

The Men Who Came to Dinner

On 8 May 1972, the President decided to give his speech to the nation at 9 p.m. announcing that he had mined Haiphong Harbor. As fate would have it, this was the exact moment at which the Soviet Incidents at Sea delegation was scheduled to arrive at the home of John Warner for dinner. John Warner had invited me and, although it was a stag party, had decided to add his wife, Kathy, and my wife, Mouza, to the dinner party since Mouza spoke Russian and most of the Russians did not speak English. John Warner and I discussed ahead of time how to handle the fact that the President would be announcing action quite anti-thetical to Soviet interests at the <sup>very</sup> moment of their arrival for dinner. I recommended that the best thing to do was to invite them to watch television with us, rather than to trot/ around it. This we did, and as soon as the guests arrived we turned on the television and told them the President was imminently going to start his speech. The guests consisted of Admiral Kasatonov, Admiral Alekseyev, Rear Admiral Motrokhov, and Major General Vishensky. They were accompanied by a beady-eyed, commissar-type named Bubnov, who spoke English. For the benefit of the military folk, my wife,

Mouza, translated the speech to the Russians ~~and short praises~~ as the President was giving it. After the speech was over, Mr. Bubnov turned to me and said: This is a very serious matter between our two countries. I said to him: This is a matter between the United States and an ally, dealing with a nation with whom we are at war and ~~we~~<sup>we had have</sup> nothing to do with the Soviet Union. Mr. Bubnov replied: You Americans don't realize that you no longer have the power to act this way. This could lead to war. I said to him: You Russians don't seem to realize that the Americans are not going to let themselves be pushed out of South Vietnam by North Vietnamese using plentiful Soviet equipment. Mr. Bubnov said: That might be your attitude but I don't think you're typical. I said to Mr. Bubnov: You should travel more throughout our country and learn what our people are really like. The meal then went on to pleasanter topics. The military members seemed to take the action in good state and realize it was quite consistent with U.S. policy and U.S. objectives and did not seem to take offense at it the way Bubnov did.