

President Has a Coming Out

Nixon Discarding 'Isolation' Tag in 2d Term

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Richard Nixon, emerging from the privacy and "splendid isolation" of his presidency, has become a more public President than ever before.

In the first month of his second term Mr. Nixon has once again confounded his critics, many of whom have repeatedly accused him of hiding out in the White House and remaining deliberately aloof from Congress, the public and the press.

While performing the duties of the presidency from his separate White Houses in Washington, Key Biscayne and San Clemente during the past weeks, Mr. Nixon has been anything but aloof. He has met several times with congressmen, conducted one of his rare press conferences, revealed a U.S.-Cuba hijacking agreement in casual conversation with reporters, talked freely on the sidewalk after attending church services in Capistrano Beach, Calif.,

and wandered through Lafayette park for a Valentine Eve's dinner at Trader Vic's.

Leaving the restaurant, he said to a group of people who were drinking mai tais, "they're lethal."

Arriving Friday in Key Biscayne, he posed with his pilot, William Shaw, who is leaving to work for IBM and

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told him, "Well, good luck. Get a stock option."

Three weeks ago, chatting with Rev. John A. Huffman Jr. after the minister had delivered a sermon at a Nixon-proclaimed service marking the end of the war, the President thanked him and suggested that Huffman "write a speech for me sometime."

"Make it a short one," Mr. Nixon added.

It is remarks such as these which confirm a notion prevalent among even some of Mr. Nixon's most loyal aides that the President is better suited to large decisions than to small talk.

But the President, in his present outgoing mood, seems cheerfully unconcerned about his historic difficulty in achieving the light touch.

There seem to be touches of the late Lyndon Johnson about him as he charges across the country, visits with his daughters, waves happily to strangers and frequently changes his plans. It might have been Lyndon Johnson in the White House rose garden last week, kidding NATO Ambassador Donald Rumsfeld about his cuffless trousers and then revealing the U.S.-Cuba hijacking agreement which Secretary of State William Rogers had planned to disclose in a formal announcement.

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EMERGE, From A1

And there was a Johnsonian touch, too, in Mr. Nixon's mid-week radio message on the environment, when he declared that we are "well on the way to winning the war against environmental degradation."

Like Mr. Johnson and many other public Presidents before him, the mercurial Nixon has taken full advantage of his coming out to make serious points that invariably receive widespread news coverage. In Mr. Nixon's case the issues have included international and domestic economic policy, world peace, and the returning prisoners of war.

Mr. Nixon has missed no opportunity to express his gratitude to the prisoners and their families and to describe the Vietnam settlement as "peace with honor" and "getting out of Vietnam the right way."

In Quest of Gratitude

It is the constancy of this "peace with honor" refrain which has caused some White House-watchers to view the entire emergence of Mr. Nixon as a carefully planned attempt to obtain gratitude for ending the war. While his aides say, even privately, that they cannot speak for the President they are quick to add that neither the Democratic opposition in the Senate nor the President's critics in the media have given Mr. Nixon sufficient credit for the Vietnam agreement.

"We don't expect outpourings of gratitude," says one aide. "We'd just like to see some credit where credit is due."

Others credit the President's new found publicness to a desire, also typical of Mr. Johnson, to show up those critics who have accused him of over-isolation and secretiveness. Columnist Joseph Alsop, a frequent advocate of administration policies, predicted on the morning of Mr. Nixon's then-unannounced press

conference that the President would become a much more public figure.

Both of these explanations or any combination of them, in the view of White House staffers, offer an incomplete picture of what is happening.

Various aides maintain that the glimpses of himself which Mr. Nixon is now the "real Nixon" for better than the stories about his showing to the public reflect isolation.

"He's ebullient, he's happy about the prisoners and the peace and he's expressing himself," said one aide. "There is no big calculated strategy to all of this. It's just the way he feels."

This same aide readily concedes that there was a large amount of calculation as to Mr. Nixon's privateness during most of 1972. He lists what he considers a necessity for secrecy prior to the Chinese and Soviet trips, during the election campaign and during the continuing Vietnam negotiations after Mr. Nixon was re-elected.

No McGovern Dialogue

White House staffers always give the election lesser weight than the international negotiations but there is little question that domestic politics had much to do with the infrequency of Mr. Nixon's appearances in 1972. Campaign strategists at the Committee for the Re-election of the President unflinchingly pointed out in the summer and fall of 1972 that the President had no intention of getting into a public dialogue with Sen. George McGovern. Mr. Nixon's policy of privacy reinforced this strategy.

After the election Mr. Nixon believed—and repeatedly stated—that it would be unwise for him to make public statements or engage in broadscale congressional consultation until the peace agreement was signed. This view was reinforced when

Sen. Frank Moss of Utah came out of one meeting and said that the President was "pessimistic about achieving a settlement."

What Mr. Nixon had actually said, according to his own spokesman, was that he was "neither pessimistic nor optimistic" and this was reported in the press along with the senator's statement. But the incident confirmed the President's view that he should keep the negotiations closely held.

"It was the privacy that was calculated, not the President's current publicness," says one aide in discussing the President's post-election conduct.

Since international crises recur periodically, this explanation suggests that the "public Nixon" may revert to the "private Nixon" whenever he feels a situation warrants his isolation. It suggests also that the President, and the President alone, has the right to determine when he should go fourth publicly and when he should become a private person.

But for the time being, at least, Mr. Nixon seems embarked on a course that will shatter the depiction of him as a hermit walled up in the White House.

Aides predict several press conferences in the months ahead frequent public appearances and more working vacations in San Clemente and Key Biscayne.

Mr. Nixon, himself, has never shown much use for the popular view that a President is both isolated and personally imprisoned by the great power of his office.

"That's a lot of nonsense that the presidency is the loneliest job in the world," Mr. Nixon said in a New Year's Eve meeting with four reporters on Dec. 31, 1970.

Seems Sure of Self

The President seemed sure of himself on the occa-

sion of this martini-mixing session, and he seems sure of himself now. One sign is his smile, which is full and steady and flashes frequently.

The smile has always been a good guide to Mr. Nixon's mood, and reporter John Osborne in "The Nixon Watch" used it as reflection of a positive change in the President the week after his first inauguration.

"The appalling, on-order smile that had been seen so often during campaign, the upward twitch followed on the instant by a return to the usual sullen set of the mouth had been replaced, at least for the week of accession, by a slower and steadier smile," Osborne wrote. "It was a believable smile again these days, and he is bestowing it lavishly."

"He's a happy man now and with good reason," says one close aide. "He really enjoys being President."



Associated Press

President Nixon reaches over car hood to shake hands with group of greeters in Jacksonville, Fla.