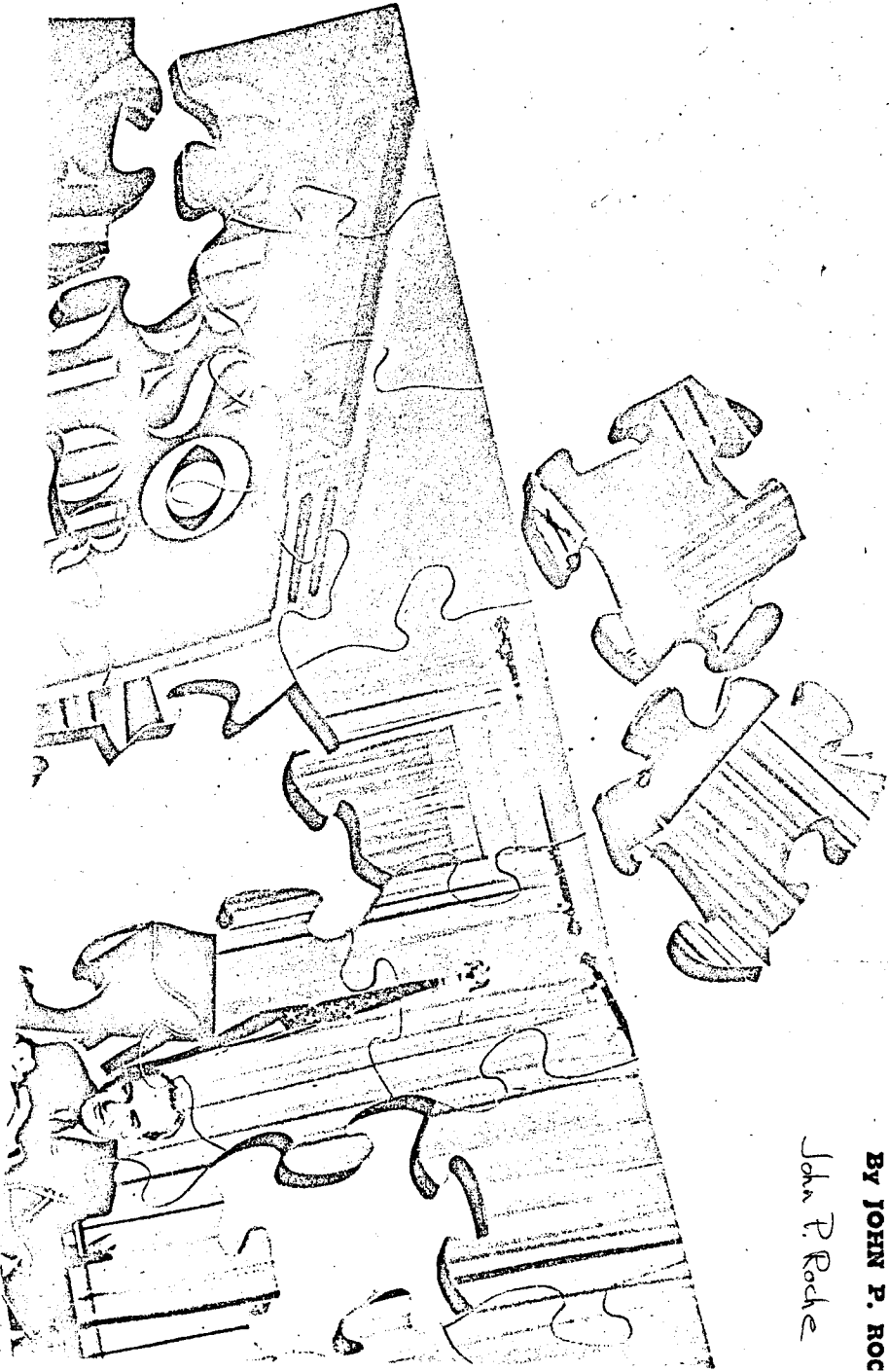


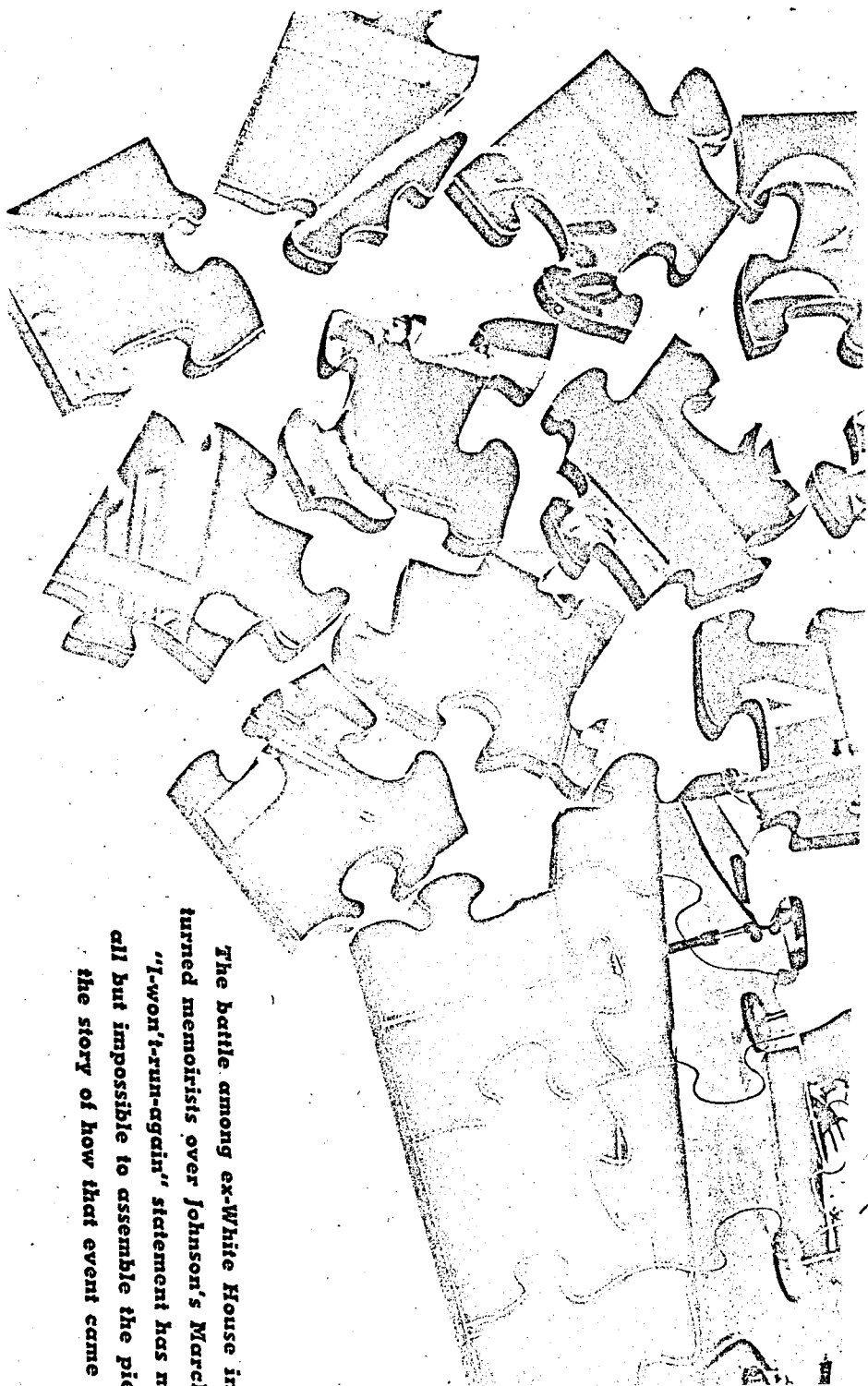
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# The Jigsaw Puzzle of History

By JOHN P. ROE

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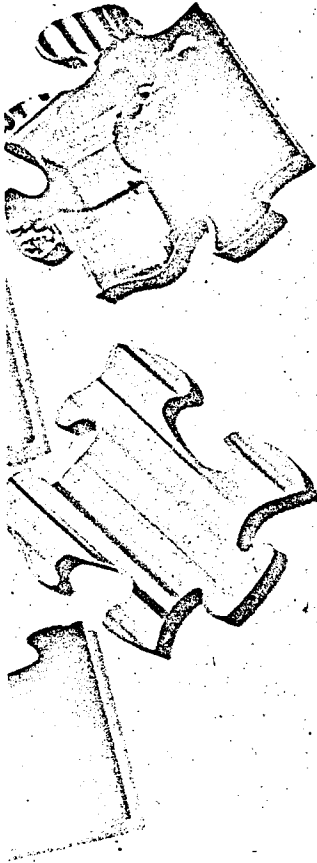




**The battle among ex-White House in-  
turned memoirists over Johnson's Mar-  
"I-won't-run-again" statement has m-  
all but impossible to assemble the pie  
the story of how that event came**

SOME years ago, in reviewing Arthur Schlesinger's "A Thousand Days" for Harper's Magazine, I suggested that there was some resemblance between the volumes then flowing from Schlesinger, Sorensen, Salinger, and other lesser luminaries at Camelot, and the medieval monastic chronicle. If anything, events since that time have reinforced his prejudice.

To be specific, I doubt that any historically valid treatment of the Kennedy-Johnson era can emerge for at least another decade, if then. I confess that when I emerged from the White House I signed up to do an "insider volume," but sober, professional second thoughts have led me



to put that project on ice until at least 1980.

The problem is that I simultaneously know too much, and not enough. I know what I thought was happening, what others on the staff thought was happening, what the press thought was happening. But I cannot fully document what happened. And I have seen enough highly classified docu-

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ments to know that what most of the observers thought was happening was at best half-right, at worst dead wrong. (We will explore a few cases of this sort later.) This has steered me in a different direction as far as writing is concerned: I am now preparing what is frankly and unashamedly an *ex parte* memoir, "From Camelot to the Alamo." It is based on what I believed was true, on the picture as I conceptualized it, of the Kennedy-Johnson era. As I pointed out so long ago with respect to Schlesinger's fine book, it will not be a history but should be helpful to those who try objectively to put the pieces together.

This is not the place to explore in detail the various "inside" stories that have emerged from the Kennedy-Johnson era, except to note that too frequently they are disguised autobiography and/or therapy. I have nothing against autobiography, but I get a bit tired of grievances posing as high theory. For example, several chroniclers emphasize President Johnson's "isolation" and the extent to which his "courtiers" protected him from reality. Translated, this means "Why didn't Lyndon talk to me?" Similarly, we are told that no one dared to challenge the President on his Vietnam policies, that he went up in smoke if anyone suggested a bombing halt. Translated, this means "I didn't dare argue because he might have fired me."

Now it so happens that I opposed the bombing strategy against North Vietnam from the day it was inaugu-

rated, wrote an article condemning it which appeared in the spring of 1965 in The Washington Post and elsewhere, and never changed my views. Note my formulation: I supported the defense of South Vietnam but opposed the whole notion of a cut-rate, air-power war. (I did not see it as a moral issue: sending bombs by air mail is no less moral than employing parcel post, as the North Vietnamese did.) President Johnson was fully aware of my position, which I called to his attention about once a month in various contexts. Indeed, on several occasions he asked me to send copies of my memorandums to Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara. As a courtesy I always sent copies to Walt Rostow, but since I neglected to send any to The New York Times (I was not working for them), it was officially true that nobody in the Administration ever questioned the President's policies.

This is not to assume a heroic pose — several of my friends in the White House (who did not have university tenure) lost their voices arguing with the President on issues ranging across the board from foreign policy to crime bills to increasing taxes. But — and this is the crux of the matter for the historian — not only was there

verbal argument, respectful but nonetheless sharp, but there were pieces of paper: "Secret — Eyes Only" memos to the President from his staff. There were full transcriptions of various crucial meetings. Each of us has a set of our memos, but only the Presidential archives in Austin contain the whole range. Including most significantly what the President said to Dean Rusk or Robert McNamara after he had read whatever stuff we sent him.

The net result is that most White House "revelations" would be thrown out of a court of law in about 30 seconds; they simply lack any probative substance. I know what the President said to me over the unmonitored direct line, and Harry McPherson and Joe Califano know what I told them the President told me. Then one of Califano's assistants might pass on to a speechwriter with an ego deficiency what he had heard (via Califano) that the President told me. The speechwriter, who was tucked away

somewhere in the Executive Office Building preparing "Rose Garden prose," i.e., talks to visiting Elks, might decide to build up his credit as an insider by calling a newspaper correspondent: "You know, I was with Johnson when he was talking to Roche this morning about the problem of jets for Peru and the old man was really climbing the wall."

Next day, Page One: "Informed White House sources indicate that the President referred obscenely to de Gaulle in connection with a rumored French agreement to sell supersonic jets to Peru." To the end of time, who will believe that the original discussion related to the British sale of Hawker Hunters to, say, Pakistan? This is hypothetical, but just so—and only to protect the guilty.

A classic example of this sort of embellishment can be found in Eric F. Goldman's "Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson." Professor Goldman, accustomed to the genial environment of Princeton, got himself involved with the West Side Jacobins in connection with a White House Arts Festival, and several of them decided to convert the affair into an anti-Vietnam happenning. There was, as you may recall, a bit of a stir and, indeed, it is difficult not to feel considerable sympathy for Professor Goldman. At the same time, the President—for equally good reasons—was not amused and, apparently, simply froze Goldman out of any White House functions. But Goldman relates that he took his

troubles to an old friend of the President, who called Presidential appointments secretary Marvin Watson, to get a reading. The old Presidential friend talked to Watson and then told Goldman that Watson suggested, in vivid obscene language, that the professor take a jump in the river.

Several aspects of this should be noted. First, Goldman does not say that Watson used the obscenity; he says X quoted Watson to that effect. Second, Goldman was clearly not the President's favorite at the time, so the story has some deductive persuasiveness. But the hooker is that Watson is a devout churchman who simply never uses that kind of language—to those of us who know Watson (and he is a close personal friend of mine) Goldman's anecdote has the same persuasiveness as a story headlined "Pope Paul Busted on

Pot Charge." But how can one prove a negative? Particularly when it is confronted on the second bounce?

Admittedly, this is a trivial instance, but it highlights a whole genre, one almost would say a business: namely, the surfacing of Presidential quotes, and of attributions to other high officials, which are impossible to validate or to refute. I recall vividly a phone conversation with President John Kennedy in late September or early October, 1962, in which he scorched me for at least 15 minutes. I had written an article suggesting less profile and more courage on a number of pressing issues, notably civil rights, and he caught me at 7:30 A.M. as I was drinking my first cup of coffee. For me it was a Bay of Pigs: I didn't get a word in edgewise and he was running about 400 a minute.

When he hung up, I went back to my breakfast and figured that this was the penalty one paid for being national chairman of Americans for Democratic Action—a job which required one to try to keep a liberal President in fighting trim. I didn't know that I had been blasted by a future martyr—Jack Kennedy had been sore at me off and on since I went to work for him in 1957. The consequence was, of course, that I did not rush to my commonplace book and record Kennedy's sentiments—I just figured that the next time he needed A.D.A. support, he would be in a friendlier mood. (As, in fact, he was.)

A couple of months later I ran into Larry O'Brien, who filled me in on

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**All the Schlesingers, Sorensens, Salingers and other "instant historians" (says a man who almost became one) cannot put together the portrait we need of the Kennedy-Johnson era.**

some details. He had gone to see the President in his bedroom and Kennedy had thrown the magazine at him—the one with my offensive article—and said, "What the hell is Arthur [Schlesinger] getting paid for? He is supposed to keep these bastards on a leash." I thought this was pretty funny and remembered it, but I wonder if O'Brien has the slightest recollection. There is no particular reason why he should—what was for me a startling experience was probably for him a commonplace event. But in legal terms, there is no way of proving a thing—I could have dreamed it all up.

While I can honestly say that I have never knowingly invented a quote for Presidential attribution, I must in all candor concede that on occasion things got a bit complicated. For example, President Johnson would in succession call Califano, Christian, McPherson and me to get our reading on some problem. Usually his calls were slightly therapeutic; i.e., he would be madder than hell about some column and would explore the author's credentials and ancestry in some detail. We would immediately caucus and try to work out a sensible, common position, and in the course of our meditations each would repeat the pithier components of the President's analysis. By the time we got finished, it was often hard to recall which things he had said to whom and within a week, I suspect, each of us fed the whole works into his personal memory bank. The smart thing to do would have been to have our secretaries monitor and transcribe the conversations, but this was absolutely forbidden (except, I believe, to Walt Rostow—who had to have his instructions on crucial matters of foreign policy down in black and white). Lyndon Johnson wanted privacy with his staff, even at the expense of historical exactitude.

Another of Goldman's difficulties which might be mentioned at this point is that he believed what he read in the papers. In his book—of which very little is actually first-hand recollection—he lavishes praise on Hubert Humphrey for his spontaneity and wit in the 1964 campaign (which was, in fact, a fearful drag).

To exemplify his point he takes a speech Humphrey delivered in Toledo, Ohio, on Oct. 6, 1964, and suggests that it was Hubert at his best. Improvised wit, searching commentary—these were the essentials of the Vice Presidential candidate's vivid presentation.

The only problem is that this speech was neither spontaneous nor delivered! It was written by me—and with all due immodesty I can state it was a good speech—and under the arrangement we had with the Senator, unless he vetoed it, the Democratic National Committee sent out a press release based on our (the Washington staff's) draft. This was done for morning release on the 7th of October, and—since it was a slow day elsewhere and the speech had some zip—it hit the headlines in three leading papers.

Meanwhile, out in Toledo, Humphrey—instead of giving my 20-minute speech—talked for an hour and 40 minutes. He gave one-third of each of five bad speeches. Why? Because someone on the plane into Toledo had persuaded him that my speech would lose Ohio, and seven volunteer speechwriters (every man seems to consider himself a speechwriter—in fact, speechwriting is a real art) had put together a monstrosity (which I later heard on tape). The correspondents on the plane heard the first 10 minutes and retired to the nearest bar, so the only coverage the event received was (1) in the Toledo papers, which were accurate; and (2) in The Times, Baltimore Sun, and Washington Post, whose stories were based on the D.N.C. press release and totally inaccurate. As I recall, this was the speech in which Humphrey actually told the assembled Democrats that Jack Kennedy was watching from heaven to see how they voted! It was not one of his better days.

LET us turn to another area of instant history which is going to be a source of major problems to the historian of the future: the conflict in authorities on the same event. On Sept. 2, 1963, President Kennedy gave Walter Cronkite of C.B.S. an exclusive interview, most of it centering on the status of the Diem regime in Vietnam. Roger Hilsman, then Assistant Secretary of State, Far East, noted in his

book that television forced a decision. "The subject of Vietnam and the Buddhist crisis," wrote Hilsman, "was an inevitable question. . . . The White House staff [composed] a proposed response that was as innocuous as possible [but] the President tossed it aside and bit the bullet. 'I don't think,' the President said, 'that unless a greater effort is made to win popular support that the war can be won out there . . .'"

Hilsman goes on to state that the "meaning of [a] reference to the need for 'changes in policy and personnel' was that the President had decided that the tension between the United States and the Diem regime would continue until the policy of repression against the Buddhists and the students had been abandoned . . ."

Of the same situation, Schlesinger wrote that President Kennedy "tossed aside a moderate statement his staff had prepared" and went on to sock Diem with a hardline position. In short both Hilsman and Schlesinger indicate that Kennedy, in his Cronkite interview, deliberately rejected a moderate view and substituted what was, in effect, an ultimatum to Diem to shape up or ship out. Sorensen makes no substantive comment.

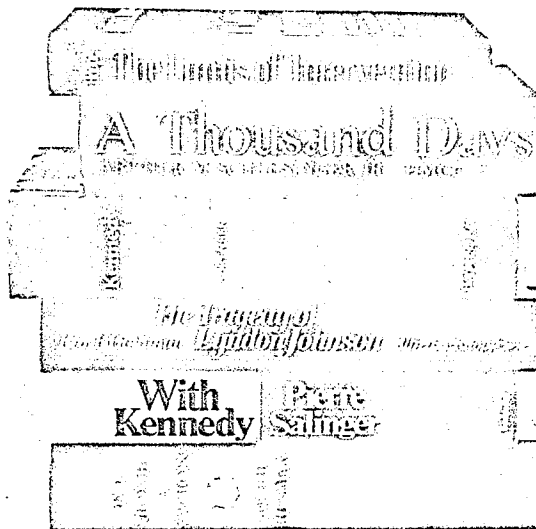
However, another precinct—one far closer to the actual TV interview than either Hilsman or Schlesinger—has also reported (and with an entirely different reading of the course of events). Pierre Salinger, press secretary, who handled the logistics of the Cronkite interview, later wrote that this TV special "had an unfortunate aftermath. C.B.S. shot half an hour of questions and answers, mostly on Vietnam, but cut the footage to 12 minutes for actual broadcast. The result was a partial distortion of J.F.K.'s opinion of President Diem. In the actual interview, which was filmed, President Kennedy spoke of his respect and sympathy for Diem. When the film was shown to the public, only the unfavorable Presidential remarks remained."

I later asked Pierre Salin-

ger how this could have happened: it is inconceivable that a network would edit an interview with the President without going over the cuts with the White House. He said it was one of those things that fell through the slats when the President was out of town—like the famous "Do not abort" cable sent to the embassy in Saigon (encouraging an anti-Diem coup) when the President was at Hvannis in late

dential competition, The New York Times ran two articles on the reasons for this shift and the bureaucratic infighting that accompanied it. Subsequently, the man who claimed to be the *deus ex machina* of the whole shift in Vietnam policy, Townsend Hoopes, published a book, "The Limits of Intervention," which attempted to bolster this claim.

Frankly, this put me in a



August, 1963. These things happen in every Administration, providing fodder for later paranoids: Why was the warning to General Short at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 6, 1941 sent by Western Union? From my knowledge of the Government, I am absolutely ready to believe that the answer was incompetence. But what know they of incompetence who only footnotes know?

LET us examine the focus of another, more recent conflict of sources: the famous "Battle of Johnson's Speech." In March, 1969, a year after the Johnson speech which cut back the air war on North Vietnam and announced his retirement from the Presi-

difficult position. It was folly to allow Hoopes to pre-empt the historical stage (since, in fact, he was poorly informed), but any serious reply had to be based on highly classified materials (which Hoopes didn't even know existed). The fact is that when Lyndon Johnson asked people to keep their mouths shut, they did—or were put on ice in one of the many comfortable welfare programs that exist in the Government. I spent, at the President's request, a good part of six months trying to figure out what went wrong in Vietnam, and I had access to all relevant documents going back to 1964-65. But, to repeat, I reported to him, not to The New York Times. Moreover, there was a certain moral question involved in

anticipating the President's memoirs—as well as the nice legal question of declassifying “Top Secret, Sensitive, Eyes Only” memorandums.

So I called the former President and suggested he break loose enough material to demolish Hoopes, but he felt that he would have an opportunity to deal personally with the question in a forthcoming series of TV interviews with the ubiquitous Walter Cronkite. On Feb. 6, 1970, he went into the whole affair on TV, reading from some of the memos, only to be greeted by hoots of derision from Hoopes (who accused him of “standing history on its head”) and others. Hoopes accused Johnson of lying when the latter said he had instructed Rusk and Clifford by memo on Feb. 28, 1968, to undertake a searching reappraisal of all aspects of our Vietnam policy. Hoopes said flatly that “the Pentagon officials concerned are quite clear that they never received such a document.” Hoopes cited a host of hearsay witnesses, and made the flat statement: “Clifford is certain that his instructions from the President were entirely oral, and rather narrow in scope...”

This time I challenged Hoopes in print, pointing out that there was a memo of Feb. 28, 1968; it went to the principal officials (including McNamara, who was retiring on the 29th); it called for a total, across-the-board evaluation of our options in Vietnam; and that Clark Clifford had signed a receipt for his copy and referred to its headings in a reply written March 4. I still did not feel it proper to distribute copies, but the odds seemed pretty good that if Hoopes, Clifford, or any of the others involved called me a liar, some documentation might surface from Austin. I guess those involved thought so, too—there was not one effort to refute my contentions.

Finally, in this context, take

the role of Dean Rusk, who was, in March, 1968, the principal supporter of an unconditional, partial (above the 20th Parallel) bombing halt. Schlesinger once referred to Rusk, whom I gather he did not like, as a “Buddha” who never contributed to policy discussions. Rusk's reply was that when Schlesinger was in the room he kept his mouth shut, since otherwise his words would be all over Georgetown in half an hour. My view is that Rusk overdid the secrecy bit—I think sometimes he kept secrets from himself just to stay in trim—but in direct private consultations with the President, McNamara, Clifford and perhaps two or three others he was a sharp, discerning participant.

By the fall of 1967, although he was pessimistic about any positive result (with justification, as events have demonstrated), Rusk had decided that a cutback in the bombing of North Vietnam might lead to negotiations. (The idea of cutting back to the 20th, by the way, had been around for some time: McNamara and Assistant Secretary of State William Bundy had staffed it out in the spring of 1967.) This came out in a reply Rusk drafted in November, 1967, to a memo (anonymous, but actually written by McNamara) which the President circulated to a dozen trusted advisers recommending a total bombing halt, a troop ceiling for Vietnam, and in general de-escalation and what is now known as “Vietnamization.” Of those canvassed, only Rusk and Under Secretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach reacted sympathetically, though they argued for a partial rather than a total bombing halt to protect our troops in I Corps from invasion through the DMZ. Clifford, by the way, was hard as nails. On March 4, 1968, Clifford was still a hard hawk, but Rusk reintroduced the proposal for a bombing cutback, argued for it with the Presi-

dent, and found a receptive ear.

**N**O disrespect is intended to Clark Clifford, who in my judgment did in the Department of Defense what should have been done two years earlier—that is, he began the Vietnamization of the war. My only point is that Rusk's proposal did not come out of the blue; he had made it six months earlier. But Hoopes simply was unaware that the November-December discussions had ever taken place.

Well, so much for “The Battle of Johnson's Speech,” except to note that this was

not really a historical argument at all. It was theological. As of 1970, liberal Democrats decided that the war in Vietnam must somehow be expunged from the party's record. The ideal way to accomplish this Orwellian objective was to show that a few sinister hawks foisted our Southeast Asian policy on an unwilling but helpless mass of liberal doves.

**H**OOPES and his associates were thus busy concocting a virtuous past; history has become an instrument of retrospective salvation. Indeed, as I look around today, I get the distinct impression that the only supporters of the Vietnam war in the top echelons of the Johnson Administration were the President, Dean Rusk, Walt Rostow and myself. The White House staff, the bureaucracy, Congress and even some high military positions were seemingly populated by secret doves. Washington, in short, was full of men wrestling with their consciences, and—as the paucity of resignations indicated—winning.

Indeed, it will be interesting to watch the historian of the future wrestling with the problem of defining a “dove.” Professor Hans J. Morgenthau, for example, has been thought of as a leading dove, but the reader of his views on South-

east Asia finds himself a bit unnerved. True, Morgenthau opposed "peripheral containment" of Asian Communism (i.e., the war in Vietnam), but suggested in its place a straight Dulles strategy—nuclear bombs!

Or, take the confusing role of Gen. James M. Gavin, who in 1966 became famous for his alleged opposition to bombing North Vietnam and his alleged advocacy of "enclaves." I say "alleged" because in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in February, 1966, General Gavin flatly denied that he wanted to stop bombing North Vietnam, denied that he wanted "a halt in the escalation," and denied that he recommended "withdrawal of American troops to defend a limited number of enclaves." Indeed, he urged that "the utility value [of Haiphong] should just be done away with since it is a major port of entry for military supplies"!

Perhaps some of the confusion arose because a year later, in testifying before the same committee, General Gavin announced that "I opposed the bombing of North Vietnam at the last hearings, and I still oppose the bombing of North Vietnam, and I think

the bombing should be stopped." Since the politicians were already beginning to cover their tracks on bombing, one suspects they decided to let the general join the caper.

Politicians and generals can, perhaps, be forgiven for trying to cover their tracks, but the situation of a scholar is somewhat different. The personal theme of Hilsman's book, "To Move a Nation," was that he resigned from the Johnson Administration because he saw it deviating from the flexible, political strategy toward Vietnam implemented by President Kennedy. The Johnson Administration, Hilsman wrote, "was obviously going to take the military path." In the course of writing his volume, Hilsman declassified a large number of his own Secret and

Top-Secret memorandums; I am taking the liberty now of declassifying one that he somehow overlooked.

Dated Aug. 30, 1963, it is a six-page Top-Secret memorandum to the Secretary of State from the Assistant Secretary, Far East (i.e., Hilsman). Subject: "Possible Diem-Nhu Moves and U. S. Responses." The background might be briefly noted. President Ngo Dinh Diem and his brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, suspecting that the United States was plotting a coup in Saigon, began in the summer of 1963 to threaten the Americans with what we now call "Vietnamization." Among the sinister gambits allegedly considered were (1) a deal with Hanoi, (2) telling the Americans to go home, and (3) calling for great-power neutralization of the whole of Indochina (patterned on the Laos model of 1962).

Hilsman projected 11 possible Diem-Nhu moves and suggested what contingency plans should be evolved to deal with each. Our concern here is with four of those moves:

"Diem-Nhu Move: Severance of all aid ties with the U. S., ouster of all U. S. personnel (except for a limited diplomatic staff), and demand for the removal of all U. S.-controlled military equipment in Vietnam.

"U. S. Response: (a) We should stall in removing U. S. personnel and equipment from Vietnam. This move by [Saigon] would again, however, underscore the necessity for speed in our counteraction. (b) If Diem-Nhu move to seize U. S.-controlled equipment, we should resist by all necessary force.

"Diem-Nhu Move: Political move toward [Hanoi] (such as opening of neutralization negotiations), or rumors and  
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indirect threats of such a move.

"U. S. Response: (a) Ambassador Lodge should give Diem a firm warning of the dangers of such a course, and point out its continued pursuit will lead to cessation of U. S. aid. (b) Encourage the generals to move promptly with a coup. (c) We should publicize to the world . . . any threats or move by Diem or Nhu toward [Hanoi] in order to show the two-edged game they are playing and help justify publicly our counteractions. (d) If [Hanoi] threatens to respond to an anti-Diem coup by sending troops openly to South Vietnam, we should let it [Hanoi] know unequivocally that we shall hit [Hanoi] with all that is necessary to force it to desist. (e) We should be prepared to take such military action.

"Diem-Nhu Move: Appeal to de Gaulle for political support for neutralization of Vietnam.

"U. S. Response: (a) We should point out publicly that Vietnam cannot be effectively neutralized unless the Communists are removed from control of North Vietnam. If a coalition between Diem and the Communists is suggested, we should reply that this would be the avenue to a Communist takeover in view of the relative strength of the two principals in the coalition. Once an anti-Diem coup is





**BENDING AN ERA:** Like a good White House Special Consultant, author Roche tries to influence Lyndon Johnson on a point in early 1967. "Several chroniclers have said that no one dared challenge Johnson on his Vietnam policies. Translated, this means: 'I didn't dare argue with him because he might have fired me.'"

started in South Vietnam, we can point to the obvious refusal of South Vietnam to accept a Diem-Communist coalition.

**Diem-Nhu Move:** Continuation of hostilities in Saigon as long as possible in the hope that the U. S. may weaken because of the bloodbath which may involve U. S. personnel.

**U. S. Response:** (a) We should maintain our sangfroid and encourage the coup forces to continue the fight to the extent necessary. (b) We should seek to bring officers loyal to Diem over to our side. . . . We should encourage the coup group [to cut off Diem's supplies]. (d) We should make full use of any U. S. equipment available in Vietnam to assist the coup group. (e) If necessary, we should bring in U. S. combat forces to assist the coup group to achieve victory."

Without laboring the obvious, Hilsman's definition of a "political solution" seems to have altered rather radically between August, 1963, when he composed this bellicose memo, and February, 1964, when he sensed a "military solution" in the offing and resigned. I might add that the key to any "political solution" in Indochina back in 1962-65 was "neutralization," along the lines of the Geneva Agreement on Laos. Thus Hilsman's view of neutralization, as expressed in the foregoing, is

particularly pertinent. By 1963 standards, Hilsman made Dean Rusk sound like a pacifist.

**T**HERE is one final problem of instant history that deserves brief analysis. That is the fact that at different periods in time people are asking different questions. The dispute over the Tonkin Gulf Resolution is a classic example of this kind of shift. In 1964, when the President asked Congress for a functional declaration of war (which is what the resolution was), the Senators who held hearings asked Secretary McNamara what Hanoi's torpedo boats were trying to do to us? The hearings were heavily censored, but if one meshes them with those held by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1968, the story becomes crystal clear: The American destroyers knew the North Vietnamese torpedo boats were out to get them because Hanoi's orders to its task force had been intercepted.

The reason for the excessive censorship escapes me—anyone with a fifth-grade education (here or in Hanoi) could figure out the main lines of the argument from the allusions in the uncensored portion of the report on the hearings. (Besides which I

was told by a high Vietnamese official that the orders were transmitted *in clear*, i.e., they were not coded.) At any rate, in 1964 the Congress asked "What were they doing to us?" and the Administration, with documents, indicated they planned to sink us. Congressmen and Senators generally take a dim view of foreign warships trying to sink our destroyers; the President wanted to lay it on the line to Hanoi for deterrent purposes; the result: the Tonkin Gulf Resolution.

Unfortunately nobody cheers when deterrence works, but when it fails the trouble begins. And as the American people became increasingly infuriated with the war, their elected representatives began searching for protective cover. The simplest form of cover is the ancient slogan, "We were tricked!"—and out it came. One of the problems of being President is that you have no place to hide, no excuse when things get tough. As Kennedy said after the Bay of Pigs, "Success has a thousand fathers, but failure is an orphan."

Since President Johnson pulled a copy of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution out of his pocket every time a Congressman or Senator complained about the war—I suspect he kept one in his pajama pock-

ets—the Senators set out to undermine its validity. Now, instead of asking what the North Vietnamese PT-boats were trying to do, they asked a different and nastier question: How successful were they? In other words, the intention of the boats was at issue in 1964, their effectiveness in 1968. Manifestly they were unsuccessful—that had been apparent back in 1964—but now their lack of success became proof that the whole affair had been blown up out of all reasonable proportion simply to trick Congress.

Now this gets the analyst into a complex problem. Clearly the President, recalling Harry Truman's Congressional difficulties over Korea, wanted to mass the Congress, and the nation. If the Tonkin Gulf Resolution had worked (as the Formosa Strait one did), we would have a different world about us. But it didn't, and the hard fact is we all (with a handful of exceptions) tricked ourselves.

So, farewell to instant history and God help the poor souls who try to put the jigsaw puzzle together when all the precincts have reported. As for me, I'm going to write it as I saw and believed it—but with a candid admission that any resemblance to events as they in fact occurred may be coincidental. ■