

JE PA 2/28

Affairs of State, by Stewart Alsop

The Johnsonization of Washington

WASHINGTON:

The departure of Presidential Assistant McGeorge Bundy from the White House marks the final stage in a process that has been going on for more than two years. This process is the Johnsonization of Washington.

The replacement of Kennedy men by Johnson men has been, of course, an inevitable part of the Johnsonization of Washington. Every President wants and needs his own men around him—when Harry Truman inherited the presidency from Franklin Roosevelt, Truman men replaced Roosevelt men within a matter of months, not years. Moreover, there is nothing at all surprising about the fact that the White House is now filled with Texans—in John Kennedy's day, after all, it was filled with the Massachusetts Irish.

But the Johnsonization of Washington is far more than the old familiar game of musical chairs. It is also a basic change in presidential style and presidential method. McGeorge Bundy's departure is the highly appropriate symbol of the change. For Bundy is both an intellectual and a member of the Eastern Establishment, and his departure marks the eclipse of the influence of both intellectuals and Establishmentarians in Lyndon Johnson's Washington.

An Establishmentarian may be defined as a person with an Eastern, classical-liberal education, moderate-liberal political views, who is rich enough not to worry about money and is strongly imbued with the notion that "public office is a public trust." The Eastern Establishment has contributed its share of pompous asses to the Washington scene. But it has also contributed more than its share of great public servants, of the stripe of Robert Patterson, James Forrestal, Robert Lovett, Dean Acheson, John McCloy, Christian Herter, Allen Dulles and Averell Harriman.

John F. Kennedy was an Establishmentarian of sorts himself, and the Establishment (along with the Massachusetts Irish, big-city pols and liberal-intellectuals) carried much weight in Kennedy's Washington. In Johnson's Washington, Averell Harriman, like the last brave leaf on the tree, still functions ably if sporadically, and there are other surviving members of the Establishment in subordinate positions, like Secretary of the Navy Paul Nitze and Assistant Secretary of State William Bundy.

But such top-level Establishmentarians as former Secretary of the Treasury Douglas

Dillon and McGeorge Bundy have vanished from the scene; and more important, in Johnson's Washington the voice of the Establishment is no longer loud and commanding. The fact is that Lyndon Johnson is not really comfortable with Establishmentarians, as suggested by his reported remark to a group of newspapermen at the LBJ ranch some months before Bundy's resignation was accepted: "Bundy—an Eastern snob but indispensable. Well, almost indispensable."

Lyndon Johnson has almost as much an inherited and regional distrust of the East as Barry Goldwater. And the feeling of distrust and discomfort is reciprocated by the intellectuals (who tend to be Easterners) as well as by the Eastern Establishment.

The egghead exodus from Johnson's Washington began almost immediately after John Kennedy's death, with Arthur Schlesinger and Kenneth Galbraith leading the pack. Late last year, Richard Goodwin, the most important of the surviving White House intellectuals (except for McGeorge Bundy himself), took his leave, and there has been a steady continuing exodus of Kennedy intellectuals, like Carl Kaysen, Adam Yarmolinsky and Daniel Moynihan. All three, significantly, have joined or will join the Kennedy Institute, which rather strongly suggests that they will be available for future political forays by Robert Kennedy.

Again, there is a last brave leaf on the tree, in the person of Walt Rostow, chairman of the State Department's Policy Planning Council. And of course there are able and intelligent Johnson staff men who might be classed as Johnson intellectuals, like Bill Moyers, Douglass Cater and Eric Goldman.

Nevertheless, the change is real and basic, and it derives very largely from the President's way of dealing with his subordinates. Take, for example, the way the Johnson White House now operates.

White House staff members are treated rather like the inmates of a toughly administered boys' school, with Marvin Watson, the conservative Texan, occupying the position of headmaster. Until recently all incoming telephone calls were monitored and White House chauffeurs reported to Watson all movements of White House personnel.

This sort of thing is supposedly in the name of "economy" and "efficiency," but it is not at all surprising that to free-wheeling intellectuals

of the Kennedy type, or prideful Establishmentarians, it looks a lot more like Orwellian surveillance. In fact, a candid memorandum from McGeorge Bundy to the President, protesting the surveillance as an insulting invasion of privacy, may have had a good deal to do with the acceptance of Bundy's resignation.

The President's passion to know everything and to control everything, which is one of his most marked characteristics, makes him an immensely difficult man to work for, which surely accounts in part for the bleeding ulcer of the ablest of his aides, Bill Moyers. But for the kind of intellectual who likes to speak his mind, or the Establishmentarian who is accustomed to unquestioned personal independence, Johnson is a virtually impossible man to work for.

Even Lyndon Johnson cannot control the whole enormous Federal Government; and in the outlying departments, independent-minded men do not feel the same degree of presidential pressure as the inmates of the White House. Even so, no President in history has ever managed to make his presence so pervasively felt. "I know it's just my imagination," says a middle-level bureaucrat-intellectual, "but I have the feeling that the President is always just behind me, breathing down my neck."

Never, not even in Franklin Roosevelt's day, has a President so utterly dominated the Washington scene. This Johnsonization of Washington, it should be said in fairness, is not simply an expression of the Johnsonian ego. It is an expression, rather, of the President's passionate desire to succeed, to serve his country, to be a great President.

Moreover, he himself is perfectly aware of the dangerously insulating effect of the presidential office—he has even assigned Under Secretary of State George Ball to be a sort of unofficial no-man, to argue against Administration foreign policy. But there are a lot of worried admirers of President Johnson in Washington, all the same. The chief virtue in government by both intellectuals and Establishmentarians is that they are, almost by definition, men of independent mind. With both species rapidly disappearing from Johnson's Washington, the ultimate effect of the Johnsonization of Washington could be a government-by-toady. It is hard to imagine a surer recipe for disaster.

Stewart Allen



McGeorge Bundy