

BY ALLEN DRURY

INSIDE THE WHITE HOUSE 1971

Sometimes, if you approach the White House at dusk, you hear a strange screeching sound that seems to be coming from all around you. Startled, you think for a moment that it may be the starlings, which have for so long been the curse of Washington, come to roost in the giant trees. Then you realize the sound is coming from loudspeakers set high in the branches, repeating over and over the high, agonized distress cry of the ubiquitous birds, its purpose to drive away any that might be tempted to tarry here. The strange sound goes on, shrieking over and over again into the cold, misty, luminous evening. Let the imagination run and you are back to the crowd causing ominously over the Capitol in Rome, the Harpies, the Witch of Endor and other dark, foreboding things. The sound goes on and on, frantic, beseeching, agonized, protesting, over and over and over, above the haunted, barred house and all who live and work within it.

Power in a President's house has many faces, many voices. Some candidly for quotation, some candidly for quotation but not for attribution, tell the story of an Administration seeking answers to questions never ending:

Dwight Chapin, the President's appointments secretary, is 30, dark-eyed, dark-haired, rosy-cheeked, good-looking, earnest, intent; he gives the impression that he has so many things on his mind that he simply can't relax for a moment. This is probably true.

"We're responsible for the general scheduling of the President's time and also the daily schedule. I also act as advance man, or send our members of my staff as advance men, when the President is traveling. In addition, I participate with Herb Klein and various public affairs officers at a regular Saturday meeting in which we take up things that might help the President in dealing with the public and decide whether they are worth his taking the time to do them. We are already considering what we want to do on television and radio next year; we are also considering how we want to involve the First Family in the holiday

season next year. This year's schedule was already locked up a long time ago. This group is involved, in other words, in the whole merchandising part of the operation.

"The President averages about 12 appointments a day. He also does a lot of telephoning. It's all on the same sheet, a log which is kept by our office and his secretary's office.

"The President says he really works two days in one. He comes to work between eight and eight-fifteen and usually works steadily until 2 p.m. Then after a lunch break, he resumes at three-thirty and works until seven. Then frequently he will return to the office after dinner and work until 10 or 11 p.m.

"Of course, he can do this because, unlike the ordinary businessman, he has everything scheduled for him. He doesn't have to stop and decide whom he's going to telephone or see because his secretary knows already who it will be, or maybe someone has been told to call in at a given time. Bob Haldeman is my boss, and we try to see that whatever the President puts his time on will be worth doing.

"When we get a request for an appointment, we staff it out by sending a memo to the President and to others concerned describing what is to be covered in the appointment, who favors the appointment and who opposes it. That way we make sure his time is not wasted. He has recently established what we call an 'open hour' once a week, during which eight or ten people may see him for as much as five or ten minutes apiece. In addition, we have the 'congressional half hour' once or twice a month in which congressmen who want to talk to him personally can make an appointment for five or ten minutes.

"The President has a real warmth about him. He's very considerate of others. To my knowledge he has never once yelled or gotten boisterous. He also is very quick to think of things to make people happy. For instance, the other day I went in and saw two Rose Bowl tickets [for the Stanford-Ohio State game] lying on his desk. I said,

'Isn't there somebody we could give those to who would appreciate them? Somebody, for instance, who was born in Ohio but grew up in California?' He thought for just a minute and then he said, 'You go find some wife of a prisoner of war who was born in Ohio and grew up in California and I bet she'd like to have them.' So we did find one and the letter has gone out. I don't know whether she'll like them or not, but at least we're starting it through the mill."

"One thing that annoys me a little with the staff," says the President's longtime campaign associate Murray Chotiner, "is that all they release of the President's schedule each day are the formal things, greeting visiting firemen or the medal-giving ceremony in the Rose Garden. There are about three of these, maybe less, each day. This goes right in the paper alongside Congress, with maybe 25 committees at work in the House and another 20 in the Senate. It makes him look almost frivolous compared to Congress. I wonder what the tourists must think who come here and know only his ceremonial schedule that they read in the papers."

Daniel Patrick Moynihan has gone back to his former love, teaching at Harvard, but he maintains his quiet ties with the President. In the White House, he was the principal agitator for the Nixon welfare plan, the idea of guaranteed income, the idea of reducing public hysteria in the approach to social problems. Flamboyant, voluble, well-spoken, decent, he believes he sees in the President a man as good-hearted as himself and says so with a forceful and unabashed vigor which brings much criticism from those who were friends of his when he worked for the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. He doesn't care, maintaining his position with a zest that would do credit to a Harry Truman in his younger days.

"Perhaps the principal thing that has struck me during my time here has been the way in which the Presidency has been devalued, degraded and even insulted. There has been a steady

continued

decline in respect for it, and this shows itself in many ways. For instance, there was that girl today who got an award from the President and then told him she didn't believe he was sincere in trying to get out of Vietnam. To me, it's vital to the way our democracy operates that you respect the office and the institutions of the country.

"I had another example coming back from a speech last night. A young man on the plane recognized me and asked if he could make a 'citizen's complaint.' I said, 'Are you a citizen?' He said he was and then proceeded with the usual comments about the war, the minorities and so on. Among other things, he said that he had read somewhere that some friend of the President had called him 'Dick' before he took office but since he became President has called him 'Mr. President.' This young fellow said this indicated to him that the President was an egomaniac surrounded by some sort of Oriental court. I tried to point out that George Washington made the decision that he was not to be addressed as 'Your Majesty' but simply as 'Mr. President,' and that this has been one of the fundamental features of our democracy ever since. But I could see that he was not really convinced, and that's typical of the attitude a lot of these kids have toward our institutions. They're just plain ignorant of history, of respect, of fundamental knowledge and common sense.

"Perhaps the fundamental issue of our time is the erosion of the authority of our American institutions. Authority relations are consensual, power relations are based on force. If we had a power society and somebody challenged the President, he could say, 'Off with your head!' But in a society resting on the authority of institutions by consent, this can't be done. The danger is, however, that if the authority of institutions is eroded enough, it may be succeeded by a power society in which democratic rights and freedoms will ultimately disappear.

"Another aspect of the erosion of the Presidency, it seems to me, can be found in the way in which it is subjected to political attack and the President's purposes thwarted for partisan reasons.

"The President's political task is made extra difficult because he represents a group which is not fashionable or popular with the major elements of the media. The silent majority is silent because it has nothing to say. It has no popular intellectuals speaking for it, it represents no major cultural breakthroughs, and so everything it says is ridiculed and put down.

"I do think the President has calmed the country substantially. When he came into the White House after a bitter campaign, we were handed forms whereby the President could call out the National Guard to handle riots. He could just fill in the date and the name of the city. That's how bad things were at that point. His inaugural was the first in which Federal troops were brought into Washington in fear of disturbances. It was really something, it gave you an eerie feeling to see troop carriers and tanks roll in here alongside the Executive Office Building, where a command post was set up. Every major presidential aide had a phone connected directly to riot control headquarters of the District of Columbia police. Two years later, no National

Guard is mobilized anywhere, no troops are in Washington, we no longer have our riot phones, and as a matter of fact, we have a lot more law and order in the country now than when we walked in two years ago.

"The President is very calm about personal attacks and urges us to be too. This can be a weakness, however, because he and the people around him just assume automatically that the press is going to attack things they propose, so they don't defend them—they don't seek even the modest support which I believe they could get if they weren't so sure they were going to be attacked. Admittedly the major elements have been and usually are very unfair. But I still think the Administration could get more support than it does get if it had a different approach and a different feeling toward the press than it does have.

"One area, of course, in which there has been great unfairness is the area of his commitment to helping the Negroes. This Administration has been more senous on the Negro than any in history. It has carried through on a rising projection of laws and directives aiding the Negro. I think there is a very genuine compassion on his part—I was poor, I know what it's like, it's lousy—yet they have managed to label him anti-Negro.

"He has had the least generous press of anyone I have ever known in the White House. It has been one long presumption of malfeasance, sinister intent, trickery and double-dealing.

"The Vietnam war is killing the American Presidency. [Henry] Kissinger is extraordinarily brilliant, but he is stuck, and the President is stuck, with the end result of other people's mistakes. Personally, I think we should get out of Vietnam even faster than we are, because the stakes involved in world affairs now are so high. I'm a pessimist—I think we really may blow ourselves up. The man you're writing about can literally push the button and destroy the world. And so, of course, can the others on the other side."

Former Eisenhower Administration official, Washington veteran, longtime Nixon friend: "How is Nixon doing? I think he is doing very poorly. He's afraid to be tough and ruthless on issues where a President has got to be tough and ruthless, and where the country would applaud him if he were. He is afraid he will live up to the press attacks about his ruthlessness, but that is exactly what is needed. They have him buffaloed so he doesn't do what he should do to provide strong leadership. I find this very disturbing."

Nixon intimate No. 1: "As of now"—that favorite politician's phrase—"there is no strong dump-Agnew movement. But a lot will depend on how the Vice President conducts himself as we come into the homestretch before the convention. He has a lot going for him, but there is a razor-thin line between a voice which points out things that a lot of people agree with and a voice that becomes strident by talking too much. Of course, the Vice President also has going for him the President's vivid memories of the sort of treatment he received when he was Vice President. There was a dump-Nixon movement in those days, remember." Nixon intimate No. 2: "There are four reasons against



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a dump-Agnew movement. The first is that the possibility is raised in columns and news stories out of an obvious, and to the President, offensive, hope that it will occur. The second is that even the hope is premature, because Presidents make that kind of decision in the spring of an election year, or maybe in the summer just before, or even during, the convention. Thirdly, I know of no disposition on the part of the President's staff or advisers to do such a thing. And fourth, Mr. Agnew has a rather devoted following among some elements of the Republican party, and an attempt to get rid of him could have quite interesting results. Having talked to him many times, I know that he is very philosophical and is not worried about it. I really think he would be happy either way—and after all, what else can a Vice President do?"

None of which means, of course, that these two suave gentlemen would not gladly and eagerly assist in the political execution of Spiro T. Ag-

new if their boss asked them to; or that their boss, bound by the imperatives of Presidents, which are sometimes less subject to conscience and friendship than those of ordinary men, might not perfectly calmly and logically decide to order such a thing at the coming national convention. An Agnew aide sums up the perils of being No. 2, an office in which you do not necessarily, if you wish to retain it, try harder:

"We have received excellent cooperation from the White House staff, partly, I think, because the President is so wholeheartedly for Agnew. However, I think that if they got the word, or if they felt he was a detriment to the President, they would ax him in a minute.

"One interesting episode occurred when the Vice President was speaking to The Associated Press Managing Editors' convention in Honolulu recently. He had about a page and a half in which he specifically named people like the New York Times, Newsweek, Time, Look and Life, NBC, ABC and CBS as those he meant when he talked about the Eastern press establishment. This caused great excitement in the White House staff. They were horrified that he would name these people.

"His point of view was that he wanted to say specifically whom he was criticizing, and not make it just the press in general. However, there was great upset about this in the staff, and they took it to Nixon. He overruled Agnew and asked him to take it out of the speech, which he did.

"I don't really understand this attitude of the President or of some of the White House staff in this, because the way I look at it, these people are your enemies for life. They are not going to change, there is nothing to be gained by appeasing them, and you might just as well sail into them with everything you have. However, the President is apparently still trying to make some points with people who are bitterly critical of him and are never going to change. That could be a factor in what he does about the Vice President next time. . . . It could be a factor."

Sitting quietly in their Sheraton-Park apartment with Mrs. Agnew after a relaxed and intimate family dinner, the storm center of all these battles, pressures and controversies speaks quietly and shrewdly about himself and the perils of his country as he sees them.

QUESTION: What do you think of the Vice Presidency as an office now that you have been in it for a while?

"I think it's the most flexible office in the Government"—sudden laugh. "Certainly it has given me, I think, more opportunity than any other Vice President—thanks to the kindness of the President—to do things in the Government. I didn't really want to get so far away from the Senate, where constitutionally I'm president of the Senate and presiding officer, but it's worked out that way.

"I went up to the Senate my first day here, all full of idealism and sentiment. I had spent five or six sessions with the parliamentarian trying to learn the rules of the Senate; I knew the senators by name and I knew their faces; I was prepared to go in there and do a job as the President's representa-

tive in the Senate. I even prepared a little four-minute talk to express my pleasure at being there on the first day. When the session opened, the majority leader spoke in a perfunctory way for about a minute to welcome me to the Senate and this was followed by the minority leader doing the same thing.

"After that the majority leader said, 'Mr. President, I move that the Vice President be given two minutes to reply.' I was then faced with cutting down a prepared four-minute speech to two minutes, which was awkward in itself. It was like a slap in the face.

"However, I tried hard to get to know the senators and to work with them in those first months. Then, unfortunately, the President was called away to Europe at the time of the ABM fight. I was given the job of helping to get that legislation through. When it got to a vote, I went up to Len Jordan [Republican, Idaho] during the vote and just said casually, 'Len, how are you going to vote?' He drew himself up, stared at me accusingly, and said, 'You can't tell me how to vote! You can't twist my arm!' Within a minute he was off the floor calling in the press for a press conference, saying that I was going around the Senate twisting arms.

"It seemed to go on from there after that. And so, after trying for a while to get along with the Senate, I decided I would go down to the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue and try playing the Executive game.

"Down here, the President has found many things for me to do, and on the whole I have been much happier working here with him in the Executive Branch. I still go up to the Senate and preside. And when I preside, I make very sure I impose the rules, and if somebody is talking too long I gavel him down, and if somebody does something he shouldn't do, why, I gavel him down and force him to obey the rules. I've decided that if that's the way they want me to be, that's the way I will be.

"However, I find up there, as I do in the Executive Branch, that I have no real power. It's a damned peculiar position to be in, to have authority and a title and responsibility with no real power to do anything. I think this is the hardest adjustment for a man to make, both coming to the Vice Presidency and coming to the Senate. He has been, as many of us were, a governor, say, in an administrative position, and suddenly he finds he can't do anything effectively. It's a strange sort of limbo, particularly for the Vice President. In the early days I used to say to myself, 'Now, tomorrow I'm going to do so and so' . . . and then I would stop and think, 'You aren't going to do anything, you don't have the power.'

"I find the Senate very exclusive and withdrawn into itself . . . almost an arrogance in the club feeling up there. It makes it difficult to deal with them, even in the rather remote fashion that I now do. And yet, you know"—dreamily—"the Senate might not be such a bad place to be, someday. . . .

"I am very much disturbed by the trend of American policy under which, prodded on by the press and the liberals, we are steadily withdrawing

from commitments around the world. It is not so much that this reduces our power militarily to a dangerous level as it is that it erodes the faith other nations have that we are strong enough to do something should a crisis arise. When I went to Asia, I found that they said, 'You can't do anything, really, if a pinch comes, because you are withdrawing.'

"In the same way, when we sometimes appear to be retreating before the Soviets in some other areas, this erodes the world's confidence that the United States will really do what it says it will do. Frankly, it scares me."

QUESTION: Then how do you explain why the President appears to be withdrawing our power around the world?

"He's in a hell of a position. He has the press and the media and the liberals and the academic community and all the rest after him all the time. He is forced to take that into account. No one who doesn't sit in the catbird seat can really understand his problem. It is all very well for people to criticize, but until you are there, you don't know the pressures he must operate under.

"I find these fellows on the Hill very disturbing, particularly the attitude of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Of course, Fulbright is going to get away free. Events will never catch up with him. He'll be dead by the time the results of what he advocates afflict this country. We're talking now about our grandchildren, or at least about the next generation. Then is when the blow will come from the Soviets. By that time, we will be so weak that we will not be able to respond unless we are willing to launch a massive retaliation that could blow up the world. They have been extremely clever in never forcing a crisis. Their method is to work around us and weaken us on every side without forcing a confrontation. Again I say it scares me, because these fellows in the Senate and in the House who oppose our foreign policy are doing things to this country which cannot possibly be reversed unless we start soon to do them. They will soon be irreversible.

"There is an almost masochistic desire on the part of the liberal community to surrender and to back away from any confrontation with Russia—for us to be twice as fair in dealing with them as with anybody else, twice as long-suffering, twice as permissive as we are with anyone else. I find this almost impossible to understand, but I know it exists among many in the liberal community.

"I wish there were some way to create a conservative newspaper in New York and also a conservative television and radio network. It is very hard to get people who have the money to cooperate with one another. It is an example of the difficulty of getting people on the conservative side to organize to combat this intensive liberal drive all the time on the other side.

"I really love foreign policy. I have thoroughly enjoyed my trips abroad and I am looking forward to making more. It is getting now so that they stop by to see me when they come through here. I spent an hour today with King Hussein, whom I had met before. The first time is a formal visit, the second time they get more relaxed, and about the third time they really begin

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to talk to you. You can begin to understand the signals in their diplomatic language. You know their situation and you know what they are saying. I find it very interesting and I'm glad the President has seen fit to give me this kind of responsibility.

"I'm standing the gaff pretty well. I keep in good shape, and they aren't getting to me. When I first began the '68 campaign, there was a terrific drive to destroy me as a candidate, and at first I took it very seriously. For a little while I thought, 'Well, I've got all those marbles out there. Am I going to be able to keep control of them?' But the President was a tower of strength to me in that situation: 'Ignore them, they're going to be after you all the time anyway. It's a political campaign and there isn't much we can do to stop it, so just say to hell with them and just keep right on doing what you're doing.' And presently I realized when I read the attacks that they were so extreme and exaggerated that they simply were ridiculous. They simply did not make sense. Once I understood that, I got to the point where I could shrug them off and then they didn't bother me any more. Now I'm just going to go ahead and do what I want to do.

"But I do find that one has to be very specific in one's comments, because if not, the press immediately shreds away all the qualifications that you put in. For instance, I said originally that those who encouraged the student riots were 'effete snobs.' Within two or three days it had become, in the press, not the people who had encouraged the students, but the students themselves. Then presently it became *all* students. Then presently it became *all* youth. And that is the way it goes.

"People asked me why I attacked Kingman Brewster of Yale and I said, 'Well, if I don't make it specific, within a week I will be accused of having attacked *all* college presidents instead of just one college president.' This is a very dangerous thing that the press does, and they do it all the time."

Mrs. Agnew, when asked how she thinks her husband is standing it: "I think he's doing all right. He manages to keep himself in good shape and seems to be in reasonably good spirits. We've learned to roll with the punches and we don't let it bother us any more."

He seems genuinely unconcerned about his political future. He seems to be really, completely philosophical about whether he stays on the ticket in '72 or leaves it. At one point when we were discussing the Vice Presidency I said humorously, "Anyway, you're stuck with it."

He raised a finger with a sudden smile.

"Not forever," he said quickly. "Not forever."

Former high Nixon staffer, amicably resigned, still friendly and concerned: "There seems to be a reluctance in the White House to come to grips with certain problems, both of personnel and of policy. Consequently, a lot of people are still hanging on who are diametrically opposed to the Nixon program and they simply can't seem to get up the guts to get rid of them. Bob Haldeman and John Ehrlichman have gotten too far too fast. They have not really been tested in getting where they are. They don't have the experience. They don't really have

the backbone about various things. Also, there seems to be a reluctance on Nixon's part really to go after some of these people who are obstructing him. It is a curious thing, which extends also, it seems to me, to foreign policy and what seems to be a reluctance, sometimes, to come to firm grips with the challenges that face him as President from the Russians and elsewhere around the world."

Tricia Nixon talks about her parents—and the press: "How do I regard the press? Well, I think they're a necessary evil—no, I won't say that, because they aren't really evil. They have their job to do and I suppose that without them the public would not be informed, and in a way a President could not really do what he wants to do because he couldn't get public opinion behind him. However, I do think that sometimes the questions in the press conference are not so much questions as they are an indictment. I don't think that is so good. . . .

"How do I regard my parents? I suppose that's the most impossible question for any child to answer. I am glad they are my parents. I love them. They've been very understanding and patient with both Julie and me. They've always been there when it counted. It's true my mother has always said she felt guilty because they had to be away so often when my father was Vice President, when we were growing up. But in a way that's contributed to our independence too.

"If there was ever a disciplinarian in the family—and there never was very much of a one—it was my mother. My father is a real soft touch, from letting the dogs come to the table and feeding them when my mother doesn't want him to, to everything else. He has always been there to give advice but he has always waited to be asked. He has felt that we were on our own, in a sense—that we should be on our own. . . .

"As for how my father is standing the Presidency . . . if he didn't have the conviction that he was contributing something to the country, and the feeling that he can accomplish something for all Americans, I think that it would be almost too great for him to bear—I suppose too great for any President to bear, because they all must have felt that. . . ."

H. R. "Bob" Haldeman, chief executive officer of the White House, is in his forties, crew-cut, with deep-set dark eyes; youthful-looking, trim, frank, straight-talking, obviously intelligent and efficient. He received me in his comfortable office, done in Williamsburg style with dark green paint and heavy drapes. A fire burned in the grate. (Outside the window we could hear King Timahoe, the Nixons' Irish setter, barking as I heard him barking on many occasions during these interviews. He does not like being confined and seems to be ever hopeful that someone will come out and let him run. Haldeman says the Nixons quite frequently let him run on the south lawn and he is constantly reminding them of it.)

"You ask what I do. It's a monumental problem to tell you because I don't exactly know. A little bit of everything, I suppose. My function is basically to be a sort of commander in chief of the White House, basically the administrative

manager of the office of the President.

"The President needs one person he can turn to quickly to cover anything he wants to cover. I, of course, will turn to someone else down the staff, but it saves him having to take the time to determine who to send things to and who to contact. He makes wads of little notes to himself about things and I am the beneficiary of that. I send his requests and desires out through the staff and make sure that someone reports back to him as soon as possible with the answer or the result.

"I keep myself free. I am always available to the President so that any time he wants to turn a problem over to me he can do so and I can arrange for somebody to work on it as quickly as possible. He is an amazing guy to work with—has a great sensitivity not to interfere with other people's feelings. He is very considerate of the staff—very demanding of results and expects that things be done right, but he is very thoughtful about the people who work for him. Of course, he has so much stuff under way that he has to keep putting it out just to stay abreast of it. He can't afford to slow down for a minute.

"We started out trying to keep political coloration as much as possible out of policy and hiring matters. However, we realize that these things make for variety in decision-making, and so within reasonable limits we have tried to keep a spread of opinion on the staff, so that no one is to the left of the President at his most liberal or to the right of the President at his most conservative. In a staff such as the speech-writing staff, someone like Ray Price could be categorized as 'liberal,' someone like Bill Safire could be categorized as being in the middle, and Par Buchanan could be categorized as being on the right.

"This type of spread is not accidental. The President goes on the theory that a person's philosophy can be contributive to the ideas around here, that there has to be a counterbalancing, that you don't want people thought of as 'house conservatives' or 'house Jews' or 'house blacks'—but you do need that type of person in each of those areas in order to contribute ideas to the Administration.

"Ehrlichman, Kissinger and I do our best to make sure that all points of view are placed before the President. We do act as a screen, because there is a real danger of some advocate of an idea rushing in to the President or some other decision-maker, if the person is allowed to do so, and actually managing to convince them in a burst of emotion or argument. We try to make sure that all arguments are presented calmly and fairly across the board.

"I'm aware that there has been criticism in Congress that relations have been bad but I don't think Congress is supposed to work with the White House—it is a different organization, and under the Constitution I don't think we should expect agreement. I feel that we have developed a situation in which the President is too much responsible for developing initiatives for Congress, and consequently it has become too much a measure of his Presidency whether his initiatives succeed in Congress or not.

"We find that Nixon is measured by a totally different standard in the press, the academic com-

munity and elsewhere than either Johnson or Kennedy was measured. We are told that if he gets something through it doesn't mean anything, because it should have gone through anyway. But if he fails in getting something through, then this is a big mark against him. I don't think there is much we can do about this. I often find it fascinating to ponder by what standards Nixon is going to be judged by history when all the partisan battles we face now are over.

"We are trying to get our case over to the country. Our getting it over has a direct relation to our ability to govern. We hope that things will be understood by some intelligent and effective segment of the population because this is necessary to govern. If this is not perceived by them, then it becomes very difficult.

"However, we don't intend to lie down just because the general run of analysts don't like what we do. I think we have had a pretty damned good two years, in terms of where we were when we came in and where we are now. Nixon is now fighting, in the Family Assistance Plan, for the most far-reaching piece of social legislation perhaps any President has ever proposed. He says we don't know how it will work, but we do know that if we don't try it, we may never know if it will work or not. We are almost at the point in welfare where some change is better than no change and where a change has to be made. . . .

"Has the President changed in office? He may be more no-nonsense than before, but the thing that has impressed me is apparently a great inner feeling of self-confidence in the job. He likes being President. He moved right in and he obviously enjoys it now. There are times, of course, when he gets fed up with petty annoyances, and he works and worries hard over the big decisions. But he likes stepping up to decisions, particularly hard ones. Occasionally, being human, he will get annoyed with the way things are going. But usually he manages to conceal this and to keep going himself in a calm and effective manner."

The press (columnist, male, veteran, long-time friend of the President): "I am very puzzled by Nixon. He does things that an experienced politician wouldn't do. It seems to me that there's almost a feeling that he just isn't interested somehow, almost as though he doesn't want to run again. I can't believe this, but look at some of the things he's done. The Carwell nomination—Carwell's a nice little guy, but he has no more business on the Supreme Court than I do. Firing Wally Hickel from the Interior Department—the only man in the Cabinet who has any kind of reputation for being a conservationist—and then appointing Rogers Morton, who has no interest in it, when the Democrats are making hay over the conservation issue. Some of the things he has done in foreign policy also seem very puzzling to me.

"I'm disappointed because I like Nixon, I want him to succeed, and I think it is vital to the country that he do so. And yet I feel in a sense that he is letting down his country and his party because there's just this curious lack of political smartness about doing things it seems obviously necessary to do—things that a smart politician would not overlook if he were really

on top of the job. . . . I find many things the President does very puzzling these days. It just doesn't seem to hang together, somehow."

He was running very late: our interview had originally been set for 4 p.m., then been delayed until 4:15. I was accompanied from the EOB to the West Wing by Herb Klein and Jeb Magruder, Herb's top assistant. The President was cloistered with Dr. Arthur Burns, chairman of the Federal Reserve Board. Time passed. His receptionist, Steve Bull, became more and more apologetic, knowing that the President had a reception for members of Congress over at the Mansion at 5 p.m. At approximately 4:45, the buzzer sounded and I was taken into the Oval Office. The huge room is now almost devoid of furniture except for the President's massive desk and a few chairs and sofas along the walls. "The first thing I'm going to do," he told me soon after his election in 1968, "is take those damned television sets out of the Oval Office." He has done so.

The windows were opened to the cool winter evening and the curtains billowed out from time to time with the wind. Photographs were taken for the first couple of minutes while we chatted about innocuous things. Then the photographer and the others left. He leaned his head in his hands, rubbed his eyes, stayed that way for a moment. But when he looked up he did not look tired, and that was the only time during our talk that he gave any sign of being tired. Mostly he looked, and talked, and appeared to be, entirely relaxed, comfortable and as though he did not have a care in the world. It was perhaps the single most impressive thing about him at that moment. Tiredness and strain are easy to spot: they were not present here this particular late afternoon.

We began with his suggestion that I submit questions in writing and that he take occasion when at Camp David or San Clemente or Key Biscayne to dictate extended answers into his tape recorder. After that, he suggested, I might want to come back and question further on certain points. He said that if he could go to the tape recorder first he would be able to be more relaxed, frame his answers more intelligently and contribute more substantially to what he hoped would be "a thoughtful and worthwhile book."

I told him this would be fine with me, and then expected him to boot me out, since congressmen and their ladies were gathering at the Mansion and the clock was moving on. Instead he sat back and chatted for half an hour, ranging from the press, on which he has some definite and occasionally acrid ideas, to the nature of the questions I wanted to ask.

I said that some of them might be critical in nature, but that I didn't intend to offer hookers: I would simply be seeking answers to some of the opinions I was running into around town.

"Don't worry about that for a minute," he said. "Give me any hookers you want. Be the devil's advocate, make them just as tough as you like. After all, it's my job to answer these criticisms, and if you simply ask me bland questions without any bite to them—'Mr. President, what did you do to save the world today?'—the

continued

are coming home, the Vietnamization program is moving forward. If we go on as we are now doing to wind it down, the public is going to realize that the President did have a plan to end the war, and that he has succeeded.

The economy, of course, also is a big issue, but as present signs magnify themselves and prove out, the interest rate is going to go down, inflation is going to drop and the stock market is going to go up. Housing starts are increasing, the auto industry is gearing up for a better year. The unemployed are going to go back to work and there will be a noticeable upswing. By '72 we should either have good times in which people can see that he is cleaning up the mess that he inherited, or really bad times, in which case there wouldn't be any hope for him. But I am sure that we will be having good times.

He also has cooled off the temper of the campuses and the streets and I really don't see how you're going to beat him. What are they going to run on if they don't have an issue? If you don't have one, you're dead. If there is nothing to complain about, they're going to have nothing to go on. About all they can do is say that they can do what we're doing, only better than Nixon. But that is hardly a real issue or a real campaign.

The Democrats have a real disadvantage because there is nothing they can really advocate. They had the Government since 1960 and all the crises and errors that we have had occurred in their administrations. So it is very hard for them to complain about what has been going on. Also, they don't have any outstanding personality. There is no one to get a glint in the eye of the public. They just can't get a glint in the public's eye. Teddy Kennedy gets a rather bloodshot look—because everybody knows about him. Muskie is not exciting. The same thing applies to Birch Bayh. McGovern doesn't turn anyone on at all. Proxmire is a lot better but still not very good. Jackson won't get moving, he's too opposed by some of his own people on ideological grounds. If we get any kind of team at all on our side, we'll be all right.

I think Agnew should be on the ticket. The Republicans can lose an election if they sit on their hands. Agnew is one who will get them off their hands and get them working. He represents what a lot of people have been thinking and I don't think the President is unfriendly to him at all. The President remembers that there was a movement in 1956 to remove him from the ticket. He has a good memory and is a sensitive person and he sympathizes with the Vice President now in these publicized efforts to get rid of him. I don't think that these people who are writing that the President wants to get rid of Agnew have checked with the White House, because I don't think that is true. There are a great many Republicans who might even vote against Nixon if Agnew were dumped from the ticket.

I think the President is amazing in his self-control. I have seen him over the years when he has been uptight about things, but somehow he has learned over the years to control and subdue his emotions. After losing the Presidency in '60 and the governorship of California in '62, he seems to have become completely relaxed. That seemed

to settle something inside him.

It's amazing to me how a man like President Nixon, with all the problems he has and with his past history of political defeats, can sit back with his feet on the desk, so to speak, and be as relaxed as he is. But now he doesn't have to shoot from the hip—he doesn't have to make snap decisions.

The White House staff operates efficiently. I think sometimes they are a little overprotective, but as far as his being isolated, that's malarkey and a lot of baloney. I don't see any isolation. I think people who want to get answers can get them either from him or from Bob Haldeman. And when he wants to see any of us he can. So I don't think there is any real isolation."

The President's press secretary, Ronald Ziegler, is 32, efficient, effective—and nice when it suits him, which it often does not. It did not suit him to be pleasant to photographer Fred Maroon, and after treating him to a series of broken appointments, false starts and occasionally downright, blatant obstruction of what he referred to sarcastically as "this commercial project," he decided not to be pleasant to me. I had an appointment with him one dark winter afternoon and waited for 55 minutes without even the courtesy of a secretary's hello, after which I picked up my marbles and went home and did not try to see him again. Next morning, after I had mentioned to others on the premises that I now thought I had found out all I needed to know about the character of Ron Ziegler, he called with loud apologies and a long tale beginning, "Jesus, I just didn't know you were out there, Al." I told him not to worry, these things will happen. I was told by his colleagues later that indeed they do, and often to people who come to him in good faith for the help he is theoretically supposed to provide on projects basically friendly to the President.

But—those magic words in this or any other White House—"the President likes him." So he stays. And, of course, he does have his troubles. And on the whole he handles them well, under often extreme and deliberate provocation. A sampling of excerpts from the press briefings he holds morning and afternoon on almost every working day gives some of the flavor of the White House press corps and his own flavor:

Tuesday, January 5, 1971, morning—

QUESTION: "Can you give us a rundown on what happened at the Cabinet meeting?"

ZIEGLER: "The Cabinet meeting lasted for an hour and a half. When the President walked into the Cabinet meeting he received a standing ovation, I think marking the Cabinet's approval of how well the President did last night in the conversation [with four television commentators]. Then before the President could get into any topic of discussion, they generally went around the room to express their views as to how the President covered the many areas he covered last night. . . ."

QUESTION: "Did anyone at the Cabinet table say that the President's answer to any questions were lousy?"

ZIEGLER: "No. They didn't."

QUESTION: "Is that the first time the President has received a standing ovation in a Cabinet meeting, Ron?"

ZIEGLER: "No. He has after other—[Laughter]—are you going to ask me about what went on in the Cabinet meeting and then chuckle among yourselves, or do you want to know? The President has received standing ovations in Cabinet meetings following addresses that he has given on television. I have recalled the Cambodian speech and also others that he has given on family assistance, when he introduced the Family Assistance Plan and other speeches that he has given on nationwide television explaining United States policy in South Vietnam. . . ."

Tuesday, February 2, 1971, morning—

QUESTION: "Can you say whether the President had any contact with Souvanna Phouma [Prince Souvanna Phouma, Prime Minister of Laos] in the past several days?"

ZIEGLER: "No, I wouldn't take that question. . . ."

QUESTION: "Why won't you take Helen's question, Ron?"

ZIEGLER: "I just am not prepared to do that."

QUESTION: "When do you expect the news blackout in Southeast Asia to be lifted, Mr. Ziegler?"

ZIEGLER: "I have no comment on that."

QUESTION: "Ron, when the American and South Vietnamese troops entered Cambodia last April, the Administration said this was not an invasion because it was done with the assent of the government of Cambodia. Would that definition apply also to Laos, since the head of the government says they have not approved any entry of foreign troops?"

ZIEGLER: "I am not prepared to take hypothetical questions such as you put forth and will have no comment on it. . . ."

Wednesday, February 3, 1971, morning—

QUESTION: "Ron, there is an AFP [the French news agency] report which is datelined Quang Tri which says, 'Thousands of military trucks moved bumper to bumper along two highways. Along the sides of the roads, troops with full field packs and arms were also moving in uninterrupted columns. Hundreds of helicopters passed overhead, airports throughout the northern provinces were buzzing with activity.'"

"Is that story true?"

ZIEGLER: "As you know, Dan, we don't address [that subject] from the White House and it would be inappropriate for us to talk about details of movements of forces. So, I can't answer your question."

QUESTION: "Could you explain to us why we have to learn from the French and the Japanese what—this question was asked in good spirit—what American soldiers are doing?"

ZIEGLER: "You have read a portion of a report to me, Dan. It related to movement of forces. I assume you were referring to what forces? You didn't say, the portion that you read."

QUESTION: "I don't know whose forces. If they aren't ours, I would be interested in that as well."

ZIEGLER: "That goes to the thrust of my point. Anything regarding movement of forces continued

interview won't add up to very much. I'd prefer to have you make them tough whenever you feel it is justified."

I asked him if he wished to impose any restriction that his answers be paraphrased rather than quoted directly and he said no, he would be perfectly willing to turn them over to me and let me use them in direct quotes as I pleased—with the exception that on some extra-sensitive subjects it might perhaps be wise to paraphrase. In that case he would do it himself, dictating. "It is known that the President believes—" or, "The President is understood to feel—" or some such protective, if easily detected, formula.

He was very curious as to whether I was getting sufficient cooperation from the staff and suggested that I be sure and talk to such people as the chef and others on the domestic staff as well as the professional and political staffs. He said both Julie and Tricia would be good sources about White House operations, as both were very thoughtful and perceptive young ladies.

"You should try to talk to a lot of people and not just these gray men around here"—and from his tone it was impossible to determine whether he meant the description as it stood or was dryly mimicking the press attacks upon them. I said I would.

Aside from a couple of minor items, I did not ask him anything particularly vital, since he had suggested written questions and I intended to ask them in that form; but I was impressed with how fluently and easily he did talk about things. Earlier in the day I had received intimations that various people on the staff were very concerned that I might be going to ask his opinion of other political leaders and they did not want me to do so.

"You won't ask him about Muskie and Kennedy, will you?" asked one earnest staffer with a real anxiety, as though this were an unsuspecting innocent who could be trapped instead of a 58-year-old political veteran perfectly capable of taking care of himself. Even if I had, I am sure he would have responded directly or sidestepped gracefully. Top men are almost always more relaxed about themselves than their staffs are, and this seems particularly true of the President of the United States.

After a pleasant and comfortable half hour, already 15 minutes late for the congressional reception, but not really seeming to mind so very much, he rose and started toward the door: "Now I have to go and shake hands with four hundred congressmen."

Confused a little by the Oval Office's several hidden doors and thinking he was showing me out, I followed him, for he gave no formal farewell but simply moved along still talking. In a moment, we found ourselves outside in the arcade along the Rose Garden and I realized he was on his way to the Mansion. I asked directions to Steve Bull's office, he told me, I said, "Good night, Mr. President," and turned back into the empty office. He waved and walked away, all by himself in the chill winter night: a suddenly lonely and touching moment.

Back in the hallway outside Steve Bull's office, I found some consternation on the part

of Steve and the Secret Service. "Where is he? Is he gone? Has he left for the Mansion? Is he by himself?"

This was apparently against all the rules. It was hard to escape the feeling that he had taken one of those small, secret delights known only to Presidents, in going off, thus unescorted and unannounced, to where he wanted to go.

Inimate comments from one in a position to know:

The President is "unusually inhibited by strangers," but once he gets used to someone on the staff, "it is very comfortable, and he hardly pays any attention to the routine work we do for him around here. . . ."

"I find this job a very strange one and this house a very strange place to work. I expect a good many of us do too, because actually, here we are and many of us have a lot of talent, many much more than I do, and yet we are all geared to simply helping one man get through his day. Many of us may sit around doing little chicken things such as I do most of the time, and yet you have to figure that you're helping the President and that is what makes it worthwhile, I guess. There are so many small details that have to be handled and they get split up in so many different hands that a lot of us find ourselves sort of spinning our wheels and not accomplishing a great deal in any sense of personal satisfaction or achievement. I guess in the long run it will all add up, but sometimes you wonder what the purpose is, and what you're doing here. . . ."

"Sometimes he is under strain, and when he is, he shows it in ways that those of us around him can tell. On the whole, however, he remains very calm. One thing that struck me about him when I first came here is that he is quite profane. This startled me when I first heard him speaking but I've gotten used to it now."

"Most of the good ideas that originate here come from him. He does take much staff advice, but usually the ideas are his own. When he does something, it will be on the basis of his own thoughts and those of many others on the staff. The opinion really flows in from the staff. He solicits the staff's advice on every point. Sometimes he is overruled by the staff—which means that when the weight of evidence or the weight of argument is against him, he will sometimes yield to the advice. Then if the staff is wrong, he will not say anything in particular, but he will let us know by his manner or his way of saying things to us what he thinks of us for having given wrong advice."

"He does not like to bawl people out and he gets upset when he has done something or said something harsh to us. I remember that on a couple of occasions when he has chewed me out, which I deserved, he has never apologized for temper the next day but he has done some little extra, thoughtful thing, which is his way of saying that he is sorry for the argument and hopes that it will not happen again."

"I have been struck here at how easygoing some people are in replying to his requests. Of course, many of them have been with him for many years and maybe that's why: they know he's not going to fire them, and he knows them and knows he will keep on depending on them as he has in the past. However, I have heard him say many times, 'I want this or that on my desk by eight o'clock tomorrow morning.' Well, it isn't on the desk by eight o'clock the next morning

and frequently it isn't there for several days. Except for a couple of very conscientious people around here, there is a rather slow method of replying to the President's requests. However, as I say, they know he is not going to fire them, so he just grins his teeth and goes along with it."

The press (male, veteran, many years' experience covering Presidents, longtime friend of Nixon): "Nixon is like all Presidents—he can be brutal about people sometimes. Maybe it's the Merlin complex or something, but he thinks he can use you for something and then go away for three years and when he comes back you're supposed to be standing there waiting and still be just as much of a friend as you were before. He expects you to maintain your loyalty to him regardless of whether he's shown any loyalty or interest in you in the meantime. They all do it, it's a funny thing. . . . I've talked to him several times and I've generally found him so serene and untroubled that I sometimes wonder a little whether he really knows what's going on, or what could hit him if things go wrong. I think he does, but I really wonder sometimes. . . . They give you this picture of everybody losing everybody else on the White House staff, and it's probably truer in this Administration than in any other I've known in four decades. But when you get up near the top, there's a lot of jockeying for position behind the scenes. I don't think it's erupted into any real feuds like we've had in some Administrations—yet—but there are frictions there, though they try to hide them. You can't avoid it when people are human beings—and these, although they seem a little bland and faceless sometimes, are human beings. There's this great desire to get near the President, to be the one who's always seeing the great man—they can't help it. If they can't do it, they pretend it. I remember the other day, X started to say to me, 'When I saw the President the other day—' I interrupted, 'Now, X, don't give me that crap. When did you actually see the President last?' He grinned a bit sheepishly and said, 'Well, actually, it was about six months ago.' But to hear him tell it, and to read how the press tells it, you'd think he was in there every other day. Among those who really are, there's a lot of competition for the great man's smile. I think it amuses him. He's an intelligent man. I think he rather enjoys it, like all Presidents. They're really all sons of bitches, in some ways. They enjoy being President and they secretly enjoy what the Presidency does to other people."

He is back in private law practice now, but Murray Chotiner is never far from the Nixon White House. A political associate since the President's early days in public life, he looks exactly what he is—a political associate. There is about him the aspect and the air of one who has handled many campaigns, made many deals, attacked and been attacked by many enemies, entered and survived many battles. Against the youthful earnestness, brisk efficiency and glittering good looks of many of the Nixon crew, he stands out like some bartered, experienced old badger, claws extended and always at the ready. He is giving behind-the-scenes advice on how to run the reelection campaign in '72, and if he has his way, it will obviously be a rough one.

"You ask me what the issues will be in '72. The war should be in excellent shape. The boys

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Of Press Secretary Ron Ziegler, above with presidential assistant Robert Finch, Drury says: "Ziegler is efficient, effective—and nice when it suits him, which it often does not."

within South Vietnam, United States forces, would, of course, come from MACV [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam] or come from Saigon. . . ."

QUESTION: "Ron, do you mean to say that if there is an entry into Laos, that this would be merely details of movements of forces that the White House would not address?"

ZIEGLER: "I don't think he raised that point in his question. You raised Laos and I assume—"

QUESTION: "That is right, but you were asked several times in the last couple of days for information about possible entry into Laos and you have referred us to the Defense Department in essentially the same way."

ZIEGLER: "I have no information to give you from here this morning. I think all of you are aware of the fact that correspondents on the scene and in South Vietnam are being regularly briefed under the basis which you are familiar with. I have no information to give you."

QUESTION: "Have you had the opportunity to discuss your views on the value of an [information] embargo that applies only to one kind of correspondent in situations like this?"

ZIEGLER: "No, I haven't."

QUESTION: "Do you have any views on that?"

ZIEGLER: "None to express here at this time."

QUESTION: "Do you think that is a fair situation?"

ZIEGLER: "I have no comment on that."

QUESTION: "Ron, this is a question that you were asked yesterday. I would like to ask it again. Has President Nixon been in touch with Prince Souvanna Phouma?"

ZIEGLER: "Gentlemen, I am just not prepared to get into any discussion regarding Indochina with you at this time."

QUESTION: "Do you plan to coordinate any announcement on a stepped-up military activity in Laos with a successful landing [by Apollo 14] on the moon? . . ."

ZIEGLER: "Let me just go on Deep Background with you for a moment. In the questions that have come, both from several of you this morning, you have drawn certain assumptions and so forth. I obviously can't address those. But I would caution you as to some of those assumptions. . . ."

QUESTION: "Deep Background means what, Ron?"

ZIEGLER: "Administration officials indicated, without direct quotation. . . ."

QUESTION: "Ron, going back on Deep Background, you said that you have drawn certain assumptions and cautioned us against those assumptions. Are you referring to the assumptions based on foreign press reports that there have been entries of South Vietnamese troops into Laos?"

ZIEGLER: "You will have to determine, without my assistance, what assumptions I was referring to."

QUESTION: "Back on the Deep Background remark, it seems a little silly to me that you won't define the assumptions we are supposed to have made. Why won't you do that? It seems nonsense."

ZIEGLER: "I didn't mean it to be, as you say, nonsensical. I was referring to the premises put forth in some of the questions which were remem-

bered from previous stories, Pete. I wasn't relating it to a question that some here asked on their own."

QUESTION: "Would you consider this question, Ron: Because of the confusion and the embargo and silence and everything, which is a very distorted ball of wax, is there anything on a positive note that you can tell us with that in mind?"

ZIEGLER: "I could probably give you some positive answers to some questions, but I can't bring one to mind yet."

QUESTION: "I am asking you whether you can tell us. It is a constructive question."

ZIEGLER: "I really have no information to provide you."

Wednesday, February 3, 1971, afternoon—

QUESTION: "Does the President feel this operation is going well?" [Laughter]

ZIEGLER: "I would not comment on that. . . ."

And so on—and on—every morning and every afternoon of almost every working day—isue after issue—crisis after crisis—for as long as the Administration stays in power and the press continue to pry and the press secretary to defend.

Earnest young staffer, forehead creased with worry: "We literally have to fight for everything we get from the media. The day we stop fighting, we won't get elected. It's a sad fact, but it's a hard, cruel world. It's very hard to get press and TV to treat us objectively, let alone give us a plug."

He is young, shrewd, sharp: more knowledgeable and more philosophical than most who fit that description—and they are many—around the White House; able to sit back and appraise the operation with the candor and objectivity that the operation needs.

"Probably 1970 is the best thing that could have happened to us, because if we had won that election we would have sailed into '72 thinking that everything we were doing was right, while ignoring various problems in the country and various weaknesses in our own approach.

"The fiasco of the President's God-awful final speech on election eve came down basically to the fact that when it was originally taped in Phoenix there was no thought of its being replayed, so it wasn't lighted or recorded or photographed very well. The staff was warned of the poor nature of the tape, but it was finally decided to go ahead and use it anyway, because there was a great time pressure involved—or so it was thought. NBC had agreed to set aside 15 minutes in their L.A. studios that night if the President wanted it, but the President had an engagement in Riverside.

"So after lots of conferring it was decided by one or two top members of the staff that the Riverside engagement had to take precedence. So the lousy Phoenix tape was used, and you know the effect it made alongside Muskie's calm and statesmanlike address for the Democrats.

"I doubt if the matter was ever brought up to the President when the decision was made, so I don't think he can be blamed for it. And while disappointed in the result, I don't believe he has punished anyone who was concerned, and has not

even reprimanded them very strongly.

"This indicated, I think, a real weakness of ours, which is that we are so dedicated to getting him where he is supposed to be on time that we are not flexible enough to take advantage of the opportunities that arise, or to do the things we should do to put him and the Administration in the best possible light. This really is one of our problems, but I think we are getting better and I think you are going to see some major changes in that area before too long."

The "Plans Committee" meets every Saturday morning and it is, as Dwight Chapin had told me, the public relations council of the White House—the image factory. It is held in Herb Klein's office, and he asked that the specifics of its discussions be off the record except in limited phrase. The committee works from a formal agenda which it sometimes adheres to and sometimes does not. Its debates range from solemn to profane as it struggles with the problem of how best to present more favorably an Administration that nine-tenths of the White House press corps is absolutely and adamantly determined to present in a harsh, suspicious and hostile light.

On this day the first item on the agenda was a memo from Bob Haldeman—signed with a large and imperial "H"—requesting the consensus on possible presidential participation in a satellite conversation with Prime Minister Heath. The consensus was that this would be great if it could be tied to a major event, otherwise it would look contrived and phony.

Second item was a request by the Canadian photographer Karsh to take pictures of the President. Decision was deferred.

Third item was requests from various magazines for information on the President's reading habits. It was agreed that this must be handled with great care, because if the President were disclosed to read anything even remotely frivolous, somebody would be sure to pick it up and make it the basis for snide criticism that would be used against him forever after.

Fourth item was the possibility of the President appearing on various types of informal television shows other than straight press conferences or talks. This too was considered a matter for further study.

Next came a discussion of the proper time for airing the President's State of the Union Message to Congress in January. Should it be at noon, Washington time, the traditional hour? Or should it be in the evening, when it would reach the widest possible television audience, a practice increasingly followed by occupants of the White House? The discussion grew heated as the traditionalists battled the let's-make-the-most-of-it group. Finally someone remarked with some disgust that he thought the idea was to strengthen the President's image and help him get reelected, and he didn't see why in hell it was so important what Congress said about his timing. It was the President's right to go up there when he pleased and talk when he wanted to. It was finally decided to place all the options before the President.

(In the event, he talked in the evening in prime time, which is exactly what all astute Presi-

dents since the advent of television have done and will continue to do.)

Sixth item on the agenda was "how to counter the theme that the President is heartless and cold," and the discussion very quickly got down to a specific: the recent episode in which a little black poster girl had been turned away without having her picture taken with the President, an incident that had brought in its wake great and probably abiding rancor in the Negro community. Those who deplored the incident's effect on the President's image were explosive and blasphemous in their criticism of the way it had been handled. Those who were responsible said crisply that the President was working on a speech and it was decided it was best not to bother him: "It was a judgment." (It was admitted, however, that it was a judgment the President had known nothing at all about until the media went into full cry that night. It had not even been brought to his attention at the time.) Those who were responsible said defensively that the President can't see everybody who comes in. Those who objected said he had damned well better take half an hour, if necessary, to be photographed with a little black poster girl—especially since just a few days later he had been photographed with a little white poster boy. Those who were responsible said well, anyway, the little girl and her parents were going to be invited to a Sunday worship service in a couple of weeks, and maybe he could be photographed with her then. Those who criticized said that of course an apology could be made after an incident like that, but if it were made weeks after the event, "Nobody will hear, nobody will know and nobody will give a damn." Those who were responsible reiterated in a tone that showed they were not to be budged: "It was a judgment." And that ended that.

The discussion began at nine-thirty and ran to twelve-twenty. It was laced throughout, on every topic, with the Administration's obsession with the media—understandable, but in its way as crippling as the media's obsession with the Administration.

There were several in the meeting who remarked with considerable asperity that criticisms could not be evaded or avoided, that they would come even without fair grounds for them, that they were part of the burden this Administration carried and so to hell with it—let the President do what he thought best and stop worrying. But the dominant mood was a fretful obsession which, translated into action down the staff, successfully seems to thwart any presidential action or reaction that might be based on the simple justice of a situation, or the simple response to it that he might make if he were given the option that really counts most in the image of a President—the option to be human.

"I have known Richard Nixon for 20 years," he says thoughtfully, from his vantage point as one of the most independent, and most likable, men on the Hill, "and I like him very much. I think he has done a good job in foreign affairs."

"In domestic policy I am damned if I know where he is driving."

"A year ago he said the Federal Government had

to balance the budget. Now he submits a budget which will be very badly out of balance. LBJ's unbalanced budget became a major cause of the inflation we have now. I don't see how Nixon thinks he can unbalance the budget and control the inflation."

"It appears the President has changed direction radically."

"I still think the most important thing is to put the Government's financial house in order. I don't think the Government in the long run can continue to operate at a deficit. Sooner or later somebody has got to pay. I am afraid this new budget is strictly politics. It is such a sudden change from just a year ago. It just doesn't make sense to me, what he is attempting to do now. I think he has reversed his field completely, and I am afraid it is for political reasons."

"I don't think the President is going to have much success with revenue sharing, and there are great problems involved in the reorganization of the Cabinet. There again, he has offered us only a broad outline with no details, and it is difficult to understand what he is driving at."

"I have to confess this whole change baffles me."

Dick Kleindienst, deputy attorney general, is in his mid-forties; large, round face, large blue eyes that can stare at one blankly but are usually full of considerable humor and life; very strong, very determined, a tough man. If he could get past the Senate, he might conceivably be head of the FBI someday.

"In a sense, I am executive officer for the department under the Attorney General. I see that the policies of the President and the Attorney General are effectuated by the 17 divisions of the department."

"In the area of civil disturbances, the President traditionally delegates to the Attorney General rather than the Secretary of Defense the responsibility of recommending when Federal troops should be used and how they should be used to quell civil disturbances, both in the District of Columbia and in the states. We have a pretty complete operation now, and I am, you might say, in a sense chief of staff of that operation."

"We haven't had the problems in that area that the Democrats had, such things as Watts, Detroit, Washington, Newark. Logically they would occur in a Democratic Administration and logically they should not occur under our Administration, because the Democrats are obligated for a lot of their political support to the black groups, which vote overwhelmingly for them, and therefore they hesitate about putting things in order when these groups create disturbances. We don't have that kind of relation and therefore we are able to respond more promptly and more efficiently without hanging back because of political considerations."

"When one of these situations has arisen, it has caused a great outcry from the black leadership because of the pressure on the Democratic President not to do much about it at the start for fear he will be charged with 'repression' and 'attack on black rights.' This has usually been accompanied by the threat that, 'If you do take strong measures, we'll go back to our people and suggest that the Democrats are as bad as the Re-

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publicans and they might as well vote Republican." Ramsey Clark, the last Democratic Attorney General under Johnson, was particularly susceptible to this kind of pressure—as susceptible to pressure as anyone has ever been in the United States Government.

"Our approach is based on plans, intelligence, quick response. We have people in place, we serve notice that disturbances are not going to be permitted to get out of hand and if they do get out of hand they're going to be stopped right now. The whole atmosphere on that changed at once on Inauguration Day, 1969. I was down here within a couple of minutes after the swearing in of President Nixon and I immediately put plans into operation to control any possible disturbances at Inauguration or after. There could have been disturbances on the first anniversary of the death of Martin Luther King and they did not occur. There could have been violent disturbances at the time of Cambodia and they did not occur. This is because we advised people in advance that preparation of Federal troops was being undertaken, and we said to them in effect, 'You can speak, but beyond that, when you get into violence, we are going to stop it right now.'

"They can't threaten us because they vote against us anyway.

"At the same time, we have cooperated in every possible way with all these dissenting groups, working with them to determine how they can march, what units will be on hand to control violence and what elements in their own ranks can be depended upon to help us control violence. Our purpose is to make it easier for them, not more difficult, and the fact that we have made it easier is proved by the record and it is one reason why riots and disturbances have not come back. [This was pre-Mayday '71.] We've used a reasonable, evenhanded approach.

"On the race issue as it involves these disturbances and law and order in the country, whether we get credit or not I firmly believe that we turned the corner to end the demonstrations. I think we have gained credibility in winding down the war, revising the draft and providing opportunity for young blacks to make their way economically.

"In the area of street crime and general city crime, 23 cities of a hundred thousand or more have been having a steady decrease in crime in the last two years. Statistics generally over the country have seemed to be going up a bit, but our statistics here in D.C., which is kind of a pilot project on what can occur, show that crime can be controlled and is being controlled.

"As for political crime such as assassination and kidnapping, in terms of numbers and impact, the effect on society is minuscule. It's only important as it is dramatic.

"Organized crime is another area where in motive power, determination and organization, more is being done by this Administration than was ever done before.

"As far as fighting crime, if you use traditional techniques, you're going to get no place. A gangster or criminal who is brought to the stand can always intimidate or buy other witnesses and just subvert the judicial process.

"Congress provided that we could go to electronic surveillance, which Ramsey Clark again refused to use before passage of the bill, and announced he would not use it if the bill became law. This was an open invitation to them to know that the Government was not going to do anything. We have straightened out that situation too. The Attorney General has authorized 250 electronic surveillances. This has brought the indictment in 18 months of between five hundred and six hundred major criminals.

"The court order which covers electronic usages requires that the Attorney General must state specifically what the need is, must specify what is going to be used. The court then grants authority for a given number of days. If you are not able to get what you want in that time, then you can go back and get the time extended. Upon indictment, all the evidence secured by wiretapping and other electronic means is immediately made available to the defendant and his attorney so that they know what is going to be used against them.

"I predict that in a reasonably short time, the narcotics problem will be stabilized and then reduced down to a normal irritant, rather than the major one that it is now. Congress has given every dollar we have asked for in this area. A great deal of this is due to the personal confidence that Congress has in John Mitchell and in this department. Congress has given us all the money we asked, clean across the board.

"Given a few years when the full impact of these revisions and these new programs and planning and all this money can be felt all across the land, there's going to be a strong resultant effect on the statistics of crime.

"These civil libertarian bastards complain about what we are doing, but the fact remains that we are clearing up many of these problems.

"In all of these areas you have to do it with vigor and determination and honest people who don't care for the political consequences but go ahead and fight crime. You can't do it with weak, opportunistic, chickenhearted bastards."

He is in his mid-thirties, dark, stocky, round-faced, soft-spoken; a former White House staff member who left because of a gradual disillusionment with the way the political side of the operation was being run, particularly in the area of press and congressional relations.

"I am really disturbed by the general inflexibility of the staff and its unwillingness to allow the President to deal with Congress in a spontaneous fashion . . . although, of course, if the impetus for this kind of approach doesn't come from the top, then maybe one shouldn't blame the people down the line too much.

"I feel the President could do a great deal with a few corny gestures toward members of Congress—that is, what people who don't understand the human nature of politics might consider corny. Sometimes a quick handshake, or a call about some personal matter, or a joke about some problem in a man's district or state can really make a member feel good toward the President. I think he should do more of this, particularly with his own Republicans. After all, as somebody has said, 'You want to keep your own troops turned on.' I don't think the President has succeeded in doing this.

"In the same fashion, I find quite disturbing the

attitude of the President and the top staff toward the press corps. Even if they are bastards who are constantly looking for excuses to attack the Administration, still I think they could be mollified a bit by personal contact. I feel that the President is basically shy about this, having been hurt so often by the press, but even so, he should be able to overcome this to some extent and be a little more cordial toward them. The attitude is reflected all through the staff, particularly in the press office. It makes things more difficult than they need to be for the Administration, in my opinion.

"At the same time, of course, I will concede that the press is so hostile that the Administration has simply got to be right on everything. It can't afford, for instance, to have a phony witness in the Berrigan case. It can't afford any personal or economic scandal on the part of any member of the Administration, for the simple reason that the press tolerance which is accorded to Democrats simply does not exist toward Nixon. Now, I know Ed Muskie, for instance: he's a man of somewhat limited grasp and somewhat limited intelligence, who is frequently banal, indecisive, short-tempered and generally inconsiderate with the press. But somehow there is a built-in tolerance toward Democratic candidates which prevents the press from letting these things really get out to the public with the sort of consistent hammering they devote to Nixon's shortcomings. They are so anxious to find an alternative to Nixon that they will build up almost anyone and give him all the benefit of the breaks in the process.

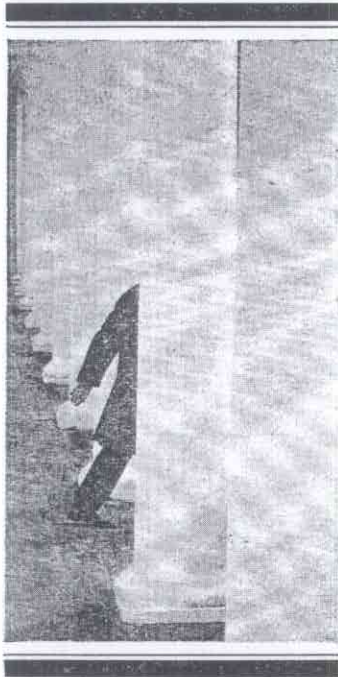
About ten days before I was scheduled to leave town I began asking the staff to find out what had become of the President's answers to my questions. Margita White reported that she was telephoning various people about it. Days passed without an answer. Two days before my departure she said she thought she was making progress: Alex Butterfield was going to be seeing the President, and had agreed to ask. The next day she called back: the President said he was very sorry, he had been too busy to answer as fully as he would like, he was working on it, he hoped I would understand, it would be along by mail in due course. I said fine, no hurry.

Apparently the lengthy delay in finding this out was caused by the fact that everybody assumed that he had already given the answers to someone. The universal question then became: Who's to blame? And if I am, how can I find a suitable excuse? When someone finally got to a direct man with a direct question he got a direct answer and the mystery was solved in half a minute.

In this, as in all administrations, a straight line, in the White House, is sometimes not the shortest distance between two points. Staffs become very timid about treating a President as though he were a reasonable man. Which is not a good thing; for them, for him, or for the country.

The press (bull session with old friends): "He is the most complex man who has ever been in the White House. He doesn't have any intimate friends. Nobody is close to him. He should have at least somebody, but all he seems to have is Bebe Rebozo.

"He definitely tries to get away from the press. The anti-press feeling permeates the whole Administra-



Reporters said to Drury during a bull session: "He is the first President to duck out of parties early to avoid the press. . . . He is always escaping from us. Why is he always escaping?"

ion. He is the first President to duck out of parties early to avoid the press. He deliberately avoids us. He wants to stay away from us." When I pointed out that the press, after all, had been extremely harsh with him over the years, this was conceded. "But the majority of publishers are Republican."

"And the majority of reporters are Democrats and liberals." "Reluctantly this was conceded too, "But—Nixon has no sense of style. No grace. He is always escaping from us. Why is he always escaping?"

I saw him for the second time in San Clemente, on March 30, 1971. The SST had been defeated in the Senate; in Laos, the unhappy invasion had surged in and limped back. It was a typical overcast Southern California day, the sun trying vainly to break through the persistent light clouds. Off in the distance the cold Pacific curled in upon the shore. In the corridors and offices there was an

air of quiet, the pace obviously slower, more relaxed, more comfortable than it is in Washington.

The President looked tanned and rested. He apologized for not having taped answers to my questions as he had promised, but explained that he had been rather busy: it was obvious from his comments throughout that he had studied them very closely before deciding on what the staff likes to call his "one-to-one" method. I showed him my newspaper horoscope for the day: "Consulting with bigwigs opens the door to greater opportunity now but don't try to criticize them in any way." He laughed and said, "Oh no! Oh no! Don't worry about that!" He played with a single silver cuff link the entire hour and a half that we talked, but otherwise seemed as calm as ever, and as convinced that the course he had chosen was right.

We began, as my written questions had begun, with the Presidency itself. It had held for him, he supposed, "fewer surprises than it does for most. I had been Vice President for eight years, I knew what a President could do and couldn't do. The main thing I had learned was that Presidents come and go, but the bureaucracy goes on forever. I knew that no President who is not in tune with the mood and the ideological bent of the bureaucracy can bend it to his program without a great deal of difficulty and hard work. I also knew how difficult it is to deal with Congress, particularly with both houses in control of the other party, and no such bipartisanship as Eisenhower was fortunate enough to have when Lyndon Johnson was majority leader of the Senate. That bipartisanship is so fragmented now that it practically no longer exists. Mike Mansfield is a very responsible majority leader now, very responsible in his disagreement about Southeast Asia—but he does disagree, and in fact disagreed with Johnson and with Kennedy too on that subject."

"So now it has crumbled away and now we have partisanship—or perhaps not so much partisanship as what you might call a new isolationism, in which the old internationalists and interventionists, who supported World War II, the Korean War, the Alliance for Progress and the rest of the war and postwar programs, are now turning away and trying to turn America inward again."

"They are concentrating now on America's internal problems, the alienation of groups and generations, the economy and all those things which our so-called 'intellectual elite'—self-appointed and self-described—have made their top priorities."

"We now have what could be termed basically a new 'America First' doctrine, not in the sense of 'look to America's defenses and forget the rest of the world,' but in the sense of 'forget the rest of the world and concentrate on our own domestic problems and social commitments.'"

"But I don't feel frustrated or disillusioned—I really don't. I went in with my eyes wide open. I knew Congress was against us, I knew we were in a period of great domestic torment, I knew we had Vietnam to face and many social problems. Essentially, of course, those problems would be here whatever happened internationally, and they will continue to be with us long after Vietnam ends. But I want to make sure Vietnam ends in

such a way that it does not leave us with disenchantment, bitterness, even greater alienation of one group from another. If it ends that way, it will not end, in a sense—it will go on to plague us for many, many years to come."

"I think we are at one of the great watersheds of American history—where America, having acquired world leadership really without consciously seeking it or wanting it, having met that role as best she could since World War II, is now determining whether she will continue to play the part of a leader in world affairs or would prefer to abdicate her responsibility and let it go. If she does, freedom and democracy will go, we all will go. I am convinced that what has happened in Laos will prove in the long run to be as sound as Cambodia. After all, what really matters is what actually happens, not what instant analysts have to say about it. They jump to conclusions, and then a few weeks or months later, they prove to be wrong. Cambodia was an enormous success, and yet you go back and look up what our friends in the press and television were saying about it at the time it ended, and you'll see they weren't about to concede it was any success."

"You have to be quite fatalistic about these things. After all"—with a sudden sharp, direct look—"I know more than they do or you do about it. I know what has happened to the enemy. I know he has taken enormous losses. I know how the South Vietnamese as a whole really behaved, in spite of what three or four units may have done. They proved they could hack it. Everybody ought to wait awhile and see how Laos affects our continuing withdrawal. The enemy will not be able to launch another offensive this summer. He will not be able to interfere with the timetable for the ending of our involvement."

"I know when American involvement will end, though I can't state it, because to do so would be to give up certain tactical advantages, and also to remove whatever chance—little, not big—may remain to have meaningful negotiations in Paris."

"I think we're going to make it, in this situation—I think withdrawal is going to work, Vietnamization is going to work—not in the sense that 'Vietnamization' would mean the withdrawing of all of the American presence, but in the basic sense of South Vietnam being able to handle its own affairs. In the sense of 17 million people having a chance to decide their own destiny and their own future, which is what we will have achieved for them with our help and our sacrifice."

"If we can do this, it will be one of the major achievements of this nation in all its long history—to keep a Communist enemy from conquering our friends, to give a nation the right to live as it wants to live."

"If we fail in that, and if South Vietnam goes Communist in spite of all we've done, then Communism will indeed be the wave of the future in Asia. But I don't think it is, and I don't think that is what will happen. . . ."

"Critical to all of this is the way the Vietnam war ends. If it ends in a way that can be interpreted as an American defeat—a retreat, a bugout—inevitably those in the world who are inclined to use force to gain their aggressive or imperialist-

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tic ends will be encouraged to do so. And all our friends will be in disarray. The world will say, 'Look at Vietnam. If the United States could not be counted on there, where can she be counted on?' The way to avoid more Vietnams is to be sure that this Vietnam ends in a way that will not dismay our friends and encourage future aggressors. . . .

"The press?" His expression changed, became earnest, stubborn, close to contemptuous. "I probably follow the press more closely and am less affected by it than any other President. I have a very cool detachment about it. I read it basically to find out what other people are reading, so that I'll know what is being given the country and what I have to deal with when I talk to the country and try to influence people for my programs. And of course I read it also because sometimes there will be a very thoughtful article on some subject that is enlightening and of value to me. Presidents are like other people: they don't know everything, it's good to get another point of view on something. Providing, that is, that it's a matter of substance and not just something somebody has dreamed up because he doesn't like Nixon or wants to make points with his own boss or bureaucracy, who don't like Nixon.

"I'm not like Lyndon as regards the press—we're two different people. The press was like a magnet to him. He'd read every single thing that was critical, he'd watch the news on TV all the time, and then he'd get mad. I never get mad. I expect I have one of the most hostile and unfair presses that any President has ever had, but I've developed a philosophical attitude about it. I developed it early. I have won all my political battles with 80 to 90 percent of the press against me. How have I done it? I ignored the press and went to the people.

"I have never called a publisher, never called an editor, never called a reporter, on the carpet. I don't care. And you know?"—a grim but rather pleased expression—"that's what makes 'em mad. That's what infuriates 'em. I just don't care. I just don't raise the roof with 'em. And that gets 'em.

"Anyway, that isn't my style. I don't stomp around. I don't believe in public displays of anger. I don't raise hell. I'm never rough on the staff about things just for the sake of being rough, or making an effect. But they know how I feel. The things we've faced in this Administration have taken a lot of hard decisions and I've had to be firm about things, but I've *been* firm—I haven't shouted about it. There are some people, you know, they think the way to be a big man is to shout and stomp and raise hell—and then nothing ever really happens. I'm not like that, with the staff or with the press.

"I never shoot blanks. "I respect the individual members of the press—some of them, particularly the older ones—who have some standards of objectivity and fairness. And the individual competence of many of the younger ones, I respect that too, though nowadays they don't care about fairness, it's the 'in' thing to forget objectivity and let your prejudices show. You can see it in my press conferences all the time. You read the Kennedy press conferences and see how soft and gentle they were

with him, and then you read mine. I never get any easy questions—and I don't want any. I am quite aware that ideologically the Washington press corps doesn't agree with me. I expect it. I think the people can judge for themselves when they watch one of my press conferences. It's all there.

"I can tell you this,"—and his eyes narrowed, he swung his chair around and stared out across the distant gray Pacific—"as long as I am in this office, the press will never irritate me, never affect me, never push me to any move I don't think is wise. . . ."

What kind of a country would he like America to be when he leaves the Presidency? What would he like history to say Richard Nixon had done for America? His face sobered, he fell silent, stared again out the window at the restless ocean, turned back, spoke slowly and thoughtfully, repeating, refining, rephrasing.

"What kind of country? "I would like first to get this war ended in a way that Americans can look back upon not ashamed, not frustrated, not angry, but with a pride that in spite of our difficulties we have been totally unselfish—that we have enabled 17 million people to choose their own destiny, and in so doing have preserved and strengthened the chance for peace in the Pacific basin, and probably the world.

"I would like to leave with a new relationship between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. It will be intensely competitive, of course. We are different peoples with a different history and we want different things—but I believe we are at the critical point where we can finally decide that we must have a live-and-let-live relationship. I think we are making some progress in that direction. I hope we may have achieved it when I leave. I would like to leave some structure on which at least the beginnings of genuine world peace can be built.

"Domestically, this nation is never going to be wholly at one. But I would hope that we can reduce the tensions, reduce the demonstrations, reduce the dissent—not the constructive dissent that is the yeast of a free society, but the destructive dissent that wants only to tear down the system.

"I want everybody in this country to recognize that our system provides for peaceful change—to get people to work within the system and find better methods to make the system work.

"You said something in your questions about how could I, a basically conservative President, propose such 'liberal' things as revenue sharing and the Family Assistance Plan. That isn't 'liberal.' It's common sense. I believe revenue sharing is one way to make the system work better, because it means decentralization of government—and I think decentralization of government is the key. The modern twentieth-century liberal is for big government. He likes concentration of power—*he likes power*. I don't go with him in that. I hope to give more people a chance to participate in the action—to believe that what they do counts. I want to restore as much as we can the concept that this country has grown great

by adhering to the principle of shared responsibility and peaceful change.

"I would like to make some progress in restoring some sense of understanding and of pride in this country and in its greatness—get away from this idea that America's foreign policy is rotten, its domestic policies are rotten, the whole damned thing is rotten. I know that because of slavery, black Americans have not had an equal chance; I know that there are many injustices in other areas. But we are working, we are trying, we are making progress. I know these things *can be changed*, and in a peaceable and constructive way, through the system we have. When you look at the United States with all its pockmarks, you realize that, nonetheless, a person born in this country has more freedom and more genuine opportunity than a person born in any other country.

"I would like to leave a renewed conviction in America that the system *does* work, that democratic government *is* better than the alternatives, that reforms *can* be made through peaceful change. I would like to leave reestablished the idea that in this system things can be achieved and made better. In foreign policy, the greatest contribution a President could make would be to leave a world in which the United States is at peace with every nation—and has the strength and the will to guarantee that peace.

"In a sense"—hitting the desk firmly with his hand—"it's all right here in this room—right here in this chair. Whoever is President of the United States, and what he does, is going to determine the kind of world we have. His leadership must be strong—and firm—and, we hope, wise.

"But more than that. He must be supported by the belief and the conviction and the faith of the American people, in themselves and in their country. That's why I want to restore some sense of balance, of perspective, of understanding and pride in America's role in the world, and in her institutions.

"This is a noble country in many ways, and somehow we must restore the feeling that we should take pride in it—that we should believe in its system and its policies and its future.

"The important thing is not our capacity to do things—we have that. The important thing is our will. It is not going to be there unless we restore to Americans more faith in themselves and their country.

"The problem now is the American spirit. This is a crisis of the spirit that we face. The most important thing of all is to restore the American spirit.

"That is what I would like to do before I leave this office."

On that day the headlines were full of post-Laotian backbiting, of Lieutenant Calley and My Lai, and of Leonid Brezhnev, calling with a fine, stern, moral righteousness for world peace, in the city whose leaders have done, are doing and will continue to do, more than any other members of the planet to destroy it.

The sky was still gray, the sea cold, the air chilly when I left. From the doorway, King Timahoe wagged amicably one last time, and at the gates, the guards smiled, saluted and waved me through to the roaring freeway and the hastening world.

END