

## In The Nation: Mobilization and Confrontation

By TOM WICKER

WASHINGTON, Nov. 10—Dean Rusk is said to have remarked at a White House dinner last week that as a member of the "loyal opposition," he had become "more loyal than opposition" after President Nixon's Nov. 3 speech on Vietnam. The all-inclusive sprawl of this speech is aptly suggested by the fact that others here heard it as an outright pledge to withdraw all American troops. One prominent antiwar Senator, Mike Mansfield of Montana, now is joining in sponsorship of a resolution of support for Mr. Nixon.

But however the speech may have obscured the facts of the President's policy toward Vietnam, it left no doubt of his attitude toward domestic critics. Mr. Nixon's theme was that the only way to get peace was to support his policy, whatever it is; and that visible dissent was, in fact, support for a Communist prolongation of the war.

The predictable result of these echoes of Lyndon Johnson was to arouse the anger of those who have learned to discount the notion of Presidential infallibility, and who are rightly convinced that if the war is one step nearer an end today that it was in 1967 it is only because of sustained

public dissent and political opposition. They know that to say what Mr. Nixon said was, in fact and effect, to equate dissenters of every character with what Vice President Agnew has more forthrightly called "rotten apples."

This reaction was so predictable, in fact, that Mr. Nixon must have known—or at least feared—that his remarks would increase the emotional content, if not necessarily the size, of the Mobilization demonstrations to be held in this city this weekend. Then it also became known that the Justice Department would deny permission for a march up Pennsylvania Avenue past the White House, on grounds that the threat of violence was too great.

### Spurring a Confrontation

But there can be no doubt whatever—not for anyone who has tried to learn anything from the urban riots and student demonstrations of the past few years—that it was the Nixon speech and the Justice Department's denial of the Pennsylvania Avenue permit that really raised the possibility of some kind of a confrontation.

Denying the use of streets and public places to throngs of demonstrators, as Mayor Daley did last year in Chicago, almost

inevitably makes an inherently unstable situation that much more dangerous. Loosing the police to retake by force buildings seized by college students has almost always made matters worse. Building up an atmosphere of toughness and hostility in advance of an incident merely increases tensions all around.

These are not theories but the conclusions that any thoughtful person has to draw from the troubled history of demonstrations in the last few years. Yet the Justice Department appears—not only by the permit denial but by making difficulties about parking, public buildings, restrooms, and the like—to be preparing for the possibility of violence in a way that increases rather than diminishes the likelihood that it will occur. If so, it is not only bad law enforcement, it is likely in the long run to be bad politics for the Nixon Administration.

### An Unwanted Effect

Surely Mr. Nixon does not wish the world to see protesting Americans clubbed in the streets with the White House as a backdrop. That would provide the exact opposite of the impression of national unity he wants to give to the world; it would mock American pre-

tensions to political and intellectual liberty; it would inflame those passions the President said he hoped to calm when he took office promising to "bring us together."

The Johnson Administration permitted the massive march on Washington in 1967, then maintained order in the city with relatively little violence. Mr. Nixon can hardly wish it said that he permitted less dissent, and more violence resulted; yet that is exactly what could happen if his Administration maintains its present attitude. And while tough action against the demonstrators might be momentarily popular with some of the President's supporters, that would be offset by the degree to which the antiwar forces would be further embittered and aroused.

In fact—aside from any pious rhetoric about the evils of violence—neither side has anything to gain from a violent confrontation. It would only dramatize the dissent Mr. Nixon wants to dampen and obscure the cause that inspires the marchers. So if a chance exists for accommodation, both sides ought to seize it out of sheer self-interest; and from the same practical political point of view, the Justice Department, which has the power to initiate a compromise, would do well to use it swiftly.