

FOREWORD

IN THIS published record of Presidential speeches, messages, and other communications, the casual reader and serious scholar alike will find a verbal outline of a year rich in the stuff of history.

Nineteen hundred seventy-two witnessed the closing chapter of our long struggle for an honorable settlement in Vietnam. It saw America successfully building a global structure of lasting peace by forging new international relationships and strengthening old ones. And, at home, it saw the emergence of a broad-based consensus for governmental reform, economic restraint and responsibility, and national renewal.

The sweep of events spanned continents. For the first time, a President of the United States was welcomed in the capitals of two nations which have been our most powerful adversaries. In Moscow, Peking, and other global nerve centers, American initiatives laid the groundwork for an era of reduced tensions and greater international understanding.

Within our own borders, a surging national economy turned more fully from the works of war to the challenges of peace. For the first time in a generation, Government and people could dedicate themselves to the goal of a prosperity unblemished by war or inflation.

Finally, in November of 1972, the American people were offered the clearest electoral choice in a century—a choice between two sharply contrasting sets of policies and philosophies of government. Statement by statement, issue by issue, the papers in this volume define the policies and philosophies for which I stood in that election, policies and philosophies which provide the goals for my Administration during its second term.

It is obvious that no collection of public papers, however encyclopedic, can paint the full picture of the many events it recounts. The intricate play of personalities, the subtleties of planning, timing, and execution defy precise description; the thousand random

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factors that can change even the most carefully charted course do not lend themselves to easy portrayal on paper.

Yet by reviewing the materials assembled here, readers should be able to sense both the broad strokes and the fine shadings which shaped our national policies in 1972. And in the laws, treaties, and executive actions that grew out of these events, we can see the tangible effects of these sometimes intangible forces.

Each document in this volume, long or short, marks an aspiration conceived, achieved or frustrated. And if, as the Athenian historian Thucydides maintained, history is philosophy taught by example, then each document is also part of a lesson as useful to posterity as it was instructive to those who lived it.

Every generation views history through lenses of its own making. The same picture constantly alters in hue and perspective and the relative importance of its individual parts forever fluctuates. Sometimes the result is greater clarity. At other times it is only fresh distortion. But in all cases, a full written transcript of the past can serve as a steadying focal point, a beacon pointing the way to sound interpretation and reevaluation.

The stronger the beacon—and the physical bulk of this volume attests to its strength in the case of 1972—the clearer the illumination it can throw on what is past and the brighter the light it can cast toward future horizons.

