

Sheriff Frank Wanicka of Lee County, Florida and his "Cops for Christ" opened the program with an impressive song. . . . Miami Dolphins star Mike Kolen spoke. . . .

And then the sound erupted, and I felt very strange – they were giving Bob and me a standing ovation! Joy flooded into my heart with a rush, and I felt beside myself with emotion, with a longing to touch and embrace those people, God's people.

Source: Anita Bryant and Bob Green, *Raising God's Children* (Old Tappen, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1977), pp. 33-4, 65, 66, 154, 156-7.

Study: Jean Hardisty, *Mobilizing Resentment: Conservative Resurgence from the John Birch Society to the Promise Keepers* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000).

Discussion Questions

1. What sorts of critiques did women and gays and lesbians offer of American society in the 1960s?
2. How are these critiques similar to or different from those women and gays and lesbians might offer today?
3. Why did some people, even some women, object to feminism and gay rights?
4. How and why did both sides in the struggle over issues of gender and sexuality use the rhetoric of "rights"?

Chapter 7

Conservative Ascendance

I. The 1968 Election

Richard Nixon's Acceptance Speech, August 8, 1968

By 1968, protest movements in the US had produced a growing backlash among Americans troubled by the increasing demands for change and the spread of demonstrations that sometimes turned violent. George Wallace, the segregationist governor of Alabama, exploited the resentment of conservative Americans by running an independent campaign for president in 1968. He won 13 percent of the popular vote in the wake of riots following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., and street battles between anti-war demonstrators and Chicago police outside the Democratic National Convention. The victor in 1968 was Richard M. Nixon, who had served as Dwight D. Eisenhower's vice-president and then lost to John F. Kennedy in the 1960 election. Taking advantage of Democratic control of the White House and Congress for the previous eight years, Nixon spoke as an outsider in 1968. In his speech accepting the Republican nomination for president, what did Nixon claim was wrong with the country and whom did he blame? What specifically did he promise to do in foreign and domestic affairs, and to whom exactly did he address his message?

The choice we make in 1968 will determine not only the future of America but the future of peace and freedom in the world for the last third of the 20th century, and the question that we answer tonight: can America meet this great challenge?

Let us listen to America to find the answer to that question.

As we look at America, we see cities enveloped in smoke and flame. We hear sirens in the night. We see Americans dying on distant battlefields abroad. We see Americans hating each other; fighting each other; killing each other at home.

And as we see and hear these things, millions of Americans cry out in anguish: Did we come all this way for this? Did American boys die in Normandy and Korea and in Valley Forge for this?

Listen to the answers to these questions.

It is another voice, it is a quiet voice in the tumult of the shouting. It is the voice of the great majority of Americans, the forgotten Americans, the nonshouters, the non-demonstrators. They're not racists or sick; they're not guilty of the crime that plagues the land; they are black, they are white; they're native born and foreign born; they're young and they're old.

They work in American factories, they run American businesses. They serve in government; they provide most of the soldiers who die to keep it free. They give drive to the spirit of America. They give lift to the American dream. They give steel to the backbone of America.

They're good people. They're decent people; they work and they save and they pay their taxes and they care. . . .

America's in trouble today not because her people have failed, but because her leaders have failed. And what America needs are leaders to match the greatness of her people.

And this great group of Americans – the forgotten Americans and others – know that the great question Americans must answer by their votes in November is this: Whether we shall continue for four more years the policies of the last five years.

And this is their answer, and this is my answer to that question: When the strongest nation in the world can be tied down for four years in a war in Vietnam with no end in sight, when the richest nation in the world can't manage its own economy, when the nation with the greatest tradition of the rule of law is plagued by unprecedented lawlessness, when a nation has been known for a century for equality of opportunity is torn by unprecedented racial violence, and when the President of the United States cannot travel abroad or to any major city at home without fear of a hostile demonstration – then it's time for new leadership for the United States of America. . . .

And so tonight I do not promise the millennium in the morning. I don't promise that we can eradicate poverty and end discrimination and eliminate all danger of wars in the space of four, or even eight years. But I do promise action. A new policy for peace abroad, a new policy for peace and progress and justice at home.

Look at our problems abroad. Do you realize that we face the stark truth that we are worse off in every area of the world tonight than we were when President Eisenhower left office eight years ago? That's the record.

And there is only one answer to such a record of failure, and that is the complete house cleaning of those responsible for the failures and that record.

The answer is the complete reappraisal of America's policies in every section of the world. We shall begin with Vietnam.

We all hope in this room that there's a chance that current negotiations may bring an honorable end to that war. . . .

And I pledge to you tonight that the first priority foreign policy objective of our next Administration will be to bring an honorable end to the war in Vietnam.

We shall not stop there. We need a policy to prevent more Vietnams. All of America's peace-keeping institutions and all of America's foreign commitments must be reappraised. . . .

And now to the leaders of the Communist world we say, after an era of confrontations, the time has come for an era of negotiations.

Where the world superpowers are concerned there is no acceptable alternative to peaceful negotiation. Because this will be a period of negotiations we shall restore the strength of America so that we shall always negotiate from strength and never from weakness. . . .

A nation that can't keep the peace at home won't be trusted to keep the peace abroad. A president who isn't treated with respect at home will not be treated with respect abroad. A nation which can't manage its own economy can't tell others how to manage theirs.

If we are to restore prestige and respect for America abroad, the place to begin is at home – in the United States of America. . . .

The American Revolution was and is dedicated to progress. But our founders recognized that the first requisite of progress is order.

Now there is no quarrel between progress and order because neither can exist without the other.

So let us have order in America. . . .

And if we are to restore order and respect for law in this country, there's one place we're going to begin: We're going to have a new Attorney General. . . .

Time is running out for the merchants of crime and corruption in American society. The wave of crime is not going to be the wave of the future in the United States of America.

We shall re-establish freedom from fear in America so that America can take the lead of re-establishing freedom from fear in the world.

And to those who say that law and order is the code word for racism, here is a reply: Our goal is justice – justice for every American. If we are to have respect for law in America, we must have laws that deserve respect. Just as we cannot have progress without order, we cannot have order without progress.

And so as we commit to order tonight, let us commit to progress.

And this brings me to the clearest choice among the great issues of this campaign.

For the past five years we have been deluged by Government programs for the unemployed, programs for the cities, programs for the poor, and we have reaped from these programs an ugly harvest of frustrations, violence and failure across the land. And now our opponents will be offering more of the same – more billions for Government jobs, Government housing, Government welfare. I say it's time to quit pouring billions of dollars into programs that have failed in the United States of America.

To put it bluntly, we're on the wrong road and it's time to take a new road to progress.

Partial Elections

6. Kent State Shootings (1970)

In 1970, President Richard Nixon ordered US troops into Cambodia because the country provided a sanctuary for communist forces fighting in neighboring South Vietnam. The move sparked a new wave of anti-war demonstrations, especially on American college campuses. In Ohio the governor sent National Guardsmen to Kent State University after protesters broke windows and a fire destroyed an abandoned Reserve Officers' Training Corps building. At midday on May 4, following a large anti-war demonstration on campus, Guardsmen fired at students, killing four and injuring nine, some of whom were simply on their way to class. The scene was captured on film and in photographs, including this one by John Filo, a student in photojournalism. Given the many outbursts of violence in the 1960s, why would this Pulitzer Prize-winning image have had such great impact on Americans? What questions does the photograph raise?

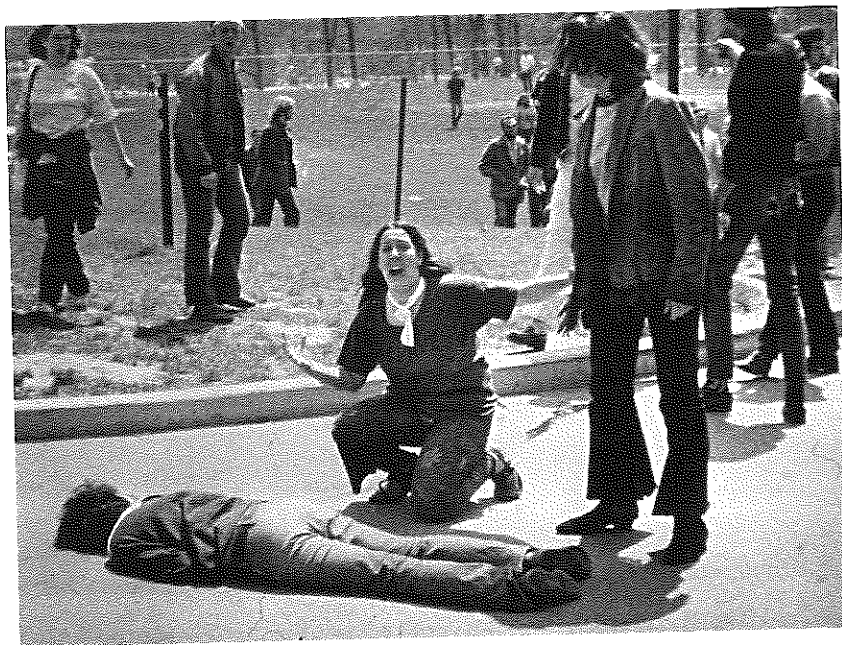


Figure 3 Kent state shootings, 1970.
Source: Photo © John Filo/Getty Images.

Study: Philip Caputo, *13 Seconds: A Look Back at the Kent State Shootings* (New York: Penguin, 2005).

7. Vietnam Veterans Against the War

John Kerry Statement, May 4, 1971

In 1969 Richard Nixon became president after promising in his campaign to seek "peace with honor" in Vietnam. While continuing peace talks with North Vietnamese representatives in Paris, President Nixon also pursued military advantage over communist forces in Vietnam. As the war dragged on, opposition grew in Congress and the country at large. One of the leading voices of opposition came from John Kerry, who had served in Vietnam as a navy lieutenant and then became a spokesperson for the group Vietnam Veterans Against the War. In May 1971, sympathetic members of Congress called Kerry to testify about his experiences and those of fellow veterans who had begun to speak out in public protests. How did Kerry describe the nature of the war, and how did his views differ from those of Presidents Johnson and Nixon? In what ways was the American effort "wrong," according to Kerry? Why would Kerry's testimony have been considered so shocking?

I would like to say for the record, and also for the men behind me who are also wearing the uniform and their medals, that my sitting here is really symbolic. I am not here as John Kerry. I am here as one member of the group of 1,000, which is a small representation of a very much larger group of veterans in this country, and were it possible for all of them to sit at this table they would be here and have the same kind of testimony. . . .

I would like to talk on behalf of all those veterans and say that several months ago in Detroit we had an investigation at which over 150 honorably discharged, and many very highly decorated, veterans testified to war crimes committed in Southeast Asia. These were not isolated incidents but crimes committed on a day to day basis with the full awareness of officers at all levels of command. . . .

They told stories that at times they had personally raped, cut off ears, cut off heads, taped wires from portable telephones to human genitals and turned up the power, cut off limbs, blown up bodies, randomly shot at civilians, razed villages in fashion reminiscent of Genghis Khan, shot cattle and dogs for fun, poisoned food stocks, and generally ravaged the countryside of South Vietnam in addition to the normal ravage of war and the normal and very particular ravaging which is done by the applied bombing power of this country. . . .

I would like to talk to you a little bit about what the result is of the feelings these men carry with them after coming back from Vietnam.

The country doesn't know it yet but it has created a monster, a monster in the form of millions of men who have been taught to deal and to trade in violence and who are given the chance to die for the biggest nothing in history; men who have returned with a sense of anger and a sense of betrayal which no one has yet grasped.

As a veteran and one who feels this anger I would like to talk about it. We are angry because we feel we have been used in the worst fashion by the administration of this country. . . .

In our opinion, and from our experience, there is nothing in South Vietnam which could happen that realistically threatens the United States of America. And to attempt to justify the loss of one American life in Vietnam, Cambodia or Laos by linking such loss to the preservation of freedom . . . is to us the height of criminal hypocrisy, and it is that kind of hypocrisy which we feel has torn this country apart. . . .

I want to relate to you the feeling that many of the men who have returned to this country express because we are probably angriest about all that we were told about Vietnam and about the mystical war against communism.

We found that not only was it a civil war, an effort by a people who had for years been seeking their liberation from any colonial influence whatsoever, but also we found that the Vietnamese whom we had enthusiastically molded after our own image were hard put to take up the fight against the threat we were supposedly saving them from.

We found most people didn't even know the difference between communism and democracy. They only wanted to work in rice paddies without helicopters strafing them and bombs with napalm burning their villages and tearing their country apart. They wanted everything to do with the war, particularly with this foreign presence of the United States of America, to leave them alone in peace, and they practiced the art of survival by siding with whichever military force was present at a particular time, be it Viet Cong, North Vietnamese or American.

We found also that all too often American men were dying in those rice paddies for want of support from their allies. We saw first hand how monies from American taxes [were] used for a corrupt dictatorial regime. We saw that many people in this country had a one-sided idea of who was kept free by our flag, and blacks provided the highest percentage of casualties. We saw Vietnam ravaged equally by American bombs and search and destroy missions, as well as by Viet Cong terrorism, and yet we listened while this country tried to blame all of the havoc on the Viet Cong.

We rationalized destroying villages in order to save them. . . .

We learned the meaning of free fire zones, shooting anything that moves, and we watched while America placed a cheapness on the lives of Orientals.

We watched the United States falsification of body counts, in fact the glorification of body counts. We listened while month after month we were told the back of the enemy was about to break. We fought using weapons against "oriental human beings." We fought using weapons against those people which I do not believe this country would dream of using were we fighting in the European theater. . . .

Each day to facilitate the process by which the United States washes her hands of Vietnam someone has to give up his life so that the United States doesn't have to admit something that the entire world already knows, so that we can't say that we have made a mistake. Someone has to die so that President Nixon won't be, and these are his words, "the first President to lose a war."

We are asking Americans to think about that because how do you ask a man to be the last man to die in Vietnam? How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake? But we are trying to do that, and we are doing it with thousands of rationalizations, and if you read carefully the President's last speech to the people of this country, you can see that he says, and says clearly, "but the issue, gentlemen, the issue, is communism, and the question is whether or not we will leave that country to the communists or whether or not we will try to give it hope to be a free people." But the point is they are not a free people now under us. They are not a free people, and we cannot fight communism all over the world. I think we should have learned that lesson by now. . . .

We are asking here in Washington for some action; action from the Congress of the United States of America which has the power to raise and maintain armies, and which by the Constitution also has the power to declare war.

We have come here, not to the President, because we believe that this body can be responsive to the will of the people, and we believe that the will of the people says that we should be out of Vietnam now.

We are here in Washington also to say that the problem of this war is not just a question of war and diplomacy. It is part and parcel of everything that we are trying as human beings to communicate to people in this country – the question of racism, which is rampant in the military, and so many other questions such as the use of weapons; the hypocrisy in our taking umbrage in the Geneva Conventions and using that as justification for a continuation of this war when we are more guilty than any other body of violations of those Geneva Conventions; in the use of free fire zones, harassment interdiction fire, search and destroy missions, the bombings, the torture of

prisoners, the killing of prisoners, all accepted policy by many units in South Vietnam. That is what we are trying to say. It is part and parcel of everything. . . .

Finally, this administration has done us the ultimate dishonor. They have attempted to disown us and the sacrifices we made for this country. . . .

We wish that a merciful God could wipe away our own memories of that service as easily as this administration has wiped away their memories of us. But all that they have done and all that they can do by this denial is to make more clear than ever our own determination to undertake one last mission to search out and destroy the last vestige of this barbaric war, to pacify our own hearts, to conquer the hate and the fear that have driven this country these last ten years and more, so when 30 years from now our brothers go down the street without a leg, without an arm, or a face, and small boys ask why, we will be able to say "Vietnam" and not mean a desert, not a filthy obscene memory, but mean instead the place where America finally turned and where soldiers like us helped it in the turning.

Source: *Congressional Record* (92nd Cong., 1st Session), vol. 117, pt. 10, pp. 13414-16.

Study: Charles DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990).

Andrew E. Hunt, *The Turning: A History of Vietnam Veterans Against the War* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways were US policies in Vietnam a product of the Cold War?
2. What explains the initial popular support for the Vietnam War and its eventual decline?
3. Why were 1964 and 1968 major turning points in US policy in Vietnam?

Chapter 5 Politics and Protest in the 1960s

I. The Cuban Missile Crisis US and Soviet Views, 1962

During the 1960s, Americans continued to live under the shadow cast by international Cold War conflicts. In October 1962, a nuclear war seemed all too possible when President John F. Kennedy announced that the Soviet Union was building sites in Cuba capable of launching missiles armed with nuclear weapons against US territory only 90 miles away. In response the president called for removal of the missiles, and he ordered a naval blockade ("quarantine") of Cuba to prevent Russian ships from delivering additional missiles to the island. As the world watched to see if the two superpowers would turn the Cold War into a nuclear hot war, Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev offered to remove the missiles in return for a US pledge not to invade Cuba. Kennedy agreed, the Russian ships turned around, and the world breathed a collective sigh of relief. Historians have debated the reasons for the Cuban missile crisis and the reality of the potential threat presented by the missiles since the Soviet Union already had the ability to strike the US. Nevertheless, the confrontation brought the two countries – and the world – to the brink of nuclear war. The two political cartoons on p. 108 provide conflicting views of the crisis. According to the American cartoon, how dangerous was the confrontation, and how was it resolved? How does the Soviet cartoon explain the crisis, and is there any evidence from the period to support this view?

And to those who say that law and order is the code word for racism, here is a reply: Our goal is justice – justice for every American. If we are to have respect for law in America, we must have laws that deserve respect. Just as we cannot have progress without order, we cannot have order without progress.

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And this brings me to the clearest choice among the great issues of this campaign.

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To put it bluntly, we're on the wrong road and it's time to take a new road to progress.

Source: Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., ed., *History of American Presidential Elections, 1789–1968* (New York: Chelsea House, 1971), vol. IV, pp. 3833–7, 3840.

Study: Mary C. Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties: The Conservative Capture of the GOP* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

Lewis L. Gould, 1968: *The Election That Changed America* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1993).

2. The Crisis of Confidence

Jimmy Carter Address, July 15, 1979

During the early 1970s, Americans experienced a series of political and economic crises, including the Watergate scandal, President Nixon's resignation, rising oil prices, and double-digit inflation. In the 1976 presidential race, American voters turned to a Democrat, former Georgia governor Jimmy Carter, who campaigned as a Washington outsider and "born-again" Christian. Carter promised to make government decent, "competent and compassionate." During his presidency, however, the economy failed to improve, and Congress resisted enacting his major proposals, especially those designed to deal with the energy crisis. Frustrated by the political impasse, Carter went over the heads of Congressional leaders and appealed directly to the American people in a television address on July 15, 1979. In what became

known as "the crisis of confidence" speech, Carter talked about the principal problem confronting the US. According to Carter, what was this problem, and what caused it? How exactly did he propose to solve this problem?

It's clear that the true problems of our Nation are much deeper – deeper than gasoline lines or energy shortages, deeper even than inflation or recession. . . .

I know, of course, being President, that government actions and legislation can be very important. That's why I've worked hard to put my campaign promises into law – and I have to admit, with just mixed success. But . . . all the legislation in the world can't fix what's wrong with America. So, I want to speak to you first tonight about a subject even more serious than energy or inflation. I want to talk to you right now about a fundamental threat to American democracy. . . .

The threat is nearly invisible in ordinary ways. It is a crisis of confidence. It is a crisis that strikes at the very heart and soul and spirit of our national will. We can see this crisis in the growing doubt about the meaning of our own lives and in the loss of a unity of purpose for our Nation.

The erosion of our confidence in the future is threatening to destroy the social and the political fabric of America.

The confidence that we have always had as a people is not simply some romantic dream or a proverb in a dusty book that we read just on the Fourth of July. . . . Confidence has defined our course and has served as a link between generations. We've always believed in something called progress. We've always had a faith that the days of our children would be better than our own.

Our people are losing that faith, not only in government itself but in the ability as citizens to serve as the ultimate rulers and shapers of our democracy. . . .

In a nation that was proud of hard work, strong families, close-knit communities, and our faith in God, too many of us now tend to worship self-indulgence and consumption. Human identity is no longer defined by what one does, but by what one owns. But we've discovered that owning things and consuming things does not satisfy our longing for meaning. We've learned that piling up material goods cannot fill the emptiness of lives which have no confidence or purpose. . . .

These changes did not happen overnight. They've come upon us gradually over the last generation, years that were filled with shocks and tragedy.

We were sure that ours was a nation of the ballot, not the bullet, until the murders of John Kennedy and Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King,

Jr. We were taught that our armies were always victorious and our causes were always just, only to suffer the agony of Vietnam. We respected the Presidency as a place of honor until the shock of Watergate.

We remember when the phrase "sound as a dollar" was an expression of absolute dependability, until 10 years of inflation began to shrink our dollar and our savings. We believed that our Nation's resources were limitless until 1973, when we had to face a growing dependence on foreign oil. . . .

Looking for a way out of this crisis, our people have turned to the Federal Government and found it isolated from the mainstream of our Nation's life. . . .

What you see too often in Washington and elsewhere around the country is a system of government that seems incapable of action. . . .

Often you see paralysis and stagnation and drift. You don't like it, and neither do I. What can we do?

First of all, we must face the truth, and then we can change our course. We simply must have faith in each other, faith in our ability to govern ourselves, and faith in the future of this Nation. Restoring that faith and that confidence to America is now the most important task we face. It is a true challenge of this generation of Americans. . . .

We are at a turning point in our history. There are two paths to choose. One is a path I've warned about tonight, the path that leads to fragmentation and self-interest. Down that road lies a mistaken idea of freedom, the right to grasp for ourselves some advantage over others. That path would be one of constant conflict between narrow interests ending in chaos and immobility. It is a certain route to failure.

All the traditions of our past, all the lessons of our heritage, all the promises of our future point to another path, the path of common purpose and the restoration of American values. That path leads to true freedom for our Nation and ourselves. We can take the first steps down that path as we begin to solve our energy problem.

Energy will be the immediate test of our ability to unite this Nation, and it can also be the standard around which we rally. . . .

Little by little we can and we must rebuild our confidence. We can spend until we empty our treasuries, and we may summon all the wonders of science. But we can succeed only if we tap our greatest resources – America's people, America's values, and America's confidence.

Source: *Presidential Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter, 1979* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1980), book II, pp. 1235–41.

Study: Philip Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Burton I. Kaufman and Scott Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter*, 2nd edn. rev. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006).

3. The Religious Right

Jerry Falwell, *Listen, America!* 1980

The cultural and political backlash against protest movements of the 1960s gathered momentum during the 1970s and became ascendant with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980. The conservative resurgence was energized by evangelical Christians. In 1977, 70 million American identified themselves as "born-again" Christians. One of the leading voices of the Religious Right was Jerry Falwell, a Virginia minister and televangelist, who founded the Moral Majority, Inc., in 1979. This political action committee soon claimed millions of members and lobbied for conservative causes. Falwell's 1980 book Listen, America! spelled out his view of the country's problems. According to him, what threatened America and what needed to be done? In what respects was his agenda "conservative"?

It is time that we come together and rise up against the tide of permissiveness and moral decay that is crushing in on our society from every side. America is at a crossroads as a nation; she is facing a fateful "Decade of Destiny" – the 1980s. I am speaking about survival and am calling upon those Americans who believe in decency and integrity to stand for what is good and what is right. It is time to face the truth that America is in trouble. . . .

Before we discuss America's moral dilemma let me summarize our military, economic, and political malaise. Even in these areas, a return to our founding principles is our sure and only hope.

The United States is for the first time, in my lifetime, and probably in the lifetime of my parents and grandparents, no longer the military might of the world. . . .

It is sad that it has taken a crisis like the invasion of Afghanistan to make our leaders realize the terrible threats of communism. The Soviet Union has watched the United States respond, not from what was once a point of strength, but from what is now a point of weakness. . . .

For the first time in two hundred years, we face a decade when it is doubtful if Americans will survive as a free people. . . .