

CHAPTER 27

Robert C. Byrd's Senate

The Democratic Leader and Foreign Policy 1977-1989*

Mr. President, although the framers of our Constitution did not foresee the post of majority leader, the office has evolved during this century into one of preeminence within the United States Senate. Indeed, it has become one of the most significant positions within the entire United States government. Few institutional "powers" come with the job, other than the power of first recognition: the presiding officer recognizes the majority leader before other senators. In addition, the majority leader has the authority to schedule action on legislation and other matters. Consequently, the position of majority leader is largely what each occupant is able to make of it through diligence, knowledge of the rules, and good working relations with other senators. The majority leader must also establish a relationship with the president of the United States, regardless of his party. And, given the Senate's unique role in American foreign policy, Senate majority leaders have increasingly sought to develop contacts with key world leaders.

It is this foreign policy component of the role that I shall address here, based on my own years as Senate Democratic leader. In so

doing, I emphasize that it is critically important for a Senate leader to develop a broad perspective on world affairs and to become acquainted with international officials in order to deal more knowledgeably with the host of diplomatic and military issues that reach the Senate.

Between 1977 and 1989, it was my privilege to meet and talk with Great Britain's Margaret Thatcher, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, Soviet leaders Leonid Brezhnev and Mikhail Gorbachev, Israel's Prime Ministers Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir, French President François Mitterrand, Chinese Premier Hua Guofeng, and many other world leaders. My discussions with such leaders were an essential part of my efforts as Senate Democratic leader to develop an independent viewpoint on foreign and defense matters through both the Carter and Reagan administrations.

As Senate majority leader, I believed it essential to assert and uphold the Senate's proper constitutional role in foreign affairs. While I worked closely with President Jimmy Carter, I often maintained an inde-

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pendent position and did not automatically support the policies of his administration, even though it was Democratic. Similarly, I supported President Ronald Reagan's administration on some issues and strongly opposed it on others.

During 1977, which was both my first year as majority leader and the first year of the Carter administration, my actions on two issues helped to establish the pattern of independence that I sought. The first occurred on June 16, 1977, when the administration's plan for a phased withdrawal of United States troops from South Korea faced a Republican-sponsored amendment to the State Department authorization bill. This amendment, which seemed likely to pass, would have barred the administration from acting and would have been seen as a sharp rebuke to the new president on one of the first foreign policy issues considered by Congress during his administration. To avoid such a serious setback, I negotiated a compromise between the White House position and those who wanted to flatly prohibit any U.S. withdrawal. My suggested language said that "United States policy toward Korea should continue to be arrived at by joint decision of the President and Congress" and that "any implementation of the foregoing policy should be done in regular consultation with the Congress." Acceptance of the amendment spared the administration an embarrassing defeat, and it also established the theme for all my other dealings with Democratic and Republican administrations. I have consistently advocated the constitutionally sound notion that foreign policy is the joint responsibility of Congress and the president, and that arbitrary, controversial, or secretive unilateral presidential actions do not produce a sound, sustainable foreign policy.

Later in 1977, I played an entirely different role in regard to the proposed sale of the Airborne Warning and Control System

(AWACS) to Iran. On July 22, 1977, I hand-delivered to President Carter a letter asking him to withdraw notification of the proposed sale of the AWACS. My actions were, in part, governed by the Senate schedule. Congress was moving toward a statutory recess, due to begin on August 5. The Senate was then tied up with a Republican filibuster against a bill for public financing of congressional elections. Under the Arms Export Control Act, Congress had only thirty days to act on the sale. In my letter to President Carter, I said, "In view of the limited time remaining, and the schedule facing the Senate, it will be impossible for the Senate to give the proposal the careful and serious consideration it deserves." But I also expressed serious reservations about the sale. I was troubled over the potential security risk involved, warning that we would be taking "an unnecessary risk of compromising the highly sophisticated technology which is critical to our own national defense." In addition, I argued that the sale ran contrary to our interest in a stable military balance and limited arms proliferation in the Middle East.

Administration officials worked hard to persuade me to back down, but I insisted that Congress deserved time to consider the sale thoughtfully. When the president would not agree to my request for a delay, I enlisted the support of the Republican minority leader, Howard Baker of Tennessee. We personally appeared before the Foreign Relations Committee to urge a disapproval resolution. We asserted that this was an institutional issue and that such a disapproval resolution was the only way to ensure that the Senate had sufficient time to weigh the sale on its merits. Senator Baker, who in fact favored the sale, agreed with me on the institutional principles involved.

Although the White House recognized the probability of a Senate defeat, it believed that the sale would be approved by the

House. (Both houses had to vote disapproval resolutions in order to kill the plan.) But the House Foreign Affairs Committee surprised the administration by voting to disapprove the transaction. At that point, the administration notified me that it had decided to temporarily withdraw the sale. President Carter also agreed to make some modifications in the AWACS package to reduce potential security risks and to meet the Senate's other concerns. Having received these assurances, Congress allowed the proposed sale to go through as modified when it returned in September from its summer recess.

In a Senate speech on October 7, 1977, I again expressed my reservations about "the immense quantity of sophisticated military equipment" we were selling to Iran. Pointing to some \$18 billion in arms sales to Iran over the previous five years, I called for a moratorium on such transactions and suggested that Congress consider requiring explicit legislative approval, rather than resolutions of disapproval, for sales valued at more than \$200 million to any one nation. Considering that the shah of Iran lost power only two years later, and that his vast stockpiles of U.S.-provided military equipment were taken over by a regime overtly hostile to our country, I believe that my concerns were amply justified. Although the AWACS sale was the last major sale to Iran that was approved before the shah was deposed, the planes had fortunately not been delivered before the Iranian revolution. Yet, the fact that those sophisticated aircraft came so close to falling into the hands of an unfriendly government surely demonstrated the dangers that I had been pointing out.

The major foreign policy issue facing the Senate in 1977 and 1978 was the debate over the Panama Canal treaties, which represented my trial by fire as the new majority leader. Signed by President Carter and Panamanian leader General Omar Torrijos on

September 7, 1977, the two treaties—the Panama Canal Treaty and the Neutrality Treaty—were designed to replace the original 1903 Panama Canal Treaty, which had been slightly modified in 1936 and 1955. Discussions of a new agreement had been underway in Democratic and Republican administrations for thirteen years, during which time I had expressed opposition to any new treaty. There had been considerable tension between the U.S. and Panama over the canal, and, after careful study of the treaties and the history and negotiations leading up to their signing, I decided to support them if certain conditions and changes were incorporated in the resolution of ratification. The Carter administration hoped that the Senate would approve the new treaties before its fall adjournment, but, as majority leader, I thought it unrealistic and unwise to talk of Senate action on the treaties that year. Hearings would consume much time, and the Senate already had a full schedule of other pressing issues. I believed that all senators needed ample time to study the treaties carefully. When I explained these points to President Carter, he agreed to leave the matter of timing strictly to me.

At that time, sentiment throughout the country ran overwhelmingly against the Panama Canal treaties. I knew that a strong groundwork would have to be laid if the Senate was to give its approval to the ratification. Along with other senators, I voiced my own concern about ambiguities in the treaties. On October 11, 1977, Minority Leader Baker, six other senators, and I met with President Carter, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, and National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski. We were especially concerned about two points: the United States' right to protect the neutrality of the canal; and the right of U.S. ships to "go to the head of the line" in the event of an emergency. We warned the president that, with-

out some clarification, the treaties' chances of approval were remote. As a result of that session, President Carter met with General Torrijos and agreed to a Statement of Understanding which clarified the interpretations concerning these two points.

After the Senate adjourned, I organized a delegation of seven Democratic senators to visit Panama from November 9 through 12, 1977. The others in the delegation were Senators Paul Sarbanes of Maryland, Donald Riegle of Michigan, Howard Metzenbaum of Ohio, Walter Huddleston of Kentucky, Spark Matsunaga of Hawaii, and Jim Sasser of Tennessee. I noted that the Senate's constitutional responsibility to provide advice and consent in the making of treaties imposed upon senators the obligation to become as knowledgeable as possible about the treaties and related issues. Our delegation went to Panama, as I said then, "to listen and learn; to discuss the issues directly with Panama's highest government officials; to hear all interested parties, including Americans and Panamanians, opposed to and in support of the treaties; and to see for ourselves the Canal and related facilities." At a dinner party given by American Ambassador William J. Jordan, I explained to the Panamanian guests that "any senator voting for these treaties will pay a high political price. He will gain absolutely nothing personally by doing so. Therefore, you have to be tolerant and patient in bringing people around to understanding these problems and to taking this difficult decision."

The Panama trip set a standard which would characterize my future travels abroad: substantive discussions with high-level leaders, following intense advance preparation. The members of the press who went along were unanimous in saying that it was not a fun trip or a junket; it was a working trip. We set our own schedule, rather than have the State Department arrange it for us. We

went to see what we wanted to see and to hear what we wanted to hear from all sectors of the Panamanian population—both Americans and Panamanians—who were for or against the treaties, or undecided.

The centerpiece of the trip was a series of discussions with General Torrijos and a day spent with the Panamanian leader visiting different parts of the country. The talks with General Torrijos were frank and wide ranging. The senators expressed concerns about various aspects of the treaties, and Torrijos engaged in an animated exchange with the delegation as we stopped at several locales and talked aboard the aircraft between stops. Responding to a flurry of questions from the delegation, General Torrijos said that he felt "like a baseball catcher catching pitches from seven different pitchers."

From the beginning, I was personally impressed with Torrijos and his sincerity. He had an easygoing manner and was amiable, yet tough and self-confident. Our whole delegation took a liking to General Torrijos, and I sensed that he reciprocated the feeling.

At the last stop prior to returning to Panama City, we visited Farallon, the general's seaside residence. Walking through the massive crowd that had us packed in like sardines, we noticed that General Torrijos walked freely among the people, with his pistol on his hip. Yet, he showed no anxiety or concern. To us, it was an indication of his strength and popularity with Panamanians. That was a factor of no little significance in our deliberations over the treaties. At dinner that night, General Torrijos reaffirmed the Statement of Understanding, although he emphasized that the U.S. right of intervention should not imply the right to intervene in Panama's internal affairs. But, he said, there was no doubt about the United States' right to defend the canal.

The delegation also took a helicopter flight over the canal and engaged in lengthy dis-



General Omar Torrijos, shown here on his arrival at a provincial town, accompanied U.S. senators on a tour of his country in 1977.

W.J. Jordan, Panama Odyssey/photo by Rogelio Achurra

cussions with Lieutenant General Dennis McAuliffe, commander in chief of the U.S. Southern Command. When the delegation asked him about General Torrijos' comment that he (Torrijos) was sitting on a powder keg, General McAuliffe replied that it was, indeed, a highly emotional situation. If the treaty were not approved, there would probably be outrage and increased anti-United States demonstrations among the Panamanians. Once such demonstrations started, radical elements would attempt to take advantage of the situation. They would say, "If we can't have the canal, you can't either."

On the final night of that memorable Panamanian trip, our delegation was given a reception and dinner at the *Presidencia* by Panama's President Demetrio Lakas. In his book *Panama Odyssey*, Ambassador Jordan described how he had told the president that my favorite hobby was playing the fiddle. Wrote Jordan:

During the meal, Lakas and Byrd got along famously and, after the toasts had been exchanged, the president pressed his visitor to honor the others with a tune. Byrd finally relented and a violin was commandeered from the orchestra. The West Virginia statesman played "Turkey in the Straw" and the prolonged applause led to several encores. People were tapping their feet and drumming on the table. The Panamanian *presidencia* had never seen anything quite like it. When Byrd finally returned the violin to its owner, Lakas took off his necktie and handed it to the majority leader as a gesture of thanks, and of friendship. Byrd reciprocated."

The intense interest of the senators in the Panama situation was evidenced all along the way by their incisive questions. The members of the delegation were highly dedicated and conscientious in their approach to the solemn duty of approving or disapproving the ratification of the treaties. In considerable measure, the outcome of the long debate was assured because these senators went to Panama. They were trusted, knowledgeable members, who spoke with authority when they engaged in the Senate debate on the treaties.

On January 26, 1978, I appeared as the final witness before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, at the conclusion of its lengthy series of hearings on the treaty. I had previously announced that it would be necessary to guarantee at least two important points in order to gain public support for, and Senate approval of, the treaties: (1) the right of the United States to guarantee neutral access to the canal at all times beyond the year 2000; and (2) head-of-the-line passage for U.S. military and auxiliary vessels. I reiterated that position before the committee and ended my statement with these comments:

The Panama Canal, as David McCullough has written, is an expression of that old and noble desire to bridge the divide, to bring people together. Certainly, the canal has done this in many respects. Now, however, the time has come to bridge the divide between

* William J. Jordan, *Panama Odyssey* (Austin, TX, 1984), p. 486.

Panama and the United States, and for the two nations to work together in seeing that the canal continues to serve the people of the United States and Panama and the world.

As time for the Senate debate drew near, I conceived a plan, in conjunction with other key senators, that I hoped would be instrumental in securing the treaties' approval. An important element of this strategy was to obtain agreement from the Foreign Relations Committee that it would not take any formal action on proposed changes in the treaties. Normally, the committee would have reported the treaties with whatever amendments or reservations its members thought appropriate. In their book *Invitation to Struggle*, Cecil Crabb, Jr., and Pat Holt noted that the focus on the treaty had been through the office of the majority leader rather than through the committee, adding, "Byrd was more assertive of his prerogatives as majority leader than had been any of his recent predecessors, with the exception of Senator Lyndon B. Johnson." Only a few amendments could be approved without endangering the treaty ratification, and I believed that the greatest support for the treaty could be gained by giving all senators the opportunity to cosponsor a few beneficial floor amendments that would draw widespread approval from the Senate.

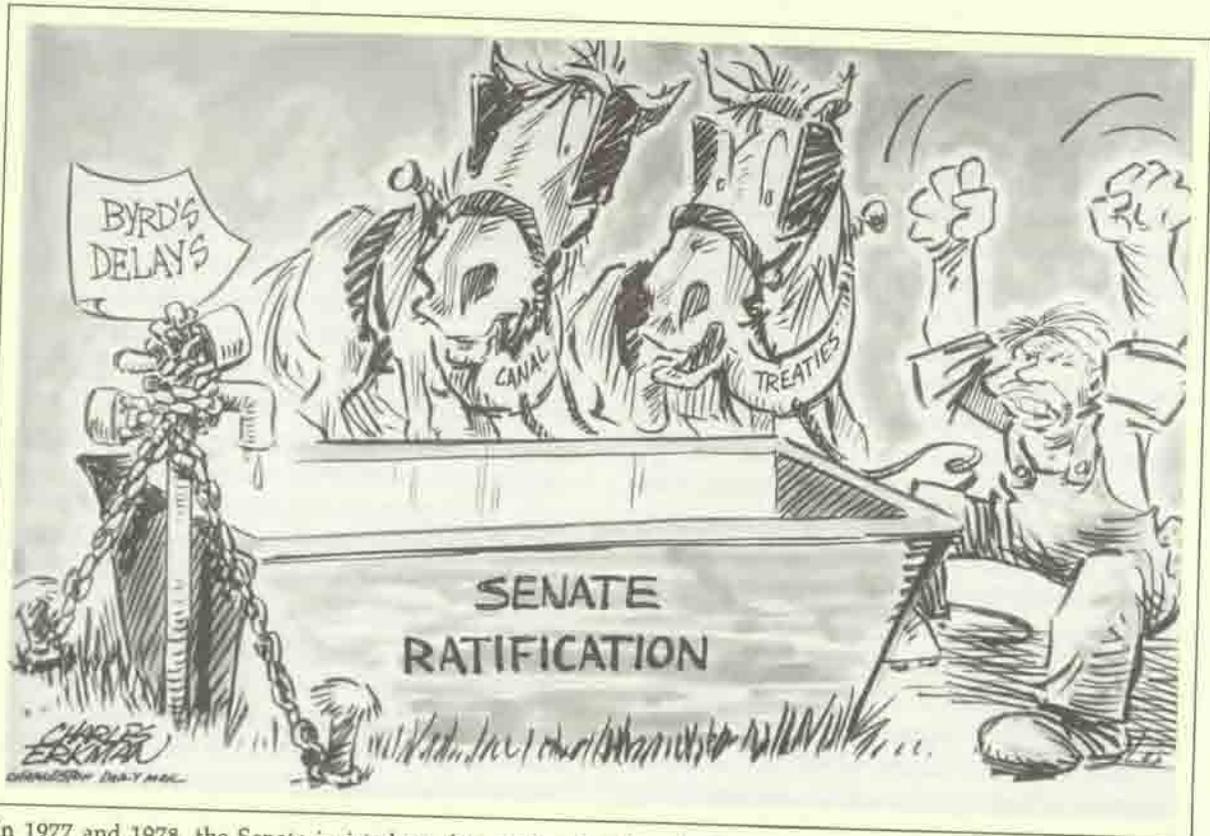
The two amendments that Senator Baker and I favored, and which were left open for broad cosponsorship on the Senate floor, were known as the "leadership amendments." Discussions between Senator Baker and myself led to the recommendations that the principles of the Statement of Understanding be the basis for amending Articles IV and VI of the Neutrality Treaty. Those amendments attracted a total of seventy-eight cosponsors. Senator Baker and I also agreed that, contrary to the general assumption, the Senate should consider the Neutral-

ity Treaty first, ahead of the Panama Canal Treaty. I believed that reversing the order would be vital, given the significance of the "leadership amendments" and the fact that these amendments applied to the Neutrality Treaty.

On February 8, the Senate began its formal consideration of the treaties, which continued through April 18, to the virtual exclusion of all other business. This was the longest Senate treaty debate since the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. I had, at one point, entertained the hope that the floor debates could be broadcast to the country by live telecasts, and Minority Leader Howard Baker shared this desire as a way of enlightening the public and enlisting support for the treaties. Technical problems appeared to be too great at the time, however, and on January 28, I announced that live radio broadcasts of the debates would be carried daily by National Public Radio through 210 stations. This audio transmission of gavel-to-gavel Senate floor debate would be unprecedented, but both Baker and I thought it necessary in order to combat the vast amount of misinformation that was being spread throughout the country by opponents of the treaties.

Opponents centered their efforts on winning approval of "killer amendments." I made it clear, however, that only the leadership amendments and certain clarifying reservations and understandings would be acceptable. Opponents attempted to circumvent this strategy by offering amendments that were phrased in such a way that senators would find them difficult to turn down. At first glance, many of these amendments seemed innocuous and "pro-American." Had they succeeded, however, they would have effectively killed the treaty.

In all, 145 amendments, 26 reservations, 18 understandings, and 3 declarations—for a total of 192 changes—were proposed; 88 of these were voted upon. In the final analysis,



In 1977 and 1978, the Senate insisted on thoroughly debating the Panama Canal treaties before approving their ratification.
Charles Erkman/Charleston Daily Mail, October 17, 1977

nothing passed that was not acceptable to the joint leadership. I adopted the strategy in most cases of moving to have the amendments tabled, rather than forcing senators to cast up-or-down votes on the proposals. This kept treaty proponents from having to vote against what appeared on the surface to be very desirable amendments.

On March 16, 1978, the Senate agreed to vote on the Neutrality Treaty, and, after approving the leadership amendments, gave its consent to ratification by a vote of 68 to 32. My vote was the sixty-seventh in favor of the treaty. But just hours before the treaty vote, the Senate took an action that threatened to jeopardize the carefully structured strategy for approval of the two treaties. Senator Dennis DeConcini of Arizona of-

fered a reservation, which was "okayed" by the White House, to provide that the U.S. or Panama could independently take steps "including the use of military force in Panama" to reopen the canal or restore the canal to operation. I was informed that President Carter, thinking that the outcome might depend upon Senator DeConcini's vote, had reluctantly agreed not to oppose his reservation. As word circulated that the White House had approved the reservation, senators assumed that the administration had considered the ramifications. The reservation was therefore approved by a 75 to 23 vote, and a few hours later the first treaty was approved.

The Panamanians found the DeConcini reservation totally unacceptable, considering it to be inconsistent with the spirit of the

treaties. Angry statements from Panama seemed to threaten the whole package. Panama might well reject the treaties if the DeConcini reservation stood; but if it were modified enough to cause the defection of Senator DeConcini and others, the treaties might well be defeated. In collaboration with Assistant Secretary of State Warren Christopher and former Assistant Secretary of State William D. Rodgers, Senators Frank Church of Idaho, Paul Sarbanes, and I sought to find a compromise that would satisfy both Washington and Panama.

A marathon series of meetings ensued to prepare an alternative proposal. Finally, at a Sunday morning meeting in the Capitol, we drafted a new "leadership reservation." The Panamanian ambassador, Gabriel Lewis, was also present at that meeting, and, by the next morning, word came that his government approved the new language. The reservation provided that the United States would take unilateral action "only for the purpose of assuring that the canal shall remain open, neutral, secure, and accessible, and shall not have as its purpose or to be interpreted as a right of intervention in the internal affairs of the Republic of Panama or interference with its political independence or sovereign integrity." With Senator DeConcini as a cosponsor, the leadership reservation was then approved 73 to 27.

At 6 p.m. on the evening of April 18, 1978, the roll was called on the Panama Canal Treaty. It was approved by precisely the same vote as the Neutrality Treaty had been a month earlier—68 to 32. I was proud to have played a role as majority leader in bringing about this courageous vote to approve the treaty. As I had said during the debate:

Nothing can be politically right if it is morally wrong. In my judgment, it is not only economically right, not only commercially right, not only right from

the standpoint of the security interests of our country, not only politically right, but it is morally right that we vote to ratify these treaties, and thus live up to the principles that we have so long espoused among nations.

The overall strategy, combined with the bipartisan leadership effort, the audio broadcasts to the nation, and hard work, had overcome the strong nationwide hostility toward the treaties, and they proceeded to their ratification.

Within only a few weeks after the approval of the Panama Canal treaties, the Senate was locked in another foreign policy dispute over the proposed sale of arms to three Middle Eastern nations. This time, the sale involved \$4.8 billion worth of jet aircraft to Egypt, Israel, and Saudi Arabia. But the principal fight was over the Saudi component of the package, which some saw as a threat to Israeli security. With signs of opposition mounting in the Senate, the Carter administration pledged that the Saudi F-15's would be based outside striking distance of Israel and would not be equipped with bomb racks or air-to-air missiles that would give them offensive power. Nevertheless, the Foreign Relations Committee sent a resolution of disapproval to the Senate floor. After the administration agreed not to outfit the planes with offensive equipment, I concluded that the sale was "consistent with our national interests and with our efforts to help bring about peace in the Middle East." After ten hours of debate, and after a rare closed-door session of the Senate to discuss classified matters related to the sale, the Senate rejected the disapproval resolution, 44 to 54, and allowed the sale to go through.

In 1978, as majority leader and special emissary of President Carter, I visited several NATO nations in Western Europe. During that trip, I met with the heads of government in Spain, Belgium, West Germany, and the United Kingdom to exchange views on inter-

national issues, particularly concerning NATO modernization. I found these discussions most valuable when the Senate later debated such matters as western security and arms control.

Stopping first in Spain, I met with Prime Minister Adolfo Suarez to discuss Spain's future relationship with NATO. I expressed strong support for the steps that Spain had taken to establish a visible and vigorous democracy after the death of General Francisco Franco in 1975. The Spanish leaders made clear that, although their primary interests at the moment were domestic, related to strengthening their new government, they placed great importance on continued close relations with the United States. We discussed the 1976 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between our two nations, and I informed the Spanish officials that the United States would welcome the entry of Spain into NATO but would never presume to tell the Spanish people what to do.

Three principal themes dominated the discussions during the remainder of that European trip. First was the European attitude toward long-term defense programs of NATO. Second was the need for early and decisive action on U.S. energy policy—a matter of particular concern to West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and British Prime Minister James Callaghan. Third was the embargo that the United States had imposed in 1974 and 1975 on shipping arms to Turkey, which European leaders wanted lifted as soon as possible.

A major element of my trip was a visit to NATO headquarters near Brussels and to the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Powers in Europe (SHAPE) near Mons, Belgium. I met with NATO Secretary General Joseph Luns and then helicoptered to SHAPE for sessions with General Alexander Haig. Both men stressed the importance of lifting the arms embargo on Turkey. At that time,

NATO officials made clear their concern about the continuing buildup of the Soviet-Warsaw Pact forces. Trends in the military balance of conventional forces seemed to be moving strongly to NATO's disadvantage and, if left unchecked, could undermine Western deterrence and stability.

While in Brussels, I met with leaders of the Belgian government, including Prime Minister Leo Tindemans and Defense Minister Paul Vanden Boeynants. With them, I emphasized the importance of Belgium's meeting its commitments to NATO's common defense efforts, particularly a three-percent real growth in defense spending. Although both men expressed strong and continuing support for NATO, they pointed to economic and political problems that acted as major constraints on increased defense spending.

In London, I had a lively discussion with Prime Minister James Callaghan at 10 Downing Street. I recall that we compared the legislative roles of the U.S. Congress and the British Parliament. We also discussed prospects for an arms control agreement. Callaghan told me that he thought the proposed SALT II Treaty would benefit both the West and the Soviets and also be good for Europe. By contrast, I found West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt concerned about the "gray areas" not covered in SALT II, notably Soviet intermediate-range missiles.

On security affairs, the German leaders expressed their appreciation for my statements concerning the U.S. commitment to NATO. Like other European leaders, however, Schmidt believed that the U.S. embargo on arms to Turkey posed an increasing problem for NATO. I also discussed the enhanced radiation (or neutron) warhead—which could kill people without destroying buildings—with the West German leaders, who saw it as a matter of great sensitivity. They were willing to see the weapon deployed, but believed it must be handled with great care.

Defense Minister Hans Apel told me that it would be very difficult to win public support in West Germany for moving ahead with this weapon, since public attitudes had shifted against it. A debate on the neutron warhead "could be a disastrous event," he warned. Chancellor Schmidt expressed his concern about Soviet activities around the world, although both he and Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher strongly supported U.S. efforts towards a SALT II agreement with the Soviets.

Having been strongly impressed by the European emphasis on the need to end the embargo on arms for Turkey, I immediately began work to get it lifted when I returned to Washington. The Carter administration was also committed to trying to have the embargo lifted, believing that its continuation was damaging to American interests. The Foreign Relations Committee, however, had already voted against a proposal to terminate the embargo, and prospects for a reversal of that action were thought to be very slim. Senator George McGovern indicated that he planned to try again to lift the embargo when the security assistance bill was taken up on the Senate floor in late July. Learning of McGovern's intention, I arranged a meeting with the South Dakota senator and told McGovern of my interest in working for repeal of the embargo, stating that I would offer an amendment for that purpose. McGovern deferred to me as majority leader. I then enlisted the support of Democrat Lloyd Bentsen of Texas and Republican John Chafee of Rhode Island, and the disparate coalition of Byrd, McGovern, Bentsen, and Chafee backed the amendment.

In arguing for termination, I noted that I had earlier supported the embargo: "There was an important point to be made in response to the Turkish use of U.S. weapons in Cyprus [during the Turkish military action in Cyprus in 1974]. That point has been

made—clearly and unmistakably. Now, we must look forward. The embargo has become counterproductive. . . . For Turkey the embargo has assumed enormous—and highly negative—symbolic significance. . . . The embargo seriously undermines our collective security arrangements."

Although the primary intent of the amendment was to end the embargo, it also provided that the president should report to Congress on progress toward resolving the Cyprus issue, and it provided equal amounts of military sales credits for Turkey and Greece.

My cosponsors and I made personal appeals to our colleagues, and I organized a series of meetings in which members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and top administration officials briefed senators and answered questions. I concentrated my efforts on newer members who had not been in Congress at the time of the earlier battles over Turkey. Meetings and briefings for staff members were also organized. I repeatedly emphasized that my efforts were not anti-Greece or pro-Turkey, but in the interests of both countries and of the U.S., NATO, and U.S. friends in the Middle East.

"Our goal is to have two strong and friendly nations in the Eastern Mediterranean, to maintain the strength of NATO, and to make possible a just and lasting Cyprus settlement," I said in introducing the amendment on July 25, 1978.

The amendment was fiercely debated, but, thanks to my intensive efforts and those of my colleagues, as well as to the strong backing of President Carter, it was approved in the Senate by a surprisingly large 57 to 42 margin on July 25, 1978. The House, on August 1, adopted a somewhat similar amendment offered by House Majority Leader Jim Wright, on a 208 to 205 vote. Both houses subsequently agreed to the conference report, and President Carter signed

the legislation into law on September 26, 1978.

The SALT II Treaty was not signed until June 1979, and I paid close attention to the negotiations prior to its signing. Administration officials briefed me periodically. In regular Friday afternoon sessions, I met with such experts on arms control and strategic issues as Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, who supported the treaty, and Paul Nitze, who opposed it. To further prepare myself for what I expected would be a key role in moving the SALT II Treaty through the Senate, I planned a trip to the Soviet Union. Before leaving, I was briefed by the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the secretary of defense, and others.

My plan to go to Moscow was precipitated by inflammatory warnings, issued by the Communist party newspaper *Prauda*, that the Senate should not amend the treaty. The Soviets took the line that no Senate amendments would be acceptable and that, if any were adopted, the Soviets would not return to the negotiating table. I considered it necessary to inform Soviet leaders that the Senate would not act to rubber-stamp any treaty; that it shared a responsibility with the president in the making of treaties; that it would fulfill its constitutional role without fear or favor; and that inflammatory editorials and statements coming from Moscow would hinder rather than speed treaty approval by the Senate.

In Leningrad, I explained that I had come to the Soviet Union neither to praise nor to condemn the treaty but to create a better understanding of the treaty in the Senate and to explain to the Soviets the Senate's constitutional role in treaty-making. These were themes that I emphasized throughout my visit. One moving experience during that trip came when I laid a wreath at the monument to the defenders of Leningrad, which stands

in a cemetery containing the mass graves of citizens who died during the nine-hundred-day Nazi siege of the city. It was clear that that wartime experience remained a vivid and dominant memory for the people of Leningrad.

After meeting with members of the Supreme Soviet in Moscow, I visited the summer residence of Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev in the Black Sea region, arriving on the Fourth of July. I was accompanied only by my staff adviser on foreign affairs, Hoyt Purvis, and a State Department translator, William Krimer. The Soviets had arranged to have a special plane fly us from Moscow to Simferopol—I recall that everything save the paneling in the forward compartment was appropriately covered in bright red. Brezhnev had sent his car to meet me at the airport and drive me to Yalta. As we whizzed through Simferopol, it became obvious that all traffic had been stopped in both directions. Cars, trucks, buses, even the electric trolley buses, had been pulled over to the side of the road. Absolutely nothing was moving except for the three cars in our motorcade.

The ninety-minute drive took us up into the Crimean mountains, offering some stunning views of the Black Sea coastline. I rode with Victor Sukhodrev, who told me he had served as translator for summit meetings since Premier Nikita Khrushchev's meeting with President John F. Kennedy in Vienna. We also talked about former President Richard Nixon, whom he respected. The Russians felt that, despite Nixon's anticommunist background, he had been able to improve relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Watergate scandal held little meaning for the Soviets, who were far more interested in foreign affairs than in American domestic politics. Along the route, Sukhodrev also pointed out to me the location of the Yalta conference where Roose-



"Why is it, Yuri, that after years of struggle by two mighty nations to achieve a SALT agreement, the entire matter is now in the hands of some person called Bobby Byrd?" read the caption to this cartoon about Senator Byrd's trip to the Soviet Union. *James Stevenson/The Washington Star, July 15, 1979*

velt, Stalin, and Churchill had met. All of this reminded me of the long and arduous history of diplomatic negotiations between our two nations since the Second World War.

After lunch, we drove to Brezhnev's compound in a heavily wooded pine forest. President Brezhnev was waiting in a lawn chair when we arrived, and he invited me to join him in another chair on the plush green lawn. That beautiful mountain setting was reminiscent of West Virginia, and I took the occasion to present Brezhnev with my record album, "Mountain Fiddler," receiving in return a book of his speeches. We then moved to a handsome conference center, where we sat across from each other at a long

conference table. President Brezhnev was flanked by an aide and an interpreter; Purvis and Krimer were with me on my side of the table. The Soviet leader and I took turns speaking, but on several occasions he interrupted my remarks, and our discussion was lively and frank.

I was determined to explain the U.S. Senate's role in the treaty process, pointing out that the Senate, which had rejected the Versailles Treaty, zealously guarded its prerogatives. "The Senate will not be intimidated," I told Brezhnev. "It will not act out of fear; it will not act in haste." Brezhnev accepted my advice that Soviet leaders should cease making inflammatory statements that could be counterproductive. "We will be patient,"

he agreed. At the conclusion of my remarks, I raised one further issue, asking that the Soviet leader give compassionate consideration to those dissidents seeking to leave the Soviet Union. Brezhnev accepted a list of these names from me but made no commitments. Later, I was pleased to learn that two of the people on the list received visas to leave the Soviet Union and that I was the first American notified of the decision.

At the end of our discussion, Brezhnev offered an Independence Day toast to the friendship between Americans and Soviets. I returned the gesture with a toast to his health, to continued friendship between our countries, and to peace in the world. As we walked back outside, Brezhnev insisted on conducting us on a brief tour of the grounds. Clearly this was unplanned, and the compound's staff could be seen scampering around in preparation. Moving in a slow shuffle and with some assistance from me, Brezhnev led us up to a log cabin several hundred yards from the conference center. This rustic structure, plainly but handsomely furnished, had been built for Stalin, to his specifications, although Brezhnev did not think that Stalin had ever used it. As we walked back to our cars, Brezhnev carried on an animated conversation, pointing out various features of the compound. I mentioned that my wife Erma and my staff had remained behind in Moscow, and I asked if I might have some of the chocolate bars we had seen on the table to take back to the ladies in my party. Brezhnev quickly dispatched a staff member to bring several candy bars. "Ladies like chocolate," Brezhnev chuckled, ". . . when it is presented by a man."

Back in Moscow the next day for a meeting with Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, I found that pictures from the Yalta meeting appeared on the front pages of Soviet newspapers.

In Moscow, I met with top Soviet officials at the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet in the Kremlin and with Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko. Our discussions were wide-ranging, but the central topics were arms control and defense spending. The Soviets believed that any reduction in strategic arms beyond those in SALT II needed to be viewed in the context of such "other factors" as China. Nikolay Inozemtzev, director of the Institute of World Economics and International Relations, assured me that the essence of Soviet policy was to go forward "in a resolute manner" toward significant reductions in strategic arms, based on the principle of equity. Our discussion of defense budgets underscored the difficulties in making comparisons between our fundamentally different economic systems. Soviet officials claimed that their defense budget was only one-fifth that of the United States, a ridiculous assertion. Differing accounting methods, radical differences in pay scales for military personnel, and the very nature of the socialist system obscured any common ground for an accurate comparison.

My two-and-a-half-hour meeting with Foreign Minister Gromyko covered a number of international topics and aspects of U.S.-Soviet relations, but most of the discussion centered on the role of the U.S. Senate in the treaty-ratification process. Just two weeks earlier, Gromyko had warned the Senate not to suggest any changes in the treaty, saying that Senate failure to approve SALT II would mean the end of Soviet-American arms negotiations. I stressed the Senate's constitutional role, and told the foreign minister that it would be in the best interest of all concerned if Soviet leaders refrained from any further inflammatory statements. Gromyko, who had by then been foreign minister for more than twenty years, acknowledged the truth of what I had said regarding the need for coolness, moderation,

and reason on both sides. He promised that, if again tempted to respond to "hot-headed" statements in the United States, he would use one hand to restrain the other from reaching for pencil and paper or instruct his staff to break the tape in his tape recorder if he dictated a sharp response. Gromyko kept his word, as did Brezhnev, and as long as prospects for the treaty remained alive, Soviet leaders refrained from making critical public comments.

At a press conference in Moscow, I described the discussion as very helpful to me, stating that it had been "a way of contributing to a better understanding by the Soviets of those matters of concern to my colleagues as we develop this internal debate." One press report observed, "The red-carpet treatment given Byrd shows that the Kremlin does understand that the treaty is probably doomed without his active support."

Returning from Moscow, I stopped in Paris to obtain the views of French officials about the SALT II Treaty and other issues of importance in East-West relations. At the Elysée Palace, my aide Hoyt Purvis and I met with President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. The president told me that France judged the SALT II Treaty on its merits, rather than on the basis of France's relationship to the United States. French experts had therefore deemed it a balanced treaty. In response to my questions about the consequences if the treaty were rejected, the French president replied that rejection would create political uncertainty in Western Europe about the United States. Some would cast the United States as extreme, and the Soviets would undoubtedly attempt to move closer to Europe and to dissociate Europe from the United States. The American ability to lead as a stable power would be questioned, and there would be fears in Europe of a new arms race and a renewed cold war. While Giscard d'Estaing made clear his support for ratification

of SALT II, however, he called for realistic efforts to alter the existing imbalance of intermediate range missiles in Europe.

My visit to Moscow and my talks with Soviet leaders had served their intended purpose, as I later reported to President Carter and others in his administration. What none of us had any way of knowing, however, was that rapidly changing international situations would prevent the Senate from debating the SALT II Treaty. In August, the State Department announced that it had discovered some two to three thousand Soviet troops in Cuba, and Senator Frank Church, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, postponed the SALT hearings to deal with reports of the Soviet brigade in Cuba. I must say that I was immediately skeptical of this brouhaha. It seemed to me premature to take any action before ascertaining the facts. In what the *Washington Post* called an "unprecedented initiative by a Senate leader," I arranged a meeting with Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin in my office on Sunday, September 23, 1979. As it developed, the Soviet brigade had been in Cuba since the 1960's and had long been "forgotten" before it was rediscovered. It was all what I called a "pseudo-crisis" that distracted attention from the real merits of the treaty. I then worked with the administration and with other senators to assure that the United States would move ahead with modernization of our strategic and conventional forces, measures which helped the SALT II Treaty to regain some of its lost momentum. Later, the Foreign Relations Committee recommended approval of the treaty by the narrow vote of 9 to 6.

Then, events in Iran and Afghanistan intervened. In November 1979, U.S. embassy personnel in Teheran were taken hostage by Iranian militants. In December, the Soviets sent troops to Afghanistan to quell the Moslem rebellion there. Under the circum-



Democratic President Jimmy Carter and Democratic Majority Leader Robert C. Byrd are depicted here supporting the SALT II treaty with the Soviet Union, while Minority Leader Howard Baker is portrayed as fearing that supporting the treaty could endanger his planned presidential campaign. *Jim Dent/Charleston Gazette, October 27, 1979*

stances, President Carter and I agreed that Senate consideration of the SALT II Treaty should be suspended. "It would not be conducive to the SALT process to bring up the treaty at this point," I said, telling the president, "the votes are not there." President Carter then publicly asked the Senate to postpone consideration of the SALT II Treaty. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had sealed the treaty's doom.

Looking back upon the international scene of 1979 and 1980, the tumultuous events in Iran come vividly to mind. As majority

leader, I had visited Iran in November 1978, when conditions in that country were becoming increasingly chaotic. Earlier that month, civil disorder and demonstrations had led the shah, Muhammad Reza Pahlavi, to install a military government. A curfew was in effect during my visit, and security conditions were extremely tight. Driving from Teheran airport to the embassy, there was virtually no traffic on the streets, and military troops were much in evidence. A car was turned on its side and burning near the embassy entrance. My wife Erma and I were

given rooms in the embassy compound, where, within less than a year, Americans would be taken hostage.

Minutes after our arrival, I met with Ambassador William Sullivan and began a long briefing session that reviewed recent developments in Iran. At that time, the U.S. supported the shah and believed he would prevail, but the ambassador warned that the situation was unpredictable. We had a serious exchange about how far the United States should go in encouraging the shah, and whether he was capable of saving the situation. National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski had urged me to tell the shah that the president and Congress stood behind him and were "unequivocal in our support." He also suggested that I encourage the shah to take his case directly to the Iranian people by radio and television. However, on the morning of November 27, when my wife and I visited with the Fatemi family, the Iranian family of my son-in-law, we heard a far less optimistic prognosis. I concluded that the shah had lost so much public support that pushing him to make more public appearances would be unwise. There was a danger of further polarizing Iranian society, so that the only alternative would then be the religious opposition led by the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

My first official meeting was with General Gholam Reza Azhari, the military chief of staff, who, three weeks earlier, had been appointed by the shah as prime minister under the military government that had just been established. Azhari was preoccupied with what might occur during the Shi'ite Moslem holy days of Moharram, which would begin in less than a week and were viewed as a possible climactic confrontation between the military government and the religious forces. He said the people now seemed to believe that all of their problems had come from the shah, a claim Prime Minister Azhari believed

to be incorrect but, nonetheless, a fact to be reckoned with. "The people must be assured that the past is the past," Azhari declared.

Following the meeting with the Iranian prime minister, my staff and my wife and I helicoptered to Nivavran Palace, where the shah greeted us in a lavishly furnished suite. I began the private conversation by relaying President Carter's assurance that the United States supported his leadership, adding my own support for the shah's efforts to move toward representative democracy and to restore domestic stability and order. I also told the shah that the United States would not interfere with Iran's internal affairs, nor would we tolerate interference from the Soviet Union. The shah expressed thanks for these comments and then offered his own assessment of the crisis. He admitted that the speed with which events had developed had taken him by surprise, particularly the growing influence of the religious leaders. Iran had seemed "like a rock" only a year earlier when President Carter referred to it as an island of stability.

The shah rather dispassionately discussed the various options open to him, but he had not clearly determined what course of action to take. He believed that he had made a mistake by concentrating his efforts on progress without paying careful enough attention to public opinion. Efforts to develop a political party system had floundered, and political talent had remained idle. "We need a machinery for democracy," he told me. "I don't know if we can do it, but I will try." He described the opposition as "riding on a wave of dissatisfaction" but considered many of them "out of touch with reality" and completely lacking in experience to govern. The shah never referred to Ayatollah Khomeini by name, only as "this fellow in Paris," who was constantly sending Iranians directives for disobedience. Acknowledging that the ayatollah had a strong following, the shah

held out the hope that Khomeini was losing ground. The shah said he himself had been caught in a vicious cycle: "Shall we establish law and order first and then democracy? Who can guarantee that if we brought a coalition to power, they would not yield too much, either to the extreme left or extreme right? If we continue clamping down, this may or may not end the disorder."

In answer to my question as to whether his government was adequately prepared to deal with events that might occur during Moharram, the shah responded, "The answer cannot be no."

I then met with the shah alone. I had decided not to push hard on the idea of urging the shah to use the mass media to appeal to the Iranian people. My reasons were: (1) it could make the shah appear weak; (2) the appointment of General Azhari as prime minister had been viewed by many as a bad decision; (3) the shah and his government lacked credibility; and (4) the situation had deteriorated so rapidly that the need was for action, not television appearances.

Following the meeting, the shah and Empress Farah hosted a luncheon attended by Ambassador and Mrs. Sullivan, Hoyt Purvis, my wife Erma and myself. The conversation was pleasant but generally serious and subdued. Empress Farah spoke of her son, who was in pilot training in the United States. The shah, not surprisingly, seemed preoccupied. He did say he was weighing options and searching for solutions.

My meetings with the shah and officials in the Iranian government and with our own Ambassador Sullivan convinced me that, while the situation was not entirely hopeless, events were rapidly approaching a climax of critical and fateful proportions, and I was pessimistic of its outcome. I urged the shah to be firm, fair, and determined, judicious but strong. He thanked me and asked me to tell President Carter and all agencies of the



In 1978, Robert C. Byrd visited Egyptian President Anwar Sadat.
Office of Senator Robert C. Byrd

U.S. government—by which I understood him to mean the Central Intelligence Agency—to support him "in what they do as well as in what they say."

Ambassador Sullivan later wrote that, while the White House had trouble accepting the reality of the problems in Iran, "one of those who must not be trapped into unreality was Senate Majority Leader Robert Byrd. I believe he left Teheran understanding the true nature of the situation we faced." Indeed, less than two months after my departure, the shah himself left on "an extended vacation," and shortly thereafter Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Iran from his fifteen-year exile.

When I left Iran, I flew to Egypt for private meetings with President Anwar Sadat. As Senate majority leader and, in this undertaking, as President Carter's emissary and with his approval, I hoped to encourage support among other countries in the Middle East for Sadat's courageous peace initiative. President Sadat, a gracious man, became quite emotional and even angry in his comments about Israeli intransigence in the peace process. I stressed to him the admiration in which the American people held him and told him that this good will was reflected in Congress. I re-



Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin greeted Robert C. Byrd in Tel Aviv in 1978.
USIA, U.S. Embassy, Tel Aviv/Matty Stern

peatedly urged him to accept the draft treaty with Israel and not to let the process unravel.

Flying from Cairo to Tel Aviv, I met with Prime Minister Menachem Begin, who was equally vigorous in arguing the Israeli side of the treaty negotiations. I stressed to Begin the importance of avoiding public statements that might create misunderstandings or lead to a hardening of positions. "The United States cannot accept a 'take it or leave it' attitude on the part of either party," I warned. However, I assured Begin and Defense Minister Ezer Weizmann that there was no question about the United States' commitment to Israel's security.

While in Jerusalem, I met with various West Bank leaders and heard their pleas for self-determination. I next flew on to Jordan, where I met with King Hussein, who also spoke of the plight of the Palestinians. I urged the king to become part of the Middle

East peace talks that had begun with the Camp David accords. I importuned him to become involved, "put your fingerprints on the peace process," and help to shape its course. Leaving Jordan, I flew to Syria—at the special request of President Carter—for a scheduled meeting with President Hafiz al-Assad, only to find, upon my arrival in Damascus, that the meeting had been canceled. I was both puzzled and angered but I left word that I would return following my visit to Saudi Arabia and would expect the promise of a meeting to then be fulfilled. Persistence had its reward and, upon my return from a visit with the Saudi Arabian leaders, I stopped in Syria and, this time, the desired meeting with President Assad took place. Again, I urged participation and support in the peace effort. Despite Syria's sharp differences of views over the Camp David accords, I found the Syrians clearly interested in maintaining a dialogue with the United States.

In Saudi Arabia, I had had a three-hour meeting with Crown Prince Fahd, who was already the effective head of the Saudi government. We talked of peace, oil, and overall United States-Saudi relations. I urged the Saudis to support President Sadat's courageous peace initiative, and, although the Saudis were reluctant to support publicly the Camp David agreements, Prince Fahd wanted America's efforts to succeed.

Except for my apprehensions and concern about Iran, I returned from the Middle East modestly encouraged about the prospects for peace. Stopping in London, I met with Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, who was then on his way to the Middle East, to give him a preliminary report of my findings, and in Washington I presented to President Carter a confidential report on the trip. In my public report to the Senate, I said that the most encouraging aspect of my discussions was the degree to which Middle Eastern leaders in

general were convinced that all of their nations and the United States shared the objective of achieving peace and stability in that region.

As we look back from another decade's perspective, that moment in the late 1970's was the closest that the Middle East has come to achieving peace and stability in our times. President Carter's effort to bring Israel and Egypt together was undoubtedly the high point of his presidency, for which he deserves lasting credit. It is a tragedy that the momentum begun at Camp David was disrupted by the Iranian revolution, the assassination of President Sadat, and the continuing, mindless, bloody civil war in Lebanon that has claimed so many lives and still holds so many innocent hostages. My journey through the Middle East proved valuable to me as Senate majority leader, giving me personal insights into those countries and their leaders that continued to assist me throughout the next decade. It also left me with a deep sense of regret over what might have been.

Concern with international affairs also took me to the People's Republic of China. In 1978, President Carter informed me that negotiations were underway to establish formal diplomatic ties with China. I knew that the supporters of Taiwan in Congress might seize upon this action as an opportunity to embarrass the administration, undercut its policies, and damage the prospects for improved relations with the People's Republic. I had already paid one visit to China in 1975 and had met with Deng Xiaoping in 1979 when he visited Washington, where we discussed the future of relations between the United States and China. Also in 1979, I received an invitation from the National People's Congress to visit the People's Republic, a trip that I made in July 1980.

Five years had passed since my previous visit, and I noticed many changes in China. It

seemed evident that the country was moving away from the rigid, statist Soviet model toward a more decentralized approach, incorporating incentives and greater market flexibility. I not only visited with government leaders in Beijing but also made visits to communes, hospitals, and military facilities in several Chinese provinces. In Beijing, I met with Premier Hua Guofeng and Vice-Premier Zhao Ziyang. We spoke especially about the Chinese opposition to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. I pointed out that a resolution I had introduced in the Senate demanding withdrawal of all Soviet troops from Afghanistan had passed unanimously. We talked also of the common interests between our nations. "We do not view this relationship as a momentary thing," Hua told me, "but from the perspective of our long-range strategic interests." I sought to allay Chinese anxieties over any change in American foreign policy toward China if Ronald Reagan were to be elected president. Stating that the vast majority of Americans wanted a continued normalization of relations between our two countries, I told the Chinese leaders, "There is no turning the clock back."

During this visit, I was especially impressed with Vice Premier Zhao Ziyang, who seemed to be emerging as the key figure in the younger generation of Chinese leaders. Indeed, two months later he replaced Hua Guofeng as premier. Zhao made it clear that his view of China's modernization depended upon economic improvements. He said that China would adopt more Western methods of organizing production and that industrial enterprises would be given more autonomy. China was introducing an economy regulated more by the market than by state planning.

On my way back to the United States, I stopped in Tokyo to discuss these matters with Mike Mansfield, the American ambas-

sador and my predecessor as Senate majority leader. In Washington, I told the Senate that "the United States has a real stake in helping China to strengthen its economy. . . . A strong, secure, peaceful, and modernizing China is vital to stability in the Asian-Pacific area." I was convinced then, and still believe, that the United States should "continue the course of steady, gradual growth in our relations with China." I regret that, in promoting the economic modernization of their country, the Chinese leadership did not realize the parallel need for greater political democracy, as demanded by the younger generation of Chinese. The massacre of student protesters in Tiananmen Square in 1989 and the fall of Zhao Ziyang as general secretary were great setbacks, both for China and for U.S.-Chinese relations. It is terrible when any political regime becomes so ossified that it can tolerate no change and would fire upon its own people. We can only hope that China, having taken this giant step backwards, will regain its footing and move forward toward the modernization and democratization that its people fundamentally desire.

My role as Senate Democratic leader changed considerably in 1981, when a Republican president occupied the White House and the Democrats became the minority party in the Senate. From a position of guiding the president's program through the Senate and marshalling the majority's forces, I found myself and my minority party in opposition to many of the new president's foreign policy initiatives. In 1981, for instance, I opposed President Reagan's proposed sale of AWACS planes to Saudi Arabia, arguing that it would destabilize the situation in the Middle East. I also opposed the president's decision to inject American peacekeeping forces into the Lebanese civil war, a decision that proved fatal to 241 U.S. Marines in one day in October 1983, and I was relieved

when President Reagan withdrew the remainder of those troops in 1984.

As Democratic leader, I supported the president whenever in good conscience I could but strongly opposed any signs of unilateral and secretive foreign policy action on the part of the executive. As minority leader, I felt it extremely important to monitor world events and maintain contact with world leaders. In 1985, when the United States and the Soviet Union resumed negotiations on a limitation of intermediate-range nuclear forces, I was eager to meet the new Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev. In August of that year, I led a bipartisan delegation of eight senators on a visit to the Soviet Union. The other participants were Senators Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, Claiborne Pell of Rhode Island, Paul Sarbanes of Maryland, John Warner of Virginia, Sam Nunn of Georgia, George Mitchell of Maine, and Dennis DeConcini of Arizona. En route to Moscow, we stopped in London to meet with the British minister of state for foreign and commonwealth affairs, in order to learn the British impressions of the new Soviet leader and of developments in Soviet policy. From London, the delegation flew to Hungary, a Soviet ally that was already showing signs of movement toward a creative domestic economic policy, the forerunner of much of the dramatic change we have witnessed in Eastern Europe during the closing weeks of 1989. We met with government leaders in Budapest and had a good exchange of views. Finally, in Moscow, we met with Mikhail Gorbachev. The appearance that same day of the September 2, 1985, issue of *Time* magazine, containing a lengthy interview with Gorbachev, convinced the delegation that we were dealing with a Soviet leader skilled in modern public relations.

Gorbachev started the meeting by asking me how I liked Moscow. I replied that I liked the city and that I had also liked Kiev, with



In September 1985, a bipartisan delegation of senators visited Mikhail Gorbachev at the Kremlin. Shown are, from left: Senators Strom Thurmond, Sam Nunn, and Robert C. Byrd with Gorbachev, far right, and two Soviet officials.
Office of Senator Robert C. Byrd

its greenery, clean streets, and warm hospitality. Gorbachev replied that there were many beautiful cities in the Soviet Union, that it was a vast land of diverse regions and cultures much like the United States, and that there were places in the Soviet Union he had never seen. Vastness, he said, left an impact on the national character and thinking of a people, so that the large-scale thinking of the United States and the Soviet Union were shaped by the large scale of our nations. "We more than any other nation are able to understand your nation and to build a bridge from the other side," he assured us.

He conceded that relations between the United States and the Soviet Union had not improved during the previous five years and

that he was determined to move relations "off dead center." This would take effort from both sides. Although there were many radical differences between our two nations, he insisted, we should not allow our differences to bring us into confrontation. "I cannot imagine a future of our two countries without cooperation," he told us. He spoke of his hopes for his forthcoming summit meeting with President Reagan and expressed concern about "those groups in the U.S. and Congress and those surrounding the President who tried to prevent the meeting."

During our dialogue, I raised our concern about the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan. Gorbachev interrupted to com-

plain that "Congress appropriates money to continue the fighting. The money sacks are all open and you spend no time to untie the money sacks." To this, I replied, "If there are any money sacks, it is easy to resolve. There will be no money sacks if the Soviets leave Afghanistan." When I completed my statement, Gorbachev replied that he had heard nothing new. Then, for about an hour and fifteen minutes, he responded with remarks that were defensive and argumentative but that continued to emphasize the need for political dialogue between our nations to end the arms race, to create a serious system of verification, and to prevent the militarization of space. He returned frequently to President Reagan's "Star Wars" plan, the Strategic Defense Initiative. "An arms race in space," said Gorbachev, "this is what bothers us and concerns us most of all." Of the continuing arms negotiations, he said, "We are all people well-steeled in the art of sitting at long meetings, but our time is drawing short." We needed greater cooperation between our nations in economic, scientific, and cultural fields. "The U.S. have their own way of life," he said. "The Soviets have their own way of life. . . . As the proverb goes, you should not go into another's monastery with your own charter." We needed to respect each other's own domestic matters.

When Gorbachev had finished, I responded that I was sorry he had "heard nothing new" in the statement that I had read on behalf of the delegation, because I believed it did express something new. I further stated:

You heard a fair and sound statement representing the feelings of the American people, and you heard for the first time the viewpoint of the U.S. Senate. After all, under our Constitution, while the President negotiates and we do not, no treaty can go into effect unless two-thirds of the members of the Senate—not the House, not Mr. McFarlane (the President's national security adviser), not the White House, but the Senate—vote to approve the resolution of ratification of a

treaty. The Senate is no rubber stamp for any President.

To add bipartisan support for my comments, the vice chairman of the delegation, Senator Strom Thurmond, noted that he fully endorsed my statement. He said that, while the United States and the Soviet Union had differences in the past, there was "no reason why we cannot iron out these differences and work together for world peace," particularly if the Soviet Union "would get out of Afghanistan, Angola, Ethiopia, and Central America."

Our delegation came away with no sure signs that the Soviet position had shifted on any substantive foreign policy issue. Yet, as we reported to the Senate, "There is a new sense of self-confidence [in the Soviet leadership] which makes Mr. Gorbachev a formidable negotiating partner, whose skills at organizing his arguments and presenting them were demonstrated convincingly."

This meeting was very important for me as well as for other members of the delegation in forming our assessments of the new Soviet leader. Indeed, a little over two years later, President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty to eliminate all INF missiles. This was the first major arms reduction agreement in over a decade. Moreover, it came before the Senate during the One-hundredth Congress, when the Democrats had been returned to the majority and I was once again majority leader. The INF Treaty was the culmination of a long, bipartisan process dating back to the Carter administration, when NATO's dual-track policy of weapons deployment and negotiation was initiated. Missiles were placed in European countries—despite the opposition of some citizens—at the same time that NATO leaders expressed their willingness to discuss with the USSR ways of reducing the number

of weapons on both sides. NATO's tenacity in pursuing this policy, at some political cost to various European leaders, provided the leverage needed to bring the Soviets to negotiate at Geneva.

On the day that the One-hundredth Congress opened in January 1987, I offered a resolution, on behalf of myself and Minority Leader Bob Dole of Kansas, reauthorizing the Arms Control Observer Group. This unique group supplemented the activities of the Foreign Relations Committee by providing a more regular and systematic involvement of the full Senate in any arms control negotiations between the United States and the USSR. This bipartisan group followed the arms control process and provided the Senate with valuable insights into the negotiations, in line with the Senate's duty to advise and consent on treaty ratification. I also met with Senators Pell, Nunn, and David L. Boren of Oklahoma—the chairmen of the Foreign Relations Committee, the Armed Services Committee, and the Intelligence Committee, respectively—to ask them to work together and coordinate their efforts on the treaty. On February 17, 1987, the Senate approved a resolution expressing its full support for the president's commitment to achieve mutual, equitable, balanced, verifiable, and stabilizing nuclear arms reduction agreements with the Soviet Union.

Because of the critical importance of the INF Treaty to the NATO alliance, I led a bipartisan delegation of senators to Europe in February 1988. The delegation—consisting of Senators Nunn, Pell, Boren, Warner, and myself—visited with government leaders in London, Paris, Bonn, Rome, and Ankara. We found these leaders, including Margaret Thatcher, François Mitterrand, and Helmut Kohl, united in their view, although for different reasons, that the Senate should approve the INF Treaty. In the meantime, the three Senate committees—Foreign Relations,

Armed Services, and Intelligence—had begun to examine the treaty, calling expert witnesses in public and executive sessions. The Armed Services Committee and the Intelligence Committee identified issues requiring further clarification. Although I was under public pressure from the White House and Senate Republicans—and some of my Democratic colleagues—to call up the treaty for floor action, I stated, in early May, that floor debate would not begin until it was clear that the United States and the Soviet Union had resolved the issues and concerns raised by the two committees.

The problems identified by the two committees included ambiguities over the definition of "weapon" and whether futuristic weapons, not mentioned in the treaty, were covered by it. Also at issue was the ability to verify an implied ban on futuristic weapons, and there were differences of opinion on the procedures governing the conduct of on-site inspections. An additional concern was whether the administration was adequately committing itself to the updating of eavesdropping satellites and other technical means of intelligence. Only after Secretary of State George Shultz and Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze met in Geneva and resolved all of the issues, and only after the concerns of the Armed Services and Intelligence Committees had been satisfied, did I call up the treaty and allow the floor debate to begin.

The Senate adopted a controversial condition on treaty interpretation that I offered on behalf of myself, Senator Dole, and the chairmen and ranking minority members of the three committees. This bipartisan amendment provided that, in interpreting the INF Treaty's terms, President Reagan or any future president would be bound not only by the treaty's text but also by the "common understanding" arrived at jointly by the Senate and the executive branch



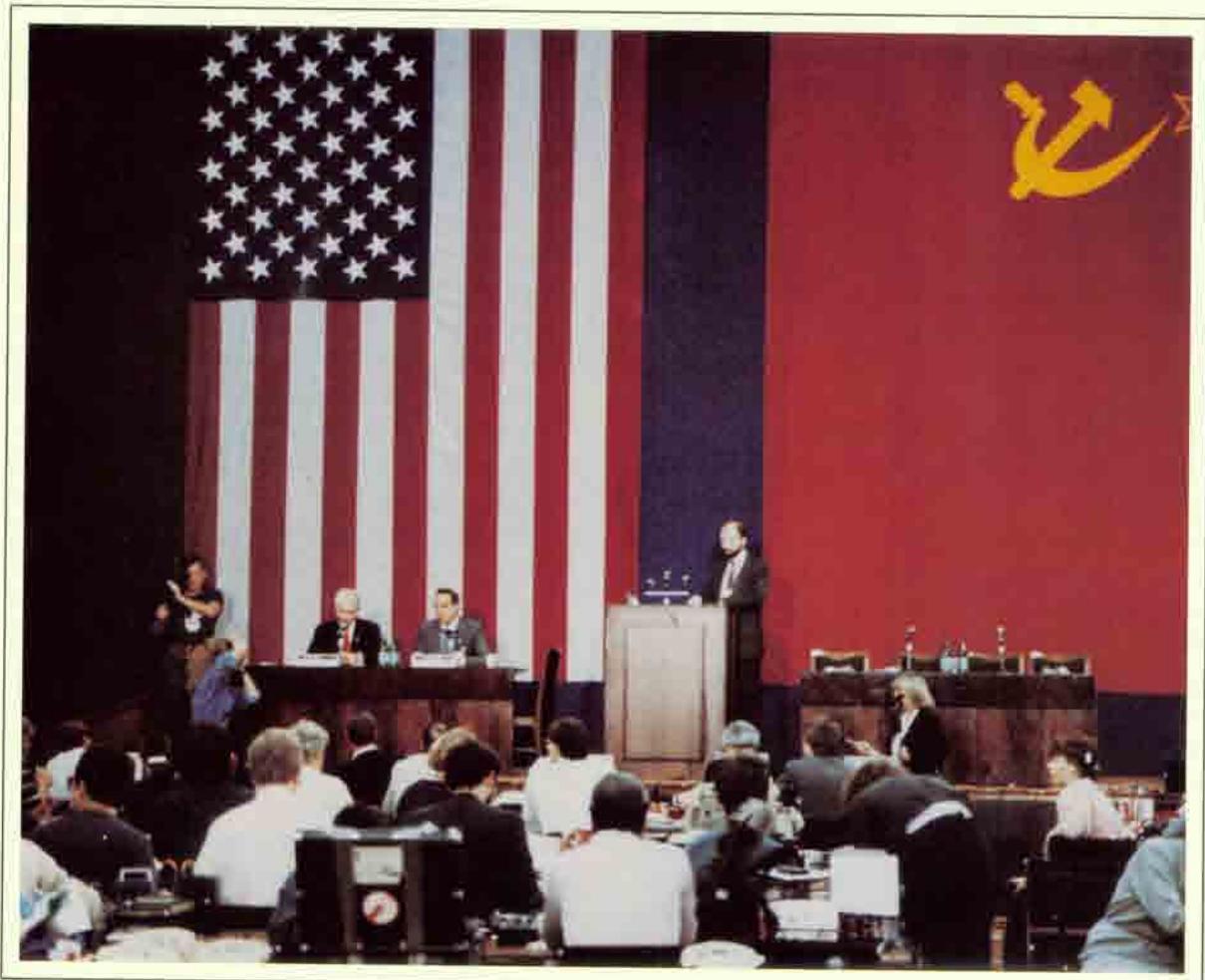
British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher greeted a delegation of U.S. senators at No. 10 Downing Street. *From left:* Senators David Boren, Sam Nunn, and Claiborne Pell; Mrs. Thatcher; U.S. Ambassador Charles H. Price; and Senators John Warner and Robert C. Byrd. *London Pictures Service*

through testimony by administration officials in hearings on the treaty. The amendment also provided that any reinterpretation of the treaty by the Reagan administration or any future administration would have to be approved by the Senate. This provision ensured that the Senate's constitutional role would not be undermined by a subsequent unilateral executive branch reinterpretation of the treaty, as had happened earlier when the Reagan administration declared that the 1972 Anti-Ballistic-Missile (ABM) Treaty would not prohibit testing of portions of

the proposed Strategic Defense Initiative program.

Taking the view that the Senate's role in the making of treaties would be meaningless if presidents could reinterpret treaties after the Senate approved them, I said, "The preservation of the institutional role of this Senate in making treaties is more important than this treaty because there will be other treaties." The amendment was adopted by a vote of 72 to 27.

Speaking to reporters after the vote on the amendment, I stated, "This Senate's action



At the invitation of President Reagan, Majority Leader Robert Byrd and Minority Leader Bob Dole attended the formal ratification of the INF Treaty in Moscow in June 1988.
Office of Senator Robert C. Byrd

on this treaty should be a clear signal to the Administration, to any future Administration and to the Soviet Union that this Senate will not roll over and play dead on any treaty for any President or be a rubber stamp for any President."

After two weeks of intense debate, on May 27, 1988, the Senate voted 93 to 5 to approve the resolution of ratification. In recognition of the key role played by the joint Senate leadership in successfully concluding debate on the INF Treaty, President Reagan invited Senator Dole and me to attend the

summit in Moscow, where the INF Treaty was formally ratified on June 1, 1988. The White House chief of staff, former Senator Howard Baker, also attended the ceremony. I was proud to be there and proud that the Senate's scrutiny had strengthened and improved this important treaty.

There were some aspects of the Reagan foreign policy that I found deeply troubling. For instance, during most of the 1980's, the administration devoted much time and energy to a narrowly focused, one-track military-oriented policy as a way of con-

fronting the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. This overemphasis on a single element of our hemispheric foreign policy resulted in a lack of adequate attention to the many serious social and economic problems faced by neighboring Mexico and the nascent democratic governments in South America.

After almost seven years of regional warfare, the presidents of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua met in Esquipulas, Guatemala on August 7, 1987. There, under the leadership of President Oscar Arias Sanchez of Costa Rica, they signed an accord designed to end the fighting in Nicaragua and El Salvador and to seek a diplomatic and political settlement of the regional conflict. This so-called Esquipulas Agreement was followed up on March 23, 1988, when representatives of the Nicaraguan government and the Contras met at Sapoa, Nicaragua. There, in accord with the provisions of the Arias peace plan, they signed an agreement to negotiate both a cease-fire and the terms beginning a process of national reconciliation.

On August 10, 1988, the Senate approved an amendment which I offered to the fiscal year 1989 Defense appropriation bill on behalf of myself and Senators Christopher Dodd of Connecticut, David Boren of Oklahoma, John Stennis of Mississippi, Bennett Johnston of Louisiana, and Lawton Chiles of Florida. Offered as an attempt to form a bipartisan consensus to protect United States security interests while promoting peace and stability in the region, the amendment had resulted from protracted three-way negotiations among Senate Democrats, Senate Republicans, and the White House. Despite the successful resolution of every issue under negotiation, however, the White House withdrew its support for the amendment at the last minute—indeed, while the amendment was pending on the Senate floor. Still, the votes of Senate Democrats were enough

to adopt the provision by a vote of 49 to 47 over the opposition of the White House and all of our Republican colleagues.

The amendment provided \$27 million in humanitarian assistance to the Contras through March 31, 1989, as well as a \$5 million package of assistance to civilian victims of the war, to be administered by the Catholic church in Nicaragua. It also provided that the president could request and receive expedited action for the release of \$16.5 million of previously authorized military aid for the Contras, if he certified to Congress that such an expedited vote was necessary to protect the Contras from an attack or a Sandinista action that threatened the peace and security of the region. Additionally, the amendment included economic incentives to encourage the Sandinistas to reach a general peace settlement with the Contras. The amendment put the Sandinistas on notice that Congress supported diplomatic solutions to the conflict in Central America, but it also sent them a message that we were prepared to return to military pressure if they failed to keep their word to democratize their government. It gave clear notice to the Sandinistas that they had reached a crucial point and that it was time to comply with the provisions of the Arias peace accord and to move to a genuinely pluralistic democratic process in Nicaragua.

A bipartisan accord was reached on March 24, 1989, in which the new administration under President George Bush joined the bipartisan congressional leadership in endorsing what had been the essential ingredients of the Byrd amendment, in effect making it affirmative administration policy for the first time. In a side letter to the accord, Secretary of State James Baker agreed to obligate funds beyond November 30, 1989, in the same formulation as set out in the amendment, if such an expenditure had been "affirmed via letters from the bipartisan leadership of

Congress and the relevant House and Senate authorization and appropriations committees." Accordingly, such a letter of approval was signed on November 27, 1989. In essence, the letter affirmed that the process of democratization in Nicaragua was proceeding as hoped, and the aid program set out in the Byrd amendment was being administered according to the spirit of the amendment.

The Byrd amendment represented the essential, critical rejection of the Reagan administration's single-minded devotion to military victory through the use of the expatriate army, known as the Contras, that was settled on the Honduran-Nicaraguan border. The amendment's successful implementation validated the support within the United States political system for the democratic and diplomatic road to peace that the presidents of the five Central American governments took when they signed the Esquipulas Agreement on August 7, 1987.

Another aspect of the Reagan administration's foreign policy that troubled me involved events in the Persian Gulf, which, by 1987, had become a sea of horrors. The decision of the Reagan administration to increase the United States' naval presence in the Persian Gulf at the height of the war between Iran and Iraq raised the question of whether the War Powers Resolution should be invoked. The administration steadfastly refused to acknowledge that it had placed American forces into a situation where involvement in hostilities was imminent and, therefore, refused to be bound by the limitations of that statute. The Senate spent considerable time debating this point.

On May 21, 1987, the Senate adopted an amendment that I offered with Senator Dole to the supplemental appropriation bill regarding the Persian Gulf. This amendment required the secretary of defense to make a comprehensive report and assessment of the

security situation in the gulf before providing military assistance to reflagged Kuwaiti shipping. We also dispatched special Senate investigating missions to the region, consisting of Senators Jim Sasser, John Glenn, and John Warner.

While some questioned the Senate's extensive oversight in regard to U.S. naval operations in the gulf, the configuration of this country's naval forces there was dramatically upgraded as a result of Senate prodding, and larger, more capable ships were deployed, making less likely a repetition of the Iraqi jet fighter's mistaken attack on the U.S.S. *Stark* that had occurred in May 1987. Furthermore, the Senate's involvement helped stimulate U.S. allies in Europe and around the Persian Gulf to increase their participation in the region.

On several occasions, the Senate attempted to express its will on the Persian Gulf but was unable to obtain the sixty votes needed to limit debate. Many senators were reluctant to pass legislation invoking the War Powers Resolution, in part because it would require the automatic withdrawal of forces from the Persian Gulf within sixty days, unless their continued deployment was authorized. This impasse lasted until October 1987, when the Senate narrowly passed a joint resolution, which I introduced with Senator John Warner, to require the president to provide a comprehensive report about the objectives of the specific military missions upon which he was embarking. Unfortunately, the resolution, which, in many ways, duplicated the requirements of the War Powers Resolution, was not acted upon in the House.

During the 1980's, the conflict in Afghanistan was an important factor in U.S.-Soviet relations. The Soviet invasion scuttled the chances of Senate approval of SALT II in 1979 and affected the relationship over the next decade. Throughout the period, the

Senate played a central role in relations between the two countries. After the invasion, the first such Soviet forcible military incursion into a sovereign independent nation since World War II, a strong bipartisan and bicameral consensus sustained a high level of military and economic assistance to the mujahedeen, the Afghan resistance fighters. The fiercely independent mujahedeen fought against great odds: a Soviet proxy regime, well-oiled with Soviet military hardware, and a five-hundred-thousand-man occupying army.

Over the decade of the 1980's, the consistent factor in the U.S. legislative-executive partnership to aid the mujahedeen was the U.S. Congress, which not only insisted on high levels of assistance, but even dominated American decision-making on specific weapons systems to be provided. A striking example of this congressional effort was the provision of "Stinger" hand-held surface-to-air missiles to the Afghan resistance, over the reluctance of the administration, an action which is credited with turning the tide of the war against the Soviets. Hundreds of Soviet aircraft and helicopters were brought down with this lethal and compact weapon, denying the Soviets the complete air dominance that they had earlier enjoyed. The Soviets were forced to withdraw their army from a war that had become increasingly unpopular among their population and that had led to an unending stream of casualties and a painful stalemate, bringing them substantial international costs, particularly in the Muslim world.

The Senate repeatedly expressed its unflinching endorsement for the cause of the Afghan resistance by adopting resolutions of continued support. In 1988, I authored a crucial resolution to prevent the administration from carrying out its intention to cut off American lethal aid as part of negotiations in Geneva on accords designed to end the con-

flict. Unfortunately, it became clear that the Soviets intended to continue giving heavy military support and guidance to their proxy regime in Kabul, even after the withdrawal of most of their ground forces. A cutoff of U.S. military aid would thus have left the resistance in an untenable position. The Senate resolution condemned any such U.S. cutoff and reiterated strong Senate support for continued U.S. military aid to the mujahedeen as long as the Soviets maintained their overwhelming assistance to Kabul. The resolution passed by a unanimous vote on February 29, 1988, and the accompanying debate was highly critical of the administration, particularly the State Department. The resolution received wide publicity, and, under the Senate's pressure, the administration hastily reformulated its policy in order to require "symmetry"—continuing U.S. military aid to the resistance so long as the Soviets provided similar aid to their client regime in Kabul.

The Soviets denounced the Senate action, but the result demonstrated the impact of long and detailed Senate watchfulness over the course of the Afghan conflict. Because the Soviets were unwilling to abandon the Kabul regime and the Senate was adamantly opposed to removing key American support, the conflict became one of irresolute painful attrition. The Soviets apparently expected U.S. attention to fade over the long run and thus provide them the political victory in Afghanistan that they had been unable to secure with their own invading army. The final outcome remains to be seen.

This overview of a majority leader's dealings with American foreign policy has not covered all of the events and issues of the times or all the leaders with whom I dealt. I went to Ankara, for instance, to meet with Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit in 1978 about lifting the U.S. embargo on arms shipments to Turkey, and to Tokyo to discuss interna-



Members of the Iran-Contra committee heard testimony from hundreds of witnesses. *Office of Senator Robert C. Byrd*

tional affairs with Japanese Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita. There were also a host of other issues regarding Africa, South America, Asia, and Europe.

I cannot close this discussion, however, without referring to the notorious Iran-Contra affair and its implications for executive-legislative relations in foreign affairs. Like other senators, I was appalled at the news, in November 1986, that Reagan administration officials and private citizens had been involved in selling U.S. weapons to Iran in exchange for Iranian intercession with groups in Lebanon holding American citizens hostage. Although President Reagan repeatedly and publicly denied any knowledge of such transactions, the facts were clearly otherwise, as evidenced by the surfacing of a presidential "finding," which bore the signa-

ture "Ronald Reagan" and was dated January 17, 1986. The document stated:

I hereby find that the following operation in a foreign country . . . is important to the national security of the United States, and due to its extreme sensitivity and security risks, I determine it is essential to limit prior notice, and direct the Director of Central Intelligence to refrain from reporting this finding to the Congress . . . until I otherwise direct.

What were the description and purpose of the "operation" as outlined by President Reagan? According to the presidential finding, the purposes were to:

Assist selected friendly . . . third countries and third parties which have established relationships with Iranian elements . . . for the purpose of . . . (3) furthering the release of the American hostages held in

Beirut . . . by providing these elements [within and outside the government of Iran] with arms, equipment and related materiel.

The president had publicly stated that he would countenance no deals with hostage takers and would not exchange arms for hostages. He had also publicly urged other industrialized nations to join in an embargo against providing arms to Iran.

It was also discovered that the proceeds from these arms sales apparently were being diverted to support anti-Sandinista forces in Nicaragua in flagrant violation of the Boland amendments, which Congress had adopted in 1982 to prohibit such assistance.

It was ironic that, as we prepared to celebrate the bicentennial of our Constitution, this bizarre stunt should come to light. It had been shrouded in secrecy and duplicity that had no place in an open, democratic society governed by laws, not men. The secret arms-for-hostages scandal damaged the presidency and the credibility of the United States with friends and allies. Moreover, it undermined the trust between the executive and legislative branches of the government.

When the One-hundredth Congress convened, one of the Senate's first acts was to vote 88 to 4 to adopt a resolution I had crafted and introduced, with Senator Dole as a cosponsor, creating a Select Committee on Secret Military Assistance to Iran and the Nicaraguan Opposition. I appointed Senator Daniel Inouye of Hawaii to serve as chairman, and I also appointed Senators George Mitchell of Maine, Sam Nunn of Georgia, Paul Sarbanes of Maryland, Howell Heflin of Alabama, and David Boren of Oklahoma to the committee. Minority Leader Dole appointed Senator Warren Rudman of New Hampshire to serve as vice chairman, together with Senators James McClure of Idaho, Orrin Hatch of Utah, William Cohen of Maine, and Paul Trible of Virginia. The

Senate committee, working in conjunction with a similar select committee of the House, heard hundreds of witnesses and examined thousands of pages of documents. The story that unfolded was a sorry tale of White House arrogance and disdain for Congress, the American people, and the rule of law.

The Iran-Contra affair represented everything that I had fought against as majority leader and as minority leader. American foreign policy is not the exclusive domain of the presidency. The Constitution implicitly, but nonetheless clearly, provides that the executive and the legislative branches share power over foreign policy. The Senate, with its advice and consent authority and its participation with the House in the appropriations process, has a constitutional duty to remain fully informed about American foreign policy and to help steer it in a wise direction.

The full extent of President Reagan's own personal involvement in the arms deal for hostages and the Iran-Contra fiasco may never be fully revealed, but the American people had been badly misled and disserved by the president and his subordinates, who—although they may have believed their objectives to be noble—ignored the Constitution; lied to Congress; and conducted a secretive, arbitrary, and unchecked foreign policy. Had the proper congressional committees been informed of these actions at the time, they could have spared the president the acute embarrassment to which he was exposed when the scheme unraveled, because Congress would not have gone along with such a perverse undertaking. Years later, the courts are still trying the Iran-Contra defendants, some of whom have been found guilty and sentenced. One hopes that future presidents will remember the lesson of Iran-Contra: that in the making of foreign policy, they would be wise to look upon Congress as a partner rather than as an enemy.

Disagreement between the branches over specific issues of foreign policy is not a source of weakness but of potential strength. From the Panama Canal Treaty to the INF Treaty, Senate objections have helped to avoid mistakes and clarify ambiguities. Foreign leaders do not always understand our system of division of powers or appreciate the Senate's role in the ratification of treaties, but personal meetings of the type I have described between foreign leaders and the

Senate leadership can be instructive for all parties and satisfy those leaders' concerns. As for United States senators, we must continue to take very seriously the separation of powers, recalling the wise words of James Madison in *The Federalist*, "In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: You must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place, oblige it to control itself."