Richard Nixon, Vietnam, & DÉTENTE

Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger meeting with Ambassador Huang Zhen (to Nixon’s right), head of the People’s Republic of China Liaison Office, 6 July 1973.
Nixon’s Background

• Republican
• Eisenhower’s Vice President
• Ran for president against (and lost to) JFK in 1960
• Elected President in 1968*
• Lyndon Johnson decided not to run for re-election.
Vietnam

• Vietnamization
  – Nixon started this right away--early 1969
  – A plan by Nixon to have the South Vietnamese take over the war against the North
  – This way America could get out!
  – “Let the South Vietnamese fight their own war!”
Cambodia

- 1969 Nixon begins **secret** bombing campaign in Cambodia
- Later even a secret invasion
• This was an attempt to wipe out the Ho Chi Minh Trail— a supply line for the Communists from the North to the South
• The point was to make it safer for American troops to withdraw from Vietnam.
• When Nixon made the bombing public, it sparked protests at college campuses all over the nation.
• Most notably among these was at Kent State University in northern Ohio.
• The national guard was called in to stop the protests
The National Guard fired shots into the crowd and **killed** 4 people--some of whom were just passing by.
• This is what the *Crosby Stills Nash and Young* song “Ohio” is about.

“Tin soldiers and Nixon's comin'. We're finally on our own. This summer I hear the drummin'. Four dead in Ohio. Gotta get down to it. Soldiers are gunning us down. Should have been done long ago. What if you knew her and Found her dead on the ground? How can you run when you know?

Gotta get down to it. Soldiers are cutting us down. Should have been done long ago. What if you knew her and Found her dead on the ground? How can you run when you know? Tin soldiers and Nixon's comin'. We're finally on our own. This summer I hear the drummin'. Four dead in Ohio.
QuickTime™ and a YUV420 codec decompressor are needed to see this picture.
• Despite all this, Nixon did begin **withdrawing** troops
• By 1973, we had signed an agreement **ending** the conflict with North Vietnam--so we left.
• By April 1975, South Vietnam had been taken over by the North.
DÉTENTE

The Cold War “Thaws” a Bit

• At the same time Nixon was trying to end the Vietnam War, he was also trying to ease tensions with the Soviet Union and China.
USSR

• SALT I--1970
  – Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty
  – Talks with US and USSR
  – Said “let’s keep the number of ICBMs at current levels”
China

• 1971--US ended the trade embargo with China
China

- 1971 --table tennis match between US and China--based on an accidental meeting of the team members in Japan
China

• 1972 Nixon becomes the 1st American President to visit China