do about Agnew. Compared to this, a few minutes missing from a non-subpoenaed tape hardly seemed worth a second thought.

During a press conference on October 3 I again had to walk a verbal tightrope on the Agnew issue. I first came to his defense, urging that he not be tried and convicted in the press. But when the question was asked if there was any truth to Agnew’s charge that this had been just a political investigation, I answered that while I had been briefed only on what the witnesses might say, the charges were serious.

After the press conference I left for a weekend in Florida. I asked Buzhardt to come with me. That afternoon he received a call from Judah Best, who said that Agnew was ready to resume discussions about a plea. Best flew to Florida and met with Buzhardt until late into the night. Earlier Best had pointed out to Buzhardt that Agnew was just a few months short of being eligible for retirement with a federal pension. He had wondered if there were not some way to give him a consultancy that would keep him on the government payroll and carry him over the pension deadline. I told Buzhardt that we could not do it at this time. Agnew had also asked if he could keep his Secret Service protection for a while, and he was concerned about what would happen to his staff. I promised that I would see to it that his Secret Service protection was extended, and that we would do our best to find jobs for his staff members.

It was agreed that on Saturday, October 6, Buzhardt would call Richardson to arrange for the talks to begin again.

OCTOBER 1973

On that same Saturday morning we received a cable from Ken Keating, our ambassador in Tel Aviv, reporting that Golda Meir had just told him that Syria and Egypt were in a final countdown for war. Israel was about to be attacked on two fronts: by the Syrians from the north in the Golan Heights, and by the Egyptians from the south in the Sinai Peninsula.

The news of the imminent attack on Israel took us completely by surprise. As recently as the day before, the CIA had reported that war in the Middle East was unlikely, dismissing as annual maneuvers the massive and unusual troop movement that had recently been taking place in Egypt. They had similarly interpreted the dramatic step-up in Syrian military activity as a precautionary move because the Israelis had recently shot down three Syrian jets.

I was disappointed by our own intelligence shortcomings, and I was stunned by the failure of Israeli intelligence. They were among the best in the world, and they, too, had been caught off guard. For the first time since 1948 the Israelis were about to go into a war without having positioned their equipment or having their reserve troops on standby. It was also Yom Kippur—the Day of Atonement—the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, when most Israelis, including many in the armed forces, would be spending the day at home with their families or in synagogue at prayer. It was the one day of the year when Israel was least prepared to defend itself.

It was tragic enough that war was once again going to plague this troubled area. But there was an even more disturbing question mark in the background concerning the role of the Soviet Union. It was hard for me to believe that the Egyptians and Syrians would have moved without the knowledge of the Soviets, if not without their direct encouragement.

In the last few hours before the fighting actually began, Kissinger contacted the Israelis, the Egyptians, and the Soviets to see if war could be prevented. But it was too late. At eight o’clock that morning the Syrians attacked Israel from the north and the Egyptians attacked from the south.

By the end of the first day of fighting, the Egyptians had crossed the Suez Canal and begun a thrust into the Sinai. In the north the Israelis were pushing the Syrians back in the Golan Heights, but they were unable to rout them as they had in earlier conflicts. Israeli losses were heavy. Mrs. Meir, however, was confident that if the Israelis had three or four days in which to mount a counteroffensive, they could turn the military tide on both fronts. We had convened a special meeting of the UN Security Council right after the fighting began, but there was little interest on either side in holding cease-fire discussions. The Soviets objected to our having called the Security Council into session; they clearly thought that the Arabs would win the war on the battlefield if they had enough time to secure their early victories. The French and the British—also Security Council members—were trying to stay at arm’s length; they did not share our uniquely close ties with Israel and they knew that Arab oil was at stake in this confrontation.

As far as the American position was concerned, I saw no point in trying to impose a diplomatic cease-fire that neither side wanted or could be expected to observe. It would be better to wait until the war had reached the point at which neither side had a decisive military advantage. Despite the great skepticism of the Israeli hawks, I believed that only a battlefield stalemate would provide the foundation on which fruitful negotiations might begin. Any equilibrium—even if only an equilibrium of mutual exhaustion—would make it easier to reach an enforceable settlement. Therefore, I was convinced that we must not use our influence to bring about a cease-fire that would leave the parties in such imbalance that negotiations for a permanent settlement would never begin. I was also concerned that if the Arabs were actually to start losing this war, the Soviet leaders would feel that they could not stand by and watch their allies suffer another humiliating defeat as they had in 1967.

We had a particularly delicate situation insofar as the Egyptians were
concerned. Beginning in February 1973, with a view toward building better relations, we had had a series of private contacts with them. While we had to keep the interests of the Israelis uppermost during this conflict in which they were the victims of aggression, I hoped that we could support them in such a way that we would not force an irrefutable break with the Egyptians, the Syrians, and the other Arab nations. We also had to restrain the Soviets from intervening in any way that would require us to confront them. Underlying all the military complications was the danger that the Arabs would try to bring economic pressure to bear on us by declaring an oil embargo.

The immensely volatile situation created by the unexpected outbreak of this war could not have come at a more complicated domestic juncture. Agnew was beginning the final plea-bargaining negotiations that would lead to his resignation, and I was faced with the need to select his successor. The media were slamming us with daily Watergate charges, and we had just begun reviewing the subpoenaed tapes in preparation for reaching a compromise with the Special Prosecutor in the unfortunate but likely event that the court of appeals ruled against us. And Congress was pushing to assert its authority by passing a far-reaching bill to restrict the President's war powers. All these concerns would be interwoven through the next two weeks. Just as a crisis in one area seemed to be settling down, it would be overtaken by a crisis in another area, until all the crises reached a concerted crescendo as we neared the brink of nuclear war.

By the end of the third day of the Yom Kippur War it was clear that the Israelis had been overconfident about their ability to win a quick victory. The initial battles had gone against them. They had already lost a thousand men—more than 700 lost in the entire 1967 war—and were on the way to losing a third of their tank force. By Tuesday, October 9, the fourth day of the war, we could see that if the Israelis were to continue fighting, we would have to provide them with planes and ammunition to replace their early losses. I had absolutely no doubt or hesitation about what we must do. I met with Kissinger and told him to let the Israelis know that we would replace all their losses, and asked him to work out the logistics for doing so.

At 6 p.m. Steve Bull stepped in and announced my next appointment. "Mr. President," he said, "the Vice President." Ted Agnew walked in behind him. He had come to inform me officially of what I already knew: he had decided to resign.

We shook hands and sat down in the chairs in front of the fireplace. I spoke first, saying that I knew his decision had been very difficult for him. I knew that he was by nature a man who would almost rather have lost everything fighting, even from his disadvantaged position, than have won the assurance that he would not go to prison at the price of having to compromise with his opponents. I told him how much I had appreciated his hard campaigning in 1968, 1970, and 1972 and the dedicated way he handled all his assignments from me. I asked about his wife and family; I knew how painful it had been for them.

He was particularly embittered by what he considered the hypocrisy of the members of Congress who had formerly served as governors. He repeated his belief that most of the governors in other states had followed practices such as those common in Maryland. He emphasized that he had always awarded contracts on the basis of merit, and he felt that the amounts he had received had been so small that no reasonable critic could claim that they could have influenced him to make a decision that contravened the public interest. He said that he could not see that what he had done was unethical.

He mentioned that after a few months he would like to have some kind of foreign assignment; he thought that he could be particularly effective in a Far Eastern country, perhaps Japan. He said he would appreciate anything that I could do to get some corporation to put him on a retainer as a consultant. I said that if an opportunity arose in which I could help, I would do so. At one point he said that he supposed the IRS would be harassing him the rest of his life. "You know, they were even charting up how much I paid for my neckties," he said bitterly.

Our meeting was over. I shook his hand and told him that I wished him well. I said that he could always count on me as a friend.

The next day Agnew walked into the federal courtroom in Baltimore and announced that he was pleading nolo contendere to one count of having knowingly failed to report income for tax purposes, and that he was resigning as Vice President.

The judge sentenced him to three years' probation and a $10,000 fine.

Ted Agnew's resignation was a personal tragedy for him and for his family, and a national tragedy as well. I wrote to him on October 10, the day he resigned:

As Vice President, you have addressed the great issues of our times with courage and candor. Your strong patriotism, and your profound dedication to the welfare of the nation, have been an inspiration to all who have served with you as well as to millions of others throughout the country.

I have been deeply saddened by this whole course of events, and I hope that you and your family will be sustained in the days ahead by a well-justified pride in all that you have contributed to the nation by your years of service as Vice President.

On the morning of October 10 I met with the Republican and Demo-
cratic congressional leaders. I said that our objective was to achieve peace without losing the support we had been able to build up in both the Arab and Israeli camps. So far we had succeeded, and neither side felt that we had turned against it. It was clear that none of these men, not even the most ardently pro-Israel among them, was enthusiastic about the prospect of a Mideast war that might involve American participation. Mike Mansfield said, “Mr. President, we want no more Vietnams.”

“Is Israel going to lose?” one of the leaders asked apprehensively.

“No,” I replied. “We will not let Israel go down the tubes.”

Later that morning, as Agnew was entering his plea in a courtroom in Baltimore, the Israeli ambassador came to the White House to deliver a letter from Golda Meir. She wrote:

> Early this morning I was told of the decision you made to assure us the immediate flow of U.S. matériel. Your decision will have a great and beneficial influence on our fighting capability. I know that in this hour of dire need to Israel, I could turn to you and count on your deep sympathy and understanding. We are fighting against heavy odds, but we are fully confident that we shall come out victorious. When we do we will have you in mind.

I had been checking almost hourly with Kissinger to see how our re-supply effort was coming. The reports were not good.

“Defense is putting up all kinds of obstacles,” he said. Defense Secretary James Schlesinger was apparently concerned about offending the Arabs and therefore did not want to let any Israeli El Al transport planes land at American military bases. Kissinger had finally persuaded him to relent if the planes first stopped in New York and had their tail markings painted over. I agreed that it was important not to offend the Arabs gratuitously, but we now had reports that a massive Soviet airlift of weapons and supplies was under way to Syria and Egypt, and that three Soviet airborne divisions had been put on alert. The Arabs were obviously trying to consolidate their initial military victories. It was unthinkable that Israel should lose the war for lack of weapons while we were spraying paint over Stars of David. “Tell Schlesinger to speed it up,” I told Kissinger.

The situation was further complicated when we received intelligence information that our strong ally King Hussein had decided to send a small contingent of Jordanian soldiers to fight with the Syrians. General Brent Scowcroft, who had replaced Haig as Kissinger’s deputy, called the Israeli ambassador and expressed our hope that Israel would not widen the war by attacking Jordan.

In the midst of the developing Mideast crisis I had to turn my attention to the selection of the new Vice President.

Several members of Congress came to the White House to talk to me about it. Many of the Democrats were understandably apprehensive at the prospect of the sudden elevation of a strong Republican to a position of such national prominence. Since I would not be able to run again in 1976, my Vice President would enjoy many of the advantages of incumbency if he became the Republican nominee. There was already a drumbeat of demands from the more partisan Democrats that I not appoint anyone who was going to run for President in 1976; they wanted a caretaker Vice President who would simply fill out Agnew’s unexpired term.

Mike Mansfield in particular urged that I go the caretaker route. His own choices were Senator John Sherman Cooper of Kentucky and Bill Rogers. He said that Connally, Rockefeller, or Reagan would meet with very strong opposition in Congress. This was, and I am sure was meant to be, a signal that if I nominated one of these dynamic Republican presidential contenders, the Democrats would turn very partisan. I said that the primary criterion had to be the man’s qualification for the job, and I deliberately mentioned Jerry Ford as an example of a qualified man. Mansfield lighted his pipe, took some deep puffs, and made no comment.

I asked Republican Party leaders to list their recommendations for Vice President in order of preference and send the lists to Rose Woods. On the afternoon of October 11 I left for Camp David with Rose’s compilation of the recommendations and the text of an announcement speech that at my direction had been prepared with four optional endings—for John Connally, for Nelson Rockefeller, for Ronald Reagan, and for Jerry Ford.

Among the approximately 400 top party leaders from all sections of the country and from Congress, the Cabinet, and the White House staff whose recommendations I had solicited, Rockefeller and Reagan were in a virtual tie for first choice; Connally was third; Ford was fourth. Ford, however, was first choice among members of Congress, and they were the ones who would have to approve the man I nominated.

John Connally had been my own first choice. As early as October 6 I had asked Haig to call him and see whether he would take the position if it were offered to him. I had also wanted to know Connally’s own assessment of his chances of confirmation. Over the next few days we did some quiet checking, and the reports were all the same: Connally simply could not make it. He would be opposed by an overwhelming number of Democrats who would fear him as the strongest possible Republican candidate in 1976. With all the problems I was having with Watergate, I could not become embroiled in a massive partisan slugfest over the selection of the new Vice President.

I had Haig call Connally again and tell him that, while he still remained my first choice, I was very seriously concerned whether he could survive a confirmation battle. Connally replied that he had been check-
ing through his own sources and had reached the same conclusion.

Looking at the other choices, I concluded that nominating either Rockefeller or Reagan would split the Republican Party down the middle and result in a bitter partisan fight that, while it might not be fatal in terms of confirmation, might leave scars that would not be healed by 1976. This left Jerry Ford.

From the outset of the search for a new Vice President I had established four criteria for the man I would select: qualification to be President; ideological affinity; loyalty; and confirmability. I felt that Jerry Ford was qualified to be President if for any reason I did not complete my term; I knew that his views on both domestic and foreign policy were very close to mine and that he would be a dedicated team player; and there was no question that he would be the easiest to get confirmed.

I returned to the White House early on Friday morning, October 12, and told Haig of my decision. The only other person we informed was Connally. He agreed immediately that Ford was the right choice in the circumstances. I wondered if Connally remembered, as I did, that I had once told him about a conversation I had had with Jerry Ford in 1972, when Ford had told me that in his view Connally was the man for 1976.

Later that morning a somber-faced Haig brought me the news: the court of appeals, in a 5–2 decision, had ruled against us in the tapes case. We now had one week to decide if we wished to appeal the decision to the Supreme Court.

Hugh Scott and Jerry Ford arrived to talk about the congressional schedule for the next few days. I revealed nothing of my decision about the vice presidency. According to some reporters, Ford had been hoping that during this visit he would learn that he was going to be named Vice President, and I was amused by news accounts that he had appeared downcast when he left the White House.

During the afternoon I learned that the plans for resupplying Israel with military equipment had become seriously bottlenecked. Because Israel was a war zone, no insurance company was willing to risk issuing policies for chartered private planes flying there. In order to get around the insurance problem, we raised with the Pentagon the idea of mobilizing a part of the Civil Reserve Air Fleet. The option of flying supplies to the Azores for transshipment to Israel was also considered, and after much discussion we were able to persuade the reluctant Portuguese government to agree to this plan. In the meantime, however, the Soviet airlift was assuming such massive proportions and the Israeli shortages, particularly ammunition, were becoming so serious, that I concluded that any further delay was unacceptable and decided we must use U.S. military aircraft if that was what was necessary to get our supplies through to Israel. I asked Kissinger to convey my decision to the Pentagon and have them prepare a plan. I was shocked when he told me that the Pentagon’s proposal was that we send only three C-5A military transport planes to Israel. Their rationale was that sending a small number of planes would cause fewer difficulties with the Egyptians, the Syrians, and also the Soviets. My reaction was that we would take just as much heat for sending three planes as for sending thirty.

I called Schlesinger and told him that I understood his concern and appreciated his caution. I assured him that I was fully aware of the gravity of my decision and that I would accept complete personal responsibility if, as a result, we alienated the Arabs and had our oil supplies cut off. I said if we could not get the private planes, we should use our own military transports. “Whichever way we have to do it, get them in the air, now,” I told him.

When I was informed that there was disagreement in the Pentagon about which kind of plane should be used for the airlift, I became totally exasperated. I said to Kissinger, “Goddamn it, use every one we have. Tell them to send everything that can fly.”

Shortly after seven o’clock on Friday evening, October 12, I had Haig place the call to Jerry Ford at home to tell him that he was my choice for Vice President and to ask if he was prepared to accept. Ford asked if we could call back on another number so that his wife, Betty, could share the call on an extension phone.

After talking with both Jerry and Betty, I went to the Residence to tell Pat the news. “Good,” she said. “I guessed it.”

At nine that night the announcement was made at a televised ceremony in the East Room. Afterward the family joined me while I ate dinner. I had just finished a small steak when Haig came in to discuss the latest Soviet message, which had been delivered to the White House earlier in the evening.

The message stated that they had heard we were supplying Israel with bombs, air-to-air missiles, planes, and tanks. They said that they had also heard rumors that 150 American Air Force pilots were going to Israel disguised as tourists. No threats were made, but the menacing tone and intention of the message were clear. Of course, there was no mention of the massive Soviet airlift, which was by then supplying an estimated 700 tons of weapons and matériel daily to Syria and Egypt.

This message was premature. Our airlift to Israel had not yet begun at the time he wrote, but the next day, Saturday, October 13, at 3:30 P.M., thirty C-130 transports were on their way to Israel.

By Tuesday we were sending in a thousand tons a day. Over the next few weeks there would be more than 550 American missions, an opera-
tion bigger than the Berlin airlift of 1948–49. I also ordered that an additional ten Phantom Jets be delivered to Israel.

In fact, the Israelis had already begun to turn the tide of battle on their own, and with our infusion of new supplies they were able to push all the way to the outskirts of Damascus and were close to encircling the Egyptian forces in the Sinai.

It was not until Saturday morning that I finally had time to go over the decision of the court of appeals, which had ruled against us in the Special Prosecutor’s suit for the nine tapes.

In one sense the ruling was a victory, because the court accepted our argument that wholesale access to executive deliberations would cripple the government. The majority opinion said that the ruling should be considered an “unusual and limited” requirement for a President to produce material evidence. But such a victory was relative at best because the majority on the court rejected our contention that only a President could decide whether such material was or was not privileged. Instead they arrogated that power to themselves.

The ruling was a serious blow to me personally, even though I had tried to prepare myself for it, as indicated by notes I had made for discussion with Haig and Ziegler:

We must not kid ourselves; we must face these facts.

After our August 15 statement, Gallup showed us with 38 percent support; since then we’ve had the August 22 press conference, the September 5 press conference, and a backbreaking schedule of foreign and domestic newsworthy events. We hear from some of our friends in Congress that Congress is in a better mood; that Ervin is going down in public esteem; that the news is not as biased as it was.

Yet both Gallup and Harris show our support going down from 38 in Gallup to 32, and in Harris the number of resignation rising to 31, with 56 opposed.

The question is: are we facing the facts? Aren’t we in a losing battle with the media despite the personal efforts I have made over the past month particularly? Are we facing the fact that the public attitudes may have hardened to the point that we can’t change them?

The situation was intolerable. Week by week, month by month, we were being worn down, trapped, paralyzed. The Ervin Committee continued its leaks and accusations. It had been four and a half months since Haldeman and Ehrlichman resigned; four months since Cox was named. Nothing had been resolved. The investigations dragged on. Despite the fact that a President can only be impeached, rumors that he wanted to indict me continued. Strong conservatives in Congress and on my staff had long felt that he had to go, both because of the liberal en-

claves he had established and also because of the parasite he had become, dangerously draining the executive month after month. Firing him seemed the only way to rid the administration of the partisan viper we had planted in our bosom. Whether or not we decided to appeal to the Supreme Court in this particular tapes case, I knew that it would be only a matter of days before Cox would be back for more, and then more after that.

This ruling had come at the worst possible time: we were in the midst of a major world crisis in the Middle East, and in the aftermath of the shattering domestic trauma of the resignation of a Vice President. But any such considerations were extraneous to the timetable imposed on us by the ruling. We had until midnight on Friday either to comply or to file a further appeal.

Appointing a Special Prosecutor had been a major mistake, one that I knew would be difficult and costly to remedy. If I could develop an acceptable compromise on the battle for the tapes, I decided to fire Cox and return the Watergate investigation to the Justice Department, where it had been considered 90 percent complete months earlier and where the investigators would not have the interest Cox and his staff had in self-perpetuation.

When the idea of supplying summaries instead of transcripts of the subpoenaed tapes had first been explored at the end of September, we had begun thinking of finding some outside person who could verify their accuracy. Fred Buzhardt suggested Senator John Stennis of Mississippi. Stennis was a Democrat, the Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Standards and Conduct, a former judge, and one of the few men in Congress respected by members of both parties for his fairness and integrity. Summaries, we felt, would not compromise the critical question of precedent.

On Sunday, October 14, I saw Stennis for a few minutes after the White House worship service and mentioned the possibility of his verifying the accuracy of some tape summaries. He felt he could handle the job.

The next day, Monday, October 15, Haig called in Elliot Richardson. Cox was officially Richardson’s subordinate, and therefore Richardson would be the one who would have to fire him. Richardson, however, was an unpredictable element. He had publicly acknowledged the constitutional foundations of my refusal to hand over tapes when they were first subpoenaed; but he had also promised at his confirmation hearings that he would not fire Cox except for “extraordinary improprieties,” and Richardson might feel that if he fired Cox he too would have to resign for breaking his promise to the Senate. After their meeting Haig con-
firmed that this was indeed how Richardson felt. Besides, I thought, no one could ignore the reality of the situation: Cox had become a Watergate hero.

Richardson’s resignation was something we wanted to avoid at all costs. Haig and I decided to approach him with a compromise: we would not insist on firing Cox, but we would go ahead with the Stennis plan. I was still determined that this would be the end of our compromises with Cox. Haig told Richardson this and reported back that Stennis felt that the plan was good and reasonable and that Stennis was perfect for the job. He also said that he had received Richardson’s assurance that if Cox refused to accept the Stennis compromise, Richardson would support me in the controversy that was bound to ensue. Haig said that Richardson was confident there would be no problem and that Cox, who had been his mentor at Harvard Law School and with whom he had been friendly ever since, would agree to the compromise.

On Monday Haig and Buzhardt went to see Stennis and confirmed the arrangements. Stennis would verify the line-by-line third-person summaries of the tapes that we produced and attest to the propriety of whatever omissions we made of material that dealt with irrelevant or national security matters. We had also decided to provide the verified summaries to Ervin and Baker for the Watergate Committee.

On October 17 I met in the Oval Office with four Arab Foreign Ministers. Afterward the Saudi Foreign Minister told reporters, “We think the man who could solve the Vietnam war, the man who could have settled the peace all over the world, can easily play a good role in settling and having peace in our area of the Middle East.”

At 8:45 p.m. on Thursday, October 18, we received word of a proposal the Soviets intended to submit to the UN Security Council for a joint Middle East cease-fire resolution. The combination of Israeli successes and our military airlift had proved too much for the Arabs and their Soviet sponsors, who proposed a resolution based on the three principles of a cease-fire in place, immediate withdrawal by the Israelis to the pre-1967 borders— and the beginning of consultations on a peace agreement.

These terms reflected the familiar Soviet insistence that before any discussions of peace could begin, the Israelis would have to give up the territory they had gained in the 1967 war. This demand was utterly unrealistic, since the Israelis saw this territory not just as their leverage in any negotiations but as essential to their national security in the present environment. Besides, the recent Israeli battlefield successes had given them a decided military advantage, and there was no chance whatever that they would accept willingly the same terms the Arabs would have tried to impose if they had been the victors.

I sent a response that did not commit us to accepting the Soviet proposal but stressed the importance of keeping communications open. I said that our détente would remain incomplete unless peace was achieved in the Middle East and both of us had played a part in it.

In the meantime Haig reported that Richardson had talked with Cox but could not persuade him to compromise. Cox was unwilling to accept Stennis’s verification. Richardson told Haig that Cox didn’t have the sense of who Stennis was—his integrity—that Washington insiders had. Not only that, Cox wanted specific assurances of total access to all White House documents and tapes in the future. Haig reported that even Richardson thought this was unreasonable. More than ever I wanted Cox fired.

On Thursday and Friday, October 18 and 19, Richardson met twice with Haig, Wright, Garment, and Buzhardt. Haig told me that Richardson had suggested as an alternative to firing Cox, putting what he called “parameters” around him. The Special Prosecutor, as a part of the executive branch, was required to obey the orders of his superiors. The parameters could include an instruction that he was forbidden to sue for any further presidential documents. In the meantime we would bypass Cox with the Stennis compromise by offering the transcripts to the court and to the Ervin Committee.

Haig told me that our lawyers had analyzed Cox’s possible reactions to Richardson’s proposal and decided that he had three possible choices: he could accept the Stennis compromise; he could reject it and do nothing; or he could reject it and resign. According to Haig, everyone was certain that Cox, if he did not accept the Stennis compromise, would resign in protest against it; this would pose no problem for Richardson.

On October 19, while we were still trying to determine the best way to deal with Cox, a letter arrived from Brezhnev. He said that the situation in the Middle East was becoming more and more dangerous. Since neither the United States nor the Soviet Union wanted to see our relations harmed, he stated that we both should do our utmost to keep events in the Middle East from taking an even more dangerous turn. He suggested that Kissinger come to Moscow for direct talks.

We had reached a critical juncture in the war. The Israelis were now defeating the Arabs on the battlefield, and over the next few days the Soviets would have to decide what they were going to do about it. In the afternoon I sent Congress a request for $2.2 billion in emergency aid for Israel. On October 17 the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries had voted to reduce crude oil production. Within a few days after my request for aid to Israel, Abu Dhabi, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, and Kuwait had imposed total oil embargoes on the United States.
Even so, I felt that we could do no less for Israel at such a critical time.

Later that same afternoon, October 19, Haig brought me word of what he called a “tepid” complaint from Richardson about some of the terms of our plan for dealing with Cox. “It’s no big problem,” Haig said.

At 5:25 P.M. Sam Ervin and Howard Baker arrived at my office. They had been reached in New Orleans and Chicago respectively and brought to Washington aboard Air Force jets. When I told them about the Stennis compromise, they both seemed pleased and relieved.

Ervin was very respectful during the meeting. Toward the end I told him that I regretted that I had talked to him so bluntly on the telephone in July. He said that he had not realized at the time that I was ill and that no apologies were necessary. After Baker and Ervin had agreed to the Stennis compromise, Haig notified the members of the White House staff, the Cabinet, and Jerry Ford. Everyone was elated by the news.

It was reported to me later that Bryce Harlow, who was helping Haig make the calls to the Cabinet, mistakenly called Elliot Richardson. He quickly apologized, but Richardson gave a petulant reply: “I have never been treated so shabbily.” Harlow reported this incident to Haig, who immediately called Richardson and said that he was astonished to hear what he had said to Harlow. Richardson apologized. He told Haig that he was very tired and had had a drink and that things were looking much better to him now.

I announced the Stennis compromise in a statement released at 8:15 that night. I began with a reference to the extremely delicate world situation at that very moment:

What matters most, in this critical hour, is our ability to act—and to act in a way that enables us to control events, not to be paralyzed and overwhelmed by them. At home, the Watergate issue has taken on overtones of a partisan political contest. Concurrently, there are those in the international community who may be tempted by our Watergate-related difficulties at home to misread America’s unity and resolve in meeting the challenges we confront abroad.

Then I described the Stennis compromise and stated that the verified summaries would be sent to Judge Sirica and to the Ervin Committee. Having done this, I announced the instruction to Cox to cease and desist from his Watergate fishing expedition:

Though I have not wished to intrude upon the independence of the Special Prosecutor, I have felt it necessary to direct him, as an employee of the executive branch, to make no further attempts by judicial process to obtain tapes, notes, or memoranda of presidential conversations. I believe that with the statement that will be provided to the court, any legitimate need of the Special Prosecutor is fully satisfied and that he can proceed to obtain indictments against those who may have committed any crimes. And I believe that by these actions I have taken today, America will be spared the anguish of further indecision and litigation about tapes.

The initial congressional and public reaction to the Stennis compromise was favorable. Congressional colleagues of both parties expressed confidence in Stennis. David Broder wrote a column describing him as the logical man for the job.

I had immediately agreed to Brezhnev’s suggestion that Kissinger go to Moscow for direct talks about the Middle East. At midnight on October 19, just before Kissinger was to leave for Moscow, I phoned him to discuss his trip.

The next morning, Saturday, October 20, I sent a stern letter to Brezhnev. I purposely mitigated the hard language in the text with a handwritten note extending best personal regards from Pat and me to him and Mrs. Brezhnev. Brezhnev, I knew, would understand what this mixture conveyed: if he was willing to get behind a serious peace effort, I would not consider that the Soviet airlift had affected our personal relationship or deflected the course of détente.

Shortly after Kissinger arrived in Moscow, he sent me a letter from Brezhnev, echoing the sentiments of my letter and containing a similar handwritten postscript: “Mrs. Brezhnev is grateful for the regards and in turn joins me in sending our best personal regards to Mrs. Nixon and to you.”

Early Saturday afternoon Cox called a press conference. Adopting the air of a modest and even befuddled professor, he said, “I am certainly not out to get the President of the United States. I am even worried, to put it in colloquial terms, that I am getting too big for my britches, that what I see as principle could be vanity ... It is sort of embarrassing to be put in the position to say, well, I don’t want the President of the United States to tell me what to do.” He said that he was going ahead with his request for the tapes despite the compromise I had offered. He said he questioned whether anyone but Elliot Richardson could give him instructions that he was legally obligated to obey.

I strongly felt that I could not allow Cox to defy openly a presidential directive. I thought of Brezhnev and how it would look to the Soviets if in the midst of our diplomatic showdown with them I were in the position of having to defer to the demands of one of my own employees. Furthermore, I thought that Cox had deliberately exceeded his authority; I
felt that he was trying to get me personally, and I wanted him out.

Shortly after two o'clock, Haig called Richardson and asked him to fire Cox. Richardson said that he would not, and that he wanted to see me in order to resign. There were rumors that Richardson in conversations with others was now trying to back off from his own role in the formulation of the Stennis compromise and the cease-and-desist directive to Cox.

When Richardson arrived at the White House, Haig appealed to him to withhold his resignation at least until the Mideast crisis had been resolved. The impact of his resignation during this crisis, while Kissinger was meeting with Brezhnev, might have incalculable effects, not just on the Soviets' assessment of our intentions and our strength, but on the morale within our own government. I later asked Len Garment, "If I can't get an order carried out by my Attorney General, how can I get arms to Israel?" But Richardson refused to wait even a few days.

Shortly after 4:30 he was ushered into the Oval Office to tender his resignation. It was an emotional meeting. I talked to him about the gravity of the decision he was making and the ramifications of the things it might precipitate. I told him how serious I thought the next days were going to be with respect to the situation in the Mideast, and I repeated Haig's arguments in a personal appeal to him to delay his resignation in order not to trigger a domestic crisis at such a critical time for us abroad. Again he refused. He thanked me for being such a good friend and for having honored him with so many high appointments.

Richardson's Deputy, William Ruckelshaus, was the next in line to succeed as Attorney General, but he let us know that he too would resign rather than fire Cox. I feared that we were in for a whole chain of such resignations, and I was not sure where it would end. I was, however, prepared to see it through.

The third-ranking official in the Justice Department was the Solicitor General, Robert Bork. The resignations of his two superiors placed Bork in a painfully difficult position. He was no "yes man." But however much he might personally have opposed my decision to fire Cox, he was a constitutional scholar and he felt that I had the constitutional right to do so and that he therefore had the duty to carry out my orders. He said that he would fire Archibald Cox.

At 8:22 P.M. on Saturday, October 20, Ziegler went to the White House briefing room and announced that Cox was being fired, that Richardson and Ruckelshaus had resigned, and that the office of the Watergate Special Prosecutor was being abolished and its functions transferred back to the Justice Department.

The television networks broke into their regular programming with breathless, almost hysterical, bulletins. Later that evening there were special reports on all networks. Commentators and correspondents talked in apocalyptic terms and painted the night's events in terms of an administration coup aimed at suppressing opposition. John Chancellor of NBC began a broadcast thus: "The country tonight is in the midst of what may be the most serious constitutional crisis in its history.... That is a stunning development and nothing even remotely like it has happened in all of our history.... In my career as a correspondent, I never thought I would be announcing these things." Some called it the "Night of the Long Knives" in a tasteless and inflammatory comparison with Hitler's murderous purge of his opposition in 1934. Within twenty-four hours the television and press had labeled the events with the prejudicial shorthand of "Saturday Night Massacre."

On Monday evening the network news shows ran nineteen different attacks on me by various congressmen; these were balanced by only five defenses, three of them by Bork.

"Has President Nixon gone crazy?" asked columnist Carl Rowan; Ralph Nader said I was "acting like a madman, a tyrant, or both"; "smacks of dictatorship" was Edmund Muskie's judgment. "A reckless act of desperation by a President... who has no respect for law and no regard for men of conscience," was Teddy Kennedy's comment. Senator Robert Byrd said that the Cox firing was a "Brownshirt operation" using "Gestapo tactics." "The wolves are in full cry," countered the New York Daily News. The Star stated, "The jackboots that some observers seem to hear... are largely in their own minds."

By Tuesday, October 23, there were twenty-one resolutions for my impeachment in varying stages of discussion on Capitol Hill. Six newspapers that had formerly been staunch supporters of the administration now called for my resignation. By October 30, in a straight party-line vote, the House Judiciary Committee had voted itself subpoena power; on November 15 the House voted to allocate $1 million to begin the process of impeachment.

Although I had been prepared for a major and adverse reaction to Cox's firing, I was taken by surprise by the ferocious intensity of the reaction that actually occurred. For the first time I recognized the depth of the impact Watergate had been having on America; I suddenly realized how deeply its acid had eaten into the nation's grain. As I learned of the almost hysterical reactions of otherwise sensible and responsible people to this Saturday night's events, I realized how few people were able to see things from my perspective, how badly frayed the nerves of the American public had become. To the extent that I had not been aware of this situation, my actions were the result of serious
miscalculation. But to the extent that it was simply intolerable to continue with Cox as Special Prosecutor, I felt I had no other option than to act as I did.

In Moscow on Sunday, October 21, Kissinger and Brezhnev produced the draft of a proposed cease-fire agreement. Brezhnev was to inform Sadat and Asad of its terms, and Kissinger was to present it to the Israelis. While he was en route, I sent Mrs. Meir a letter expressing my regret that there had not been more time for consultation and describing the provisions of the proposed agreement:

1. A cease-fire in place.
2. A general call for the implementation of UN Resolution 242 after the cease-fire.
3. Negotiation between the concerned parties aimed at establishing a just and durable peace in the Mideast.

These terms were especially notable because they were the first in which the Soviets had agreed to a resolution that called for direct negotiations between the parties without any conditions or qualifications. It was also the first time that they had accepted a "general call" for adherence to Resolution 242 and not insisted on Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories as a prerequisite for any further negotiations.

Both the Arabs and the Israelis accepted the terms—without much enthusiasm, to be sure—and on Monday, October 22, the cease-fire went into effect. Within hours, however, the Israelis charged that the Egyptians were violating it and resumed an active offensive and completed their encirclement of the 20,000-man Egyptian Third Army on the east bank of the Suez Canal.

Kissinger, now back in Washington, received a message from the Soviets blaming the Israelis for the breakdown of the cease-fire and informing him that Sadat had suggested that the United States and the Soviet Union agree on measures to ensure the physical disengagement of Egyptian and Israeli forces. Twenty minutes later, at 11 A.M. on October 23, I received an urgent message from Brezhnev over the Washington-Moscow hot line. Although it began, "Esteemed Mr. President," the words were hard and cold. Brezhnev ignored the Egyptian provocations and charged the Israelis with rupturing the cease-fire. He urged that the United States move decisively to stop the violations. He curtly implied that we might even have colluded in Israel's action.

I sent a reply that, according to our information, Egypt was the first party to violate the cease-fire. I added that this was not the time to debate the issue. I said that we had insisted that Israel take immediate steps to cease hostilities, and I urged Brezhnev to do the same on the Egyptian side. I closed by saying that he and I had achieved a historic settlement over the past weekend and should not permit it to be destroyed.

By the time I reached Camp David that afternoon, Brezhnev had sent a message that the Egyptian side was ready for another cease-fire if the Israelis would agree. We sent back a reply urging him to press Syria as well as Egypt to accept the cease-fire. I concluded, "I continue to believe that you and we have done a distinct service to the cause of peace."

That same day, Tuesday, October 23, Charles Alan Wright was scheduled to appear before Judge Sirica and announce my decision on the subpoenaed tapes. The Stennis compromise had fallen apart in the wake of the Cox firing, and shortly before Wright was to leave for the court I met with him, Haig, Garment, and Buzhardt to make the final decision.

I could see that we were going to have to act swiftly or risk an impeachment resolution being raced through the House. This threat argued for yielding the tapes. At the same time, I knew the implications of such compliance, both for the principle of executive privilege and for my personal situation. As a third option I could appeal the decision to the Supreme Court. But that would force an even more binding decision, possibly a negative one, and even greater damage would be done to the presidency and the doctrine of separation of powers.

There were other considerations as well: some congressmen were hinting that Ford's confirmation would be dependent on my surrendering the tapes. Finally, I felt that there was a need to relieve the domestic crisis in order to reduce the temptation the Soviets would feel to take advantage of our internal turmoil by exploiting the international crisis in the Middle East. Everyone at the meeting agreed that I should yield the tapes. It was a wrenching decision for me. I consoled myself that at least these tapes might finally prove that Dean had lied in his testimony against me. That afternoon Wright appeared before the bench and announced, "This President does not defy the law."

On October 24 the second Mideast cease-fire went into effect. But there were alarming new intelligence reports: we received information that seven Soviet airborne divisions, numbering 50,000 men, had been put on alert; and eighty-five Soviet ships, including landing craft and ships carrying troop helicopters, were now in the Mediterranean.

That afternoon Sadat publicly requested that Brezhnev and I send a joint peacekeeping force to the Middle East. The Soviets would obviously back this idea, viewing it as an opportunity to re-establish their military presence in Egypt. Through John Scali, now our ambassador to the UN, we also picked up rumors that the Soviets were plotting for the
nonaligned nations to sponsor and support a joint U.S.-U.S.S.R. force whether we liked it or not.

I decided to use our newly opened lines of communication with Egypt to send Sadat a straightforward message:

I have just learned that a resolution may be introduced into the Security Council this evening urging that outside military forces—including those of the U.S. and U.S.S.R.—be sent to the Middle East to enforce the cease-fire. I must tell you that if such a resolution is introduced into the Security Council, it will be vetoed by the United States for the following reasons:

It would be impossible to assemble sufficient outside military power to represent an effective counterweight to the indigenous forces now engaged in combat in the Middle East.

Should the two great nuclear powers be called upon to provide forces, it would introduce an extremely dangerous potential for direct great-power rivalry in the area.

At nine o'clock that night a new message arrived from Brezhnev. He claimed to have hard information that Israeli armed forces were fighting Egyptian forces on the east bank of the Suez Canal. We knew that this was not true; it had been a relatively quiet day on the battlefield. There was clearly some ulterior motive behind Brezhnev's message, and we would have to wait and see what it was.

An hour later another message from Brezhnev arrived. Kissinger called Dobrynin and read it to him just to be sure there was no mistake, because this message represented perhaps the most serious threat to U.S.-Soviet relations since the Cuban missile crisis eleven years before. Brezhnev repeated his assertion that Israel was fighting despite the Security Council cease-fire. Therefore he urged that the United States and the Soviet Union each immediately dispatch military contingents to the region. He called for an immediate reply and stated that if we did not agree to the joint action he proposed, the Soviets would consider acting unilaterally.

When Haig informed me about this message, I said that he and Kissinger should have a meeting at the White House to formulate plans for a firm reaction to what amounted to a scarcely veiled threat of unilateral Soviet intervention. Words were not making our point—we needed action, even the shock of a military alert.

Late that night I sent Sadat another message, outlining the Soviet proposal and explaining, as I had in my earlier message, why I found intervention unacceptable:

I asked you to consider the consequences for your country if the two great nuclear countries were thus to confront each other on your soil. I ask you further to consider the impossibility for us for undertaking the diplomatic ini-

In the meantime Kissinger, Haig, Schlesinger, Scowcroft, Moorer, and Director Colby of the CIA met at eleven o'clock in the White House Situation Room. Their unanimous recommendation was that we should put all American conventional and nuclear forces on military alert. In the early morning hours we flashed the word to American bases, installations, and naval units at home and around the world.

When we were sure the Soviets had picked up the first signs of the alert, I sent a letter to the Soviet Embassy for immediate transmission to Moscow. It was directly to Brezhnev from me, and beneath the diplomatic phraseology it minced no words:

Mr. General Secretary:

I have carefully studied your important message of this evening. I agree with you that our understanding to act jointly for peace is of the highest value and that we should implement that understanding in this complex situation.

I must tell you, however, that your proposal for a particular kind of joint action, that of sending Soviet and American military contingents to Egypt, is not appropriate in the present circumstances.

We have no information which would indicate that the cease-fire is now being violated on any significant scale. . . .

In these circumstances, we must view your suggestion of unilateral action as a matter of the gravest concern involving incalculable consequences.

It is clear that the forces necessary to impose the cease-fire terms on the two sides would be massive and would require closest coordination so as to avoid bloodshed. This is not only clearly infeasible but it is not appropriate to the situation.

I said that I would be prepared to agree that some American and Soviet personnel go to the area, but not as combat forces. Instead, they might be included in an augmented UN force. But even this kind of arrangement would have to follow carefully prescribed lines:

It would be understood that this is an extraordinary and temporary step, solely for the purpose of providing adequate information concerning compliance by both sides with the terms of the cease-fire. If this is what you mean by contingents, we will consider it.

Mr. General Secretary, in the spirit of our agreements this is the time for acting not unilaterally but in harmony and with cool heads. I believe my proposal is consonant with the letter and spirit of our understandings and would ensure a prompt implementation of the cease-fire. . . .
You must know, however, that we could in no event accept unilateral action. As I stated above, such action would produce incalculable consequences which would be in the interest of neither of our countries and which would end all we have striven so hard to achieve.

At 7:15 A.M. on October 25 a message arrived from President Sadat that he understood our position and that he would ask the UN to provide an international peacekeeping force.

I met with Haig and Kissinger at eight, and less than an hour later I briefed the bipartisan leadership on these latest events. The room was hushed as I described the exchanges of the last few hours. When the leaders left, they said that they were fully in support of my actions and my policy, including the military alert.

While we were still waiting for word from Brezhnev that would indicate the Soviet reaction, Kissinger held a press conference. It had been a severe shock to the American people to wake up and find that during the night our armed forces had been placed on worldwide alert, and four of the questions at Kissinger's press conference specifically related to whether the decision to call the alert had been based entirely on the military aspects of the situation. Some even obliquely wondered whether the decision had been totally rational. One reporter commented, "As you know, there has been some line of speculation this morning that the American alert might have been prompted as much perhaps by American domestic requirements as by the real requirements of diplomacy in the Middle East."

Kissinger was taken aback by the hostile and skeptical atmosphere in the room, and he replied icily: "It is a symptom of what is happening to our country that it could even be suggested that the United States would alert its forces for domestic reasons. We do not think it is wise at this moment to go into details of the diplomatic exchanges. ... Upon the conclusion we will make the record available. ... And I am absolutely confident that it will be seen that the President had no other choice as a responsible national leader." Later in the press conference he acknowledged that we were undergoing a major domestic crisis, and he added: "It is up to you ladies and gentlemen to determine whether this is the moment to try to create a crisis of confidence in the field of foreign policy as well. ... But there has to be a minimum of confidence that the senior officials of the American government are not playing with the lives of the American people."

As Kissinger was parrying these questions, a message arrived from Brezhnev. In a few short sentences he announced that the Soviet Union was going to send seventy individual "observers" to the Middle East. This was completely different from the military contingent he had described in his earlier letter. I responded to his message in a similarly low-keyed tone, but strongly expressed my opposition to sending even independent observers:

I propose that at this time we leave the composition of the UN Observer Force to the discretion of the Secretary-General. ... We do not believe it necessary to have separate observer forces from individual countries operating in the area.

I evaluated the Soviet behavior during the Middle East crisis not as an example of the failure of détente but as an illustration of its limitations—limitations of which I had always been keenly aware. I told the bipartisan leadership meeting on October 25, "I have never said that the Soviets are 'good guys.' What I have always said is that we should not enter into unnecessary confrontations with them."

The Soviet Union will always act in its own self-interest; and so will the United States. Détente cannot change that. All we can hope from détente is that it will minimize confrontation in marginal areas and provide, at least, alternative possibilities in the major ones.

In 1973 the Soviets, with their presence in the Middle East already reduced, feared that they would lose what little foothold they had left. As our direct approaches to Egypt and the Arab countries had met with increasing success, the Soviets had undoubtedly compensated with increased anti-Israeli bravado. Perhaps this indirectly encouraged the Arab countries, which were fanatically determined to regain the occupied territories from Israel if the Soviets would supply the means. Although Brezhnev heatedly denied it when I talked to him at Summit III in Moscow in June 1974, the Soviets may have gone even further and directly urged the Arabs to attack, lured by the tantalizing prospect that they might actually win a quick victory over the Israelis if they could combine surprise with their vastly superior numbers. The Soviets might also have assumed that the domestic crisis in the United States would deflect or deter us from aiding Israel as much or as fast as we had in the past.

Any such high hopes were dashed by the Israeli counteroffensive made possible by the American airlift. For the second time in six years the Arabs lost most of the Soviet equipment that had been sent them. Moreover, for the first time in an Arab-Israeli conflict the United States conducted itself in a manner that not only preserved but greatly enhanced our relations with the Arabs—even while we were massively re-supplying the Israelis. Once they realized that military victory was now beyond their reach for at least the next several years, the Egyptian and Syrian leaders were ready to try the path of negotiation. Thanks to our new policy of carefully cultivated direct relations with the Arab capitals, the Arab leaders had a place other than Moscow to turn.
So obsessive had Watergate become for some reporters and publications that suggestions continued to be made that I had purposely provoked or encouraged the Mideast crisis to distract attention from Watergate and to demonstrate that I was still capable of leadership and action. With this in mind, and thinking about the reporting on the Cox firing, I faced this problem head on at a press conference on October 26. "I have never heard or seen such outrageous, vicious, distorted reporting in twenty-seven years of public life," I said. "And yet I should point out that even in this week, when many thought that the President was shell-shocked, unable to act, the President acted decisively in the interests of peace, in the interests of the country, and I can assure you that whatever shocks gentlemen of the press may have, or others, political people, these shocks will not affect me in my doing my job."

At the end of October there was another hot-line exchange. Brezhnev made a formal complaint about what he called Israeli hostilities; in particular he referred to their handling of food and medical supplies intended for the trapped Egyptian Third Army. He also stated that the recent U.S. alert had surprised him, and he complained that it had not promoted a relaxation of tension.

In my reply I said we would do our part to assist the transport of supplies to the wounded Egyptians in the Third Army. In response to his criticism of the alert I quoted the words he had written threatening to take unilateral action unless we joined his plan to send U.S. and Soviet forces to the Middle East. I stated, "Mr. General Secretary, these are serious words and were taken seriously here in Washington."

I followed up on November 3 with a letter to Brezhnev stating the importance of respecting the principle stated in our agreement on the prevention of nuclear war: that efforts at gaining unilateral advantage at the expense of the other party were inconsistent with the objectives of peaceful relations and the avoidance of confrontations. I repeated the fact that the peace of the world depended on the policies and actions of our two countries—in both a positive and a negative sense.

After almost three weeks Brezhnev replied to this letter. He indicated a willingness to pick up the dialogue of détente where it had left off before the Mideast crisis, and he closed with an unusually personal reference: "We would like, so to say, to wish you in a personal, human way energy and success in overcoming all sorts of complexities, the causes of which are not too easy to understand at a distance."

At the beginning of November Golda Meir came to Washington. We met for an hour in the Oval Office, and she expressed her gratitude for the airlift. "There were days and hours when we needed a friend, and you came right in," she said. "You don't know what your airlift means to us."

"I never believe in little plays when big issues are at stake," I said.

I urged a policy of sensible restraint for Israel. "Sometimes, when you have a situation of attrition, even winners can lose," I reminded her. "The problem that Israel must now consider is whether the policy you are following can succeed. Lacking a settlement, the only policy is constantly being prepared for war. But that really is no policy at all." I said that she could be remembered as the leader who created an Israel that was not burdened with a huge arms budget or with having to fight a war every five years.

Mrs. Meir seemed to understand the essential common sense of what I was saying. She also seemed to appreciate my lack of illusions about the limitations of détente or the nature of the Soviet threat. "When the Europeans talked about détente," she said, "they were bleary-eyed and naïve. But you know exactly what you are doing and who your partners are."

On November 5 Kissinger began the first of many journeys to the Middle East in which he personally guided first Israel and Egypt, and then Israel and Syria, along the unfamiliar and often painful road toward a peaceful settlement of their differences. On November 7, 1973, after six years of tense estrangement, the United States and Egypt resumed diplomatic relations.

After Cox had been fired, I had intended that Henry Petersen and his Justice Department staff would be allowed to complete the Watergate investigation, which they had begun and which was properly their responsibility. But it was evident that Congress was determined to have another Special Prosecutor. It was equally evident that I was in no political position to prevent it.

Robert Bork, as Acting Attorney General, began searching for a new Special Prosecutor. A few days later Haig reported to me that he and Bork had concluded that Leon Jaworski, a successful Houston lawyer, a former president of the American Bar Association, and a prominent Texas Democrat, was the right man for the job. Haig had already tentatively approached Jaworski, who had said he would accept if he could have our agreement that in the event we came to an impasse he could sue me in the courts for evidence. I agreed to this condition, and, as a further guarantee, we announced that there would have to be a supportive consensus of the Majority and Minority Leaders of the House and Senate and the ranking majority and minority members of the House and Senate Judiciary Committees before he could be fired.

Within ten days of the Cox firing and after the high political price I had had to pay for ridding myself of him, I was back in the same trap of
having to accept a Watergate Special Prosecutor. But there was one major difference: I had been told that, unlike Cox, Jaworski would be fair and objective. Although as a Democrat he would be under pressure from other Democrats to score partisan points, I was led to believe that he respected the office of the presidency and that therefore he would not mount court challenges just for the plaudits and publicity he would thereby receive. Haig said that Jaworski recognized that the staff assembled by Cox was excessively anti-Nixon and that he was determined not to become their captive. He told Haig that he planned to bring in his own people and would see to it that the staff limited its activity to relevant and proper areas. Haig liked Jaworski and was impressed by him; he told me that Jaworski would be a tough prosecutor but not a partisan who was simply out to get me. On November 1, we announced that Leon Jaworski would be the Special Prosecutor.

I also needed a new Attorney General. The political situation created by Richardson's resignation dictated that in order to get my nominee confirmed, I would have to select someone who would not have to contend with charges of excessive personal loyalty to me. Senator William Saxbe of Ohio had long since established that he was a man without that problem. As my father would have put it, he was as "independent as a hog on ice." His appointment was announced the same day as Jaworski's.

### SETBACK AND RALLY

In late September, when we were first preparing for the Stennis compromise, Steve Bull had had some difficulty locating several of the nine subpoenaed conversations. The Secret Service had catalogued the tapes, but their system was informal at best and haphazard at worst. In one case, Bull finally found an apparently missing conversation on a reel that had been erroneously labeled. In the case of a June 20, 1972, phone conversation with John Mitchell, I remembered that I had talked to him from a phone that was in the Family Quarters and therefore not connected to any recording equipment. In another case, that of an April 15, 1973, conversation with John Dean, the tape of my meeting with him the next day, because a comparison of the tape. of my meeting with him the next day, because a comparison of the tape. of my meeting with him the next day, because a comparison of the tape with my written notes of the April 15 meeting with John Dean and the April 15 notes and the April 16 tape indicated that we had covered much the same ground in the two sessions.

On October 30 Buzhardt informed Sirica that two of the subpoenaed conversations had never been recorded. We readily agreed to have a panel of experts investigate our explanation for each case. We also offered my written notes of the April 15 meeting with John Dean and the tape of my meeting with him the next day, because a comparison of the April 15 notes and the April 16 tape indicated that we had covered much the same ground in the two sessions.

I was sure that a full explanation of how and why the phone call to Mitchell and the meeting with Dean had failed to be recorded would clear things up completely. I simply did not understand the degree of public anticipation that had developed around these nine subpoenaed tapes; now I can see that it was largely the result of the degree to which my personal credibility had sunk.

The news was met with an outburst of anger and indignation. The next day the media began reporting about two "missing tapes." This was both unfair and misleading: the use of the word missing implied that the two tapes had existed in the first place. People felt that I was toying with their patience and insulting their intelligence.

For the first time since the Watergate affair began, the New York Times urged editorially that I resign the presidency. Time, in its first editorial in fifty years, also said that I should step down. Even old friends, among them the Detroit News and ABC's Howard K. Smith, began to express doubts. It was in the wake of the two so-called missing tapes that Senator Edward Brooke of Massachusetts became the first Republican in Congress to urge that I resign.

When Barry Goldwater saw the frenzied turn events were taking, he went on the air to ask people to "curb their wild stampede, to pause a moment in their tumult and trumpeting," and give thought to the consequences of the hysteria if it continued uncurbed. "In God's name, cool it," he said.

On November 1 I wrote a frustrated note on the top of a briefing paper:

- There were no missing tapes.
- There never were any.
- The conversations in question were not taped.
- Why couldn't we get that across to people?

That same day I left for a weekend in Florida. I looked forward to the