were bargaining for too much and thus prolonging the war. They hinted that Brezhnev as leader of the socialist community should push pressure on Washington to settle. On our own, we wanted the war to end as soon as possible, because it affected our relations with the United States.

While I was in Moscow Nixon ordered the most intensive bombing campaign of the war. We understood the political nature of the bombing: the administration had already turned over all ground combat to the South Vietnamese, and now it needed to end the war and bring home its prisoners. After four years in office and two years of negotiations, it did not really care very much which regime would end up in control. Kissinger and Nixon were making it very clear that they wanted a political solution to get out of Vietnam because they needed peace for domestic reasons.

Immediately on my return to Washington on December 28, I had a phone call from Kissinger, who was staying in California with the president on a short vacation. The conversation was entirely devoted to Vietnam, and I told Kissinger that the Soviet leadership believed that the United States should show more flexibility at the final stage of the conflict, first of all by ceasing the bombing of North Vietnam immediately. This would help overcome stalling tactics on both sides and lead to a speedy conclusion of a peace agreement.

Kissinger remarked, rather angrily, that it was difficult to deal with the stubborn Vietnamese who were unreasonable at the conference table. “Is the American side more reasonable when it tries to make its arguments more convincing to the accompaniment of bombs?” I asked him in turn. But we agreed on one thing—that we did not need unnecessary tensions between our two countries at the end of the war.

A couple of hours later he called back and said he had informed the president about Moscow’s attitude. Nixon decided to agree to a proposal by Hanoi for Le Duc Tho to meet with Kissinger in Paris on January 8. Simultaneously, he had ordered a halt to bombing north of the twentieth parallel starting the next day, December 29. Hanoi had not yet been informed, so they asked us not to tell them. The United States would do that directly. Kissinger read me the text of the message that had been prepared for Hanoi. Negotiations were on again.

On January 27, 1973, a peace treaty was signed in Paris by the United States, the South Vietnamese, the North Vietnamese, and the Vietcong. A cease-fire took effect the following day, and on that day I delivered a letter from Brezhnev to Nixon saying, “Peace in Vietnam opens up new possibiliti
ties for the strengthening of Soviet-American relations and general improvement of the international situation."

Kissinger was jubilant. He said the president felt it now was time to fix the date of Brezhnev’s visit to the United States. He said also that Nixon had privately offered the post of American ambassador to the Soviet Union to former Secretary of State Dean Rusk in order to put the relations with Moscow on a solid basis. But Rusk unfortunately had refused to return to public life and preferred to remain a lecturer at his state university in Georgia.

In his reply Nixon agreed with Brezhnev that an end to the war would benefit Soviet-American relations and stressed that the process of detente would now be accelerated. He asked Brezhnev to tell him the most convenient date for his visit to the United States and the next summit meeting.

Undeniably, both Brezhnev’s and Nixon’s letters reflected genuine feelings of relief and satisfaction at the end of the Vietnam War, although perhaps for different reasons. But they both believed the end of the war opened up new prospects for promoting relations between the two countries. As for me, having lived through three difficult presidencies with their permanent irritation in our relations over Vietnam, I was really happy in my own professional way, for more constructive work lay ahead. Both governments were now set on a firm course toward the next summit.

V. To the Summit Again, in America

Detente and Its Problems

Soviet-American relations reached a level of amity in 1973 never before achieved in the postwar era. Events demonstrated the viability of the policy of detente, although there were some relapses, mainly on the American side. Indeed, the very idea of detente in terms of its practical implementation came to Americans out of the blue and caught many completely unaware. The shift also created new and strange domestic alliances, the most aggressive linking right-wingers, liberal anti-communists, and Jewish groups working together for free emigration and other human rights in the Soviet Union. It was their campaign that prompted Congress to endorse the Jackson-Vanik amendment, linking trade concessions to the Soviet Union to a relaxation of its domestic policies. Thus it was not yet time to talk about a serious change in the American mood in favor of a stable improvement of our relations, in contrast to the sentiments in the Soviet Union.

But by far the most remarkable influence on the developments in the United States was made by Watergate, which provoked a crisis of American constitutional democracy. At first the break-in on May 28, 1972, at the Democratic Party’s headquarters in Washington’s Watergate apartment building, had seemed nothing more than a minor event. The burglars were later discovered to have been acting on behalf of Nixon’s inner circle of political operatives, but even then I did not pay much attention to the first reports of the trail leading toward the White House. I thought it inconceivable that Nixon, a man of great political experience, would permit his office to become involved in such a petry venture.

The Soviet Union and its government had great difficulty understanding how public opinion in the United States could have gotten rid of President Nixon, surely one of the most able leaders of his time in foreign affairs even if he was also one of the most reckless in his climb to the top. Here was the president, elected for the second term by a significant majority, threatened by impeachment for what was seen as a minor affair. His use of the CIA, the FBI, and the considerable powers of his own office to remain in the White House was considered in the Soviet Union at that time a fairly