

Dear Jim,

Nixon's Farewell

8/9/74

No tear, no sorrow, no remorse, no guilt, no man not his enemy, poor abused personification of all that is good in public life.

And so we are about to lose the first President who found it necessary to protest "I am not a crook" and that "I have never obstructed justice." The same who in quitting also boasted "I am not a quitter." The big crook, the wholesale obstructor of justice.

Often I have described some particularly evil thing he did as the ultimate obscenity. But this and immediate reaction to it must really be it. When Severeid described this continuation of a lifetime of lived lies as "magnanimous" I had it and went to bed to get a little sleep for a 4 a.m. start because that kind of opinion and interpretation would not inform, that kind of reaction being predictable. That kind of non-reporting having made him and all he did possible.

To the end- eight hours away -he is a crook and a chiseller. After all the leaks about how he would take a mere public VIP plane and all its costs to flee to his Valhalla he is taken. AF One, this time called that whether he still make one want to vomit by calling it The Spirit of '76. That the spirit of the American Revolution?

Never has there been such uninterrupted dishonesty, yet to the end to him it is all honest. Orwell must have had him in mind! With one flaw: he never did anything well. He was a package, not a performer.

It will not surprise me if, when he is flying away and still technically President, his last act is clemency for all his crooks, convicted, charged and yet to be charged. If he could make himself the victim of those he victimized in this farewell speech and if he could bring himself to make such a speech, there is nothing of which he is not capable. And the one thing he has to know is what so many can yet do to him.

We have held the same view, that in the end his endeavor was immunity as a minimum. We have no way of knowing whether he has it because it can't be voted. It can be a policy.

With the past to go on and the reaction to this thoroughly obscene performance so favorable to it, one of the apparent possibilities is that these untried crimes may become anti-climactic. They will be forgotten because those who would inform us or keep us from forgetting have their own deficiencies to forget. There would be a certain amount of this inevitable from the real needs he leaves us, to try to straighten out the national mess he could not have helped making and he made worse for his own survival. What he called his dedication to the working of the constitutional process. Like the murderer who insists that going to trial is dedication to the workings of the law.

To the end he is the true sociopath, without a single deviation from true character. Meaning the end to the moment.

His bitterness glares at us from the tube and he says he is not bitter, is generous, forgives the entire world for being against him. (Except his daughters and Rabbi Korff.)

He frames himself with the two flags he has disgraced. Too bad Johnny Cash can't do Wagner, that he couldn't have his fan-driven fireplace roaring flames in the background.

But if he had no Wagnerian accompaniment, he has provided the flames of purification. Everyone else will become pure, all those so impure. The Post which made the compounding of disaster reality by its deals with Bennett and the CIA will be more heroic.

And his junior monster will become the inheritor of compassion, will be regarded as savior when at his pinnacle he is mediocrity when in his purest he is only quiet in his own dedication to evil, his lifetime's way that nobody will print. He is with it all also an incompetent who, in his own way and his own lifetime, has learned that incompetence is the guarantee of political success if it serves the interests of those who give us our glorious leaders. Even Nixon never stooped to clearing himself of a charge he could have ignored by getting the FBI to investigate him, that investigation consisting of interviewing him only and taking his denial only and then proclaiming his "clearance" by FBI investigation. What a fitting successor to The Man Who Could Not Be Hitler!

This vile reaction to this vile era and its immediate cause will not mean that we deserve evil. It will mean that we can't avoid it because avoiding it is made impossible by those who profit from it and thus want it. Or who fear and see it as the lesser evil.

When so thoroughly despicable an abdication can be hailed as "magnanimous," look to the future with apprehension! Best,