

President Who?

By Art Buchwald 6/21/73

I was walking down Pennsylvania Avenue the other day when I ran into an old man. His hair was white and his beard was gray and he was muttering to himself.

"Oh my god. Oh my god."

"What's the trouble, sir?" I asked.

"I never thought I'd see the day when the hammer and sickle would be flying from the Executive Office Building next to the White House."

"Don't get upset," I said. "It's just to honor Leonid Brezhnev's visit to the United States. He's the Secretary of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union and he's visiting the President. Don't you read the newspapers?"

"I've been asleep for 20 years," the old man said. "Oh my god, Richard Nixon warned us this would happen."

"You don't understand, old man. Nixon is the President and he's the one who is entertaining Leonid Brezhnev."

"It couldn't be the same Nixon," the old man said adamantly. "The Nixon I knew sent Alger Hiss to jail for playing footsy with the Communists. In every political campaign he warned of the Red Menace. He fought the Communists while everyone was being duped by them. Nixon would never entertain one in his home."

"Times have changed, sir."

"The name's Rip," the old man said.

"Well, since you've been asleep a lot of things have happened. The President has even visited the People's Republic of China."

"Oh? How's Chiang Kai-shek?"

"Not that China, Rip. The other one: mainland Com-

munist China."

"The President of the United States went to Communist China?"

"Yes, and then he went to Moscow. And he's sworn friendship to the Socialist People's Republic of the Soviet Union on Russian television."

"Oh my god," Rip said. "Didn't Senator Joe McCarthy try to stop him?"

"McCarthy is dead."

"No wonder Nixon could get away with it," Rip said.

"Listen, Rip, I think I had better clue you in on a few things. There is no such thing as a 'Red Menace' anymore. The President of the United States has made his peace with the two major Communist powers in the world. Communism is no longer a threat to the security of the free world except in Indochina."

"Indochina?"

"Yes, we've been fighting a war in Indochina for 10 years to keep the North Vietnamese Communists from spreading their insidious ideology over the globe. The President is committed to keeping them from achieving their goals."

Rip seemed confused. "That's the only threat of communism there is in the world?"

"Exactly. All other forms of communism, as far as President Nixon is concerned, are inoperative."

"Can my ears deceive me?" Rip said. "Is that the 'Internationale' being played by the U.S. Marine Band on the White House lawn?"

"Yup," I replied. "They're playing *our* song."

"Oh my god," Rip said. "Why did I ever wake up?"

"Don't worry, Rip, the detente with the Communist countries has been the greatest thing to happen in the last 20 years. It could mean a generation of peace for all mankind, except for those rotten Commies in Cambodia. If it hadn't been for Watergate, President Nixon might have gone down as one of the greatest Presidents in history of our country."

"What's Watergate?"

"Rip, I think you had better sit down. It's a very long story. . . ."