

**F**OR LARGE NUMBERS of President Nixon's friends, the successive shocks of the past two years have brought the awful realization that of all Mr. Nixon's enemies, in many ways his worst enemy is something inside himself.

The question of how to save him from this arch-foe, and thus save his presidency and much else of value to America and the world, has increasingly crowded out all other concerns for many of the President's staff and associates. It has presented each one with agonizing choices which completely explode the old standard of participatory citizenship—the standard many of us at the White House used to think meant no more than giving our all to help the President do whatever he wanted done.

"Cast your whole vote," Thoreau once said, "not a strip of paper merely, but your whole influence." For some, like me, casting a whole vote has ultimately meant voting with their feet—leaving the government to try for better purchase on the problem from the outside, after efforts to effect change on the inside proved futile. For others, many of them patriots of the highest principle, it has meant what may be an even harder decision: the resolve to stay with the ship long after they've lost all stomach for it, pressing their convictions on the President with an impertunity verging on insubordination, using what access and persuasion they can to ally with the better angels of his nature in driving out the demons.

But for all, it has been a time of greater testing than any of us had ever experienced before.

### Learning About Politics

**F**OR ME, the test began in 1969, when I came out of the Navy at 25 hoping for employment with William Buckley's National Review. Instead, Ron Ziegler, with an assist from John Ehrlichman, brought me on as a White House press aide. Within a few months the unenthusiastic Nixon voter of 1968 had become a convert, convinced that "RN" would one day overshadow even FDR among the modern greats. It was my first job.

Then came 1972.

In January the President announced for reelection.

In February he went to China, in the diplomatic masterstroke of the century. A speechwriter now, I stayed home but glowed at the sound of an occasional phrase of mine, broadcast back halfway around the world from the Great Hall of the People.

In March, a few days after a phony letter-to-the-editor had reduced the President's principal Democratic challenger to tears on the hustings in New Hampshire, Sen. Muskie limped home a disappointingly narrow winner in the year's first primary; his campaign never recovered. Well, I thought, that's politics.

# Nixon's

# Last

# Chance

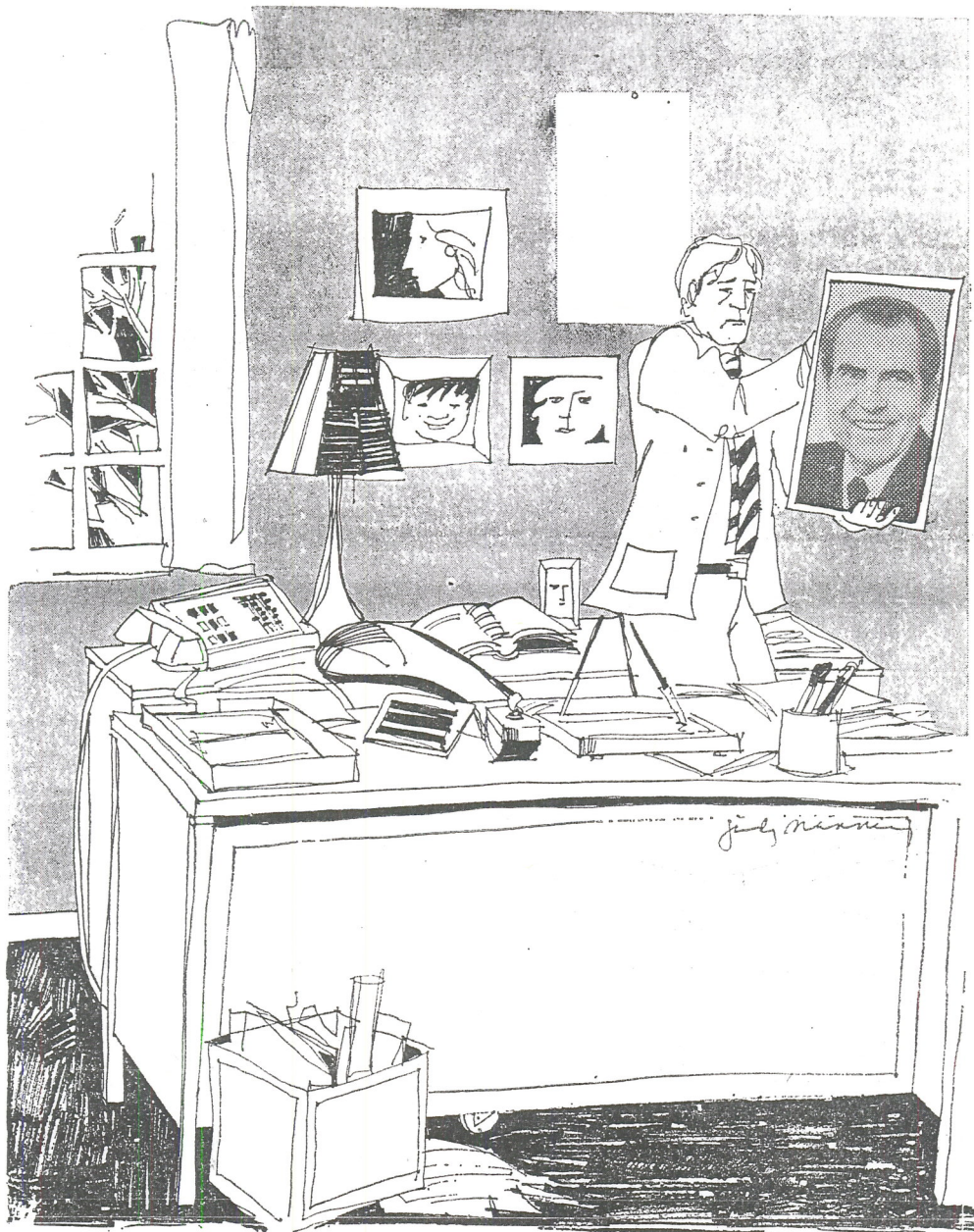
*By John K. Andrews Jr.*

*Andrews resigned last month as a presidential speechwriter after four years on the White House staff.*

*Post  
1/20/74*

In April I helped with the President's TV address on Hanoi's Easter offensive. I was told the speech must impress the Soviets and Chinese with Mr. Nixon's desire to stand by principle, regardless of political consequences. "I want them to know I don't give a s—about the election," the President growled. Wow, I thought, that's statesmanship.

In May the President went to Moscow. There in the Kremlin the Cold War was buried, or so it then seemed, and historic first steps were taken to muzzle the Bomb. It was the biggest breakthrough for peace in most Americans' lifetimes. I was along, wide-eyed but in the thick of it. While we were away, wiremen from the Nixon campaign burgled the Democratic Party's Watergate headquarters.



By Judy Manning for The Washington Post

In June the wiremen burgled again, but this time they taped one door too many. When it hit the papers, I was puzzled at the tepid reaction of Messrs. Ziegler, Nixon and Mitchell, law and order apostles all; I chalked it up to my own political naivete.

In July the President became a shoo-in for reelection when George McGovern copped the Democratic nomination. Also in July I reported to John Dean (counsel's reaction strangely patronizing and perfunctory) a tip I'd gotten about perjury by someone over at the Re-election Committee. I didn't worry much; I felt sure my superiors knew best.

In August the President sequestered himself at Camp David to write his acceptance

speech, then flew to Miami to be triumphantly renominated. Mr. Nixon told the convention delegates that he was sure, as he had been four years earlier, that Spiro Agnew was the very best available for Vice President. A few days later he told reporters the White House was totally clean on Watergate, this assurance having reached him third-hand from house dick Dean, with whom he'd never spoken on the matter.

In September the Watergate Seven were indicted. The President, according to testimony, again did not ask the fatal query—"Who else?"—of father-figure John Mitchell, just as he had not asked it in the months before and would not in those to come

In October, as the rising tide of investiga-

tive reporting lapped into the West Wing corridors, the President's astute campaign toured serenely, while I worked at my typewriter in the back of the plane. Things were peaking beautifully. Vietnam peace was "at hand," the once-anemic economy was robust, and revenue sharing, crown jewel of the New Federalism, became law. On the plane and across the 50 states it was clear: This President really did have the stuff of greatness, and he would eclipse even the Johnson and Roosevelt landslides.

Back in the West Wing, I told my old friend the press secretary that the White House briefings on Dwight Chapin and Donald Segretti stank of lies; the press secretary said I would understand when I got older. But no one around the White House and the EOB had trouble working up a good head of righteous indignation at McGovern's charge that this was the most corrupt administration in U.S. history.

In November, on election night, the President touted his new term as the best four years in our history, a time to earn the benediction "God bless America." But next morning the word went out to his top 2,000 foot soldiers in the executive branch—nothing about gratitude for the first-term job or the big win, just blanket resignations and hold your breath while he weighed your fate at Camp David. Then came a magnanimity-in-victory interview, Nixon style: "The average American is like a child in the family." The uneasy millions hoping for reassurance on Watergate through some exercise in presidential candor, now that the political hurdle was behind, still had 12 full months to wait for even a promise of candor, longer than that for the genuine article.

In December, as the coverup timebomb ticked on in Washington, Stratofortresses ferried smart bombs to Hanoi. It took guts, and it worked—but was there no way to ease Americans' holiday anxiety and still play good diplomatic poker? On April 30 the President was to call this period "my (first person singular!) terrible personal ordeal."

### Calm at the Center

**T**HE AUGURIES for 1973 looked grim to me, but the new year began auspiciously enough, with January's Paris peace agreement. A sigh of relief from the world, and well-merited kudos to Nixon and Kissinger. January was also the month Mr. Nixon reached 60, but no new mellowness was in evidence. "Ask not just what government will do for me, but what can I do for myself," he exhorted in a hard-line inaugural, jabbing gratuitously at a rival already 10 years in the grave. Only much later would Americans learn just how much he and his clever lawyers and tax men had done for himself.

## NIXON, From Page C1

Near the end of January, when appointments secretary Chapin quietly resigned to relieve the President of the embarrassment Chapin's campaign dirty-tricks role had created, I was put to work on statements of aggrieved denial which Mr. Nixon and Halde- man could issue to refute any such interpretation of the resignation. Finally someone blushed at the project's transparent mendacity and turned it off; but the President had missed another opportunity for manful candor and only narrowly averted a flat lie.

In February the Senate created a select committee to poke around in what most people assumed were the dead ashes of Watergate. Mr. Nixon and Dean began to work more closely, their every meeting (unless one of them is now lying) apparently a classic of double entendre. The "little Sony" whirred away in the President's desk drawer.

In March everything started hitting the fan. Your plumbers knocked off a shrink's office in L.A., the President was told; reaction nil. Jim McCord wrote the judge a letter. I implored John Ehrlichman to implore the Boss to act: "Either the President's friends go—Mitchell, Stans, Chapin—or he does." "He's well aware of that," was the testy reply from Ehrlichman, a presidential friend in his own right. The last of the POWs came home, hailing as a hero the commander-in-chief who had brought them out on their feet instead of their knees.

In April, no one could believe that the man who had spiked the Checkers scandal in a matter of days was still just sitting there and letting this one ravage him as week on week of shocks rocked the capital. Now growing distraught, I chucked the chain of command and began drumming on Ehrlichman, Kissinger, Ziegler: In God's name please use your influence. Finally, on the night of the President's cryptic April 17 "new developments" announcement, I confronted him in a receiving line: Good performance today, sir. Very heartening. Hope you pour it on. At which the President drew a blank: What performance? Guest singer Sinatra had driven Waterwhatchacallit right out of his consciousness. Was it possible, I wondered, that Mr. Nixon did not realize his very survival in office might be at stake?

### To Tell the Truth

IN MAY, the morning after his April 30 non-explanation and non-apology, the President turned briskly back to "the business of the people." Three weeks later he non-explained some more and turned back yet again. It was during this month that my heart began telling me what my mind did not want to believe: that, whether through negligence or criminality, the highest office now stood shamed and profaned, and that true honor dictated resignation for the man under whose stewardship all this had hap-

pened. But I knew how unrealistic any such chivalrous standard must be in these cynical times and for this proud man, and so I tried to hope instead that Mr. Nixon could still somehow tel. all the truth and emerge ennobled by the ordeal.

In June Leonid Brezhnev came to Washington and San Clemente—more structural steel for that magnificent edifice of peace. In June also, John Dean took the witness stand. I found Ziegler and Haig exulting together at the close of Dean's first day. "You're optimistic?" I asked. The chief of staff: "Hell, yes, we're optimistic." Ehrlichman was long departed, but the inner circle still did not see in summer, as he had not in spring, that the burden of proof had fatally shifted off the President's accusers and onto his defenders.

In July the President's men began to learn that his Berlin Wall had not been razed, merely given two new faces: Ziegler and Haig. I sent the President a memo suggesting he drop the guilty-seeming, fugitive demeanor and at least acknowledge the Watergate problem in logical context, such as the upcoming swearing-in of a new FBI director; the document was shortstopped. "That idea would drive him up the wall," explained Gen. Haig. Trying to become enthusiastic about rehabilitating (as opposed to removing) Mr. Nixon, I began to sense that both courses were being rejected in favor of a middle way: sullen standpattism. Would the man not move to save himself and all he had done and could yet do for America? Not to at least try seemed, in itself, a grave offense against the public good.

### Hope and Frustration

IN AUGUST the Agnew nightmare burst onstage. Lord, how that one hurt—doubly so, for besides the Veep's own tragedy there was the added, grimly ironic realization that any presidential exit via resignation with honor was now blocked for the nonce.

But even there in the dog-days of summer, new hope stirred. I got my oar in on writing the rebuttal to the San Clemente spending allegations, and took heart as I saw what a bad rap had been laid on the President there. Maybe all of the other charges and suspicions were equally baseless. I plunged ahead into the Aug. 15 white paper project—only to see the lengthy, detailed, convincingly exculpatory early drafts fall aside before the Nixon "vault mentality," leaving only a pitiful little "gray paper" for final release.

The frank admissions of error I had written into a suggested text for the President's Aug. 15 speech also went nowhere. "Mea culpa" was this summer's no-no word in the West Wing, and the vast reservoir of public sympathy and forgiveness which John F. Kennedy had exploited with just such a confessional after the Bay of Pigs remained untapped by Mr. Nixon.

Fall came on. The virtuoso press confer-

ence of Aug. 22 gave Mr. Nixon the momentum his unconvincing speech of a week before had failed to give. But in September the barnstorming campaign that was to have sustained and consolidated the President's press conference gains never happened. The Nobel peace prize that should have been Mr. Nixon's went instead to his secretary of state; the President was warm and gracious about it with Henry. I and many of my colleagues wasted memo after memo pleading for openness on the tapes. The polls faltered again.

In October Agnew was whisked out, with never a word from his two-time ticket-mate to help a stunned nation fathom the meaning and lessons of it all. Wednesday's fallen titan became Friday's non-person, utterly ignored as the President staged a surrealistic gala to name his new VP. Who can forget those autumn weekends? The smoke on the

breeze was not burning leaves but gunpowder. The Friday following Ford's nomination brought a new high in presidential high-handedness against the judiciary, the legislature and the independent prosecution; the Friday after that, a new low in contempt for the same free press Mr. Nixon had told on April 30 to keep on giving him hell.

It was in October that, with great sadness, I came to see that — though other men and women of principle should surely continue to serve with Mr. Nixon while their own lights required it and while their own positions gave them leverage for good — John Andrews' usefulness at the White House was exhausted. The conclusion was inescapable: For me, at least, loyalty to the presidency now dictated a break with the President.

Early in November I prepared to resign with a public statement calling on the President to seek speedy justice through impeachment or resign. Friends dissuaded me: Go if you must, but first take your feelings and recommendations to the President in private. The chief of staff and the press secretary said they could arrange it; but the confrontation looked unpleasant to the President, and he stalled.

Meanwhile Operation Candor lurched fitfully forward, its most humanly winning hour the gamecock President in the pit with the editors at Orlando, but its most riveting exhibit at an 18-minute, two-tone, tape-recorded hum. On the last day of the month, plumbers' chief Bud Krogh raised a new standard of moral responsibility and gave a weary nation some small solace, when he changed to a guilty plea on the Ellsberg break-in out of his conviction that a strict adherence to the hallowed Bill of Rights is more important than a strained interpretation of the much-traduced shibboleth "national security." At the White House, I was still flying in a holding pattern.

In December I decided to take the hint

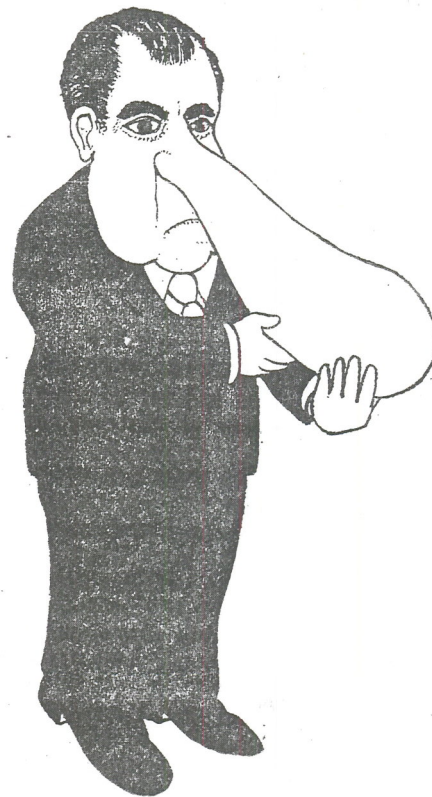
and resign, meeting or no. On the eve of going public as I had planned to do a month before, I was dissuaded yet again: Can you in conscience take this position of trust Richard Nixon has given you and turn it into a platform from which to attack him? No—no, I saw how wrong that would be.

Better a quiet, civil, cheerful leavetaking — the only fitting close, I saw after much anguish, to a chapter of my life I would always treasure, with men and women I would always respect. Better to accept the sop of a two-minute farewell call with my family in the Oval Office instead of the substantive meeting I'd appealed for, to send my staff colleagues an upbeat goodbye note, to put my sorrow and my pleas for change into a confidential memo to the President rather than an emotional statement to reporters. There would be time enough to speak out once I was a private citizen again, if circumstances still seemed to demand it.

So it was that on Dec. 7, 1973, four years to the day after Ziegler had told me I was hired, I left the President's service.

### Survival With Honor

"IT'S LIKE the Titanic," a member of the White House staff said to me of the President's prospects, at a Christmas party a few days after my resignation. This was one of the old guard speaking, a savvy Washington hand as loyal to the President personally, politically and ideologically as any Nixon loyalist can be these days. He had surfaced that evening after days of immersion in the Oval Office tapes on Watergate, and he was



emphatic that most of what the recordings contained looked good for Mr. Nixon. Yet he stuck to the sinking-ship metaphor: "When the iceberg hit, passengers up on deck barely felt the ship shudder. But down below, the damage control men computed the flooding rate, consulted their charts, and told the captain never mind how good things look now—she's going down."

For too many months, he said, the White House had been lying, weaseling, dodging, evading to a public which would have forgiven the President—maybe even taken him closer to their hearts—had he only decided to face the music and tell the hard truth way back in April. Not to tell the truth about presidential crimes, he added, for there had been none—but at least to meet his mistakes head on, to go on the tube and say, "We blew one, and here's how it happened, and here's how I'm gonna make it up to you."

Now it was too late, though, the loyalist argued resignedly. As in classic tragedy, the protagonist's own character flaws had broken out of control under stress: now they were pulling him down in ruins, and what could anyone do to stop it?

Somehow I can't quite buy so flat a prediction that Richard Nixon will not make it to the end of his term. My admiration and, yes, affection for this man remain, like the man himself, battered but unbowed. I want him to survive, to survive with honor, and I believe he still can.

Granted that the burden of proving his fitness to continue in the White House now rests very clearly with Mr. Nixon. Quite apart from the technical determinations of various individuals' guilt or innocence that might be made in a court of law or an impeachment trial, grave wrongs have indisputably been perpetrated against the American people during the past several years under this President's leadership.

National security has been made a justification for trampling individual liberties and constitutional procedures. Elaborate schemes have been launched to tilt the balance of fair competition in our system of free elections. The workings of justice have been cynically obstructed by officials sworn to protect them. The financial affairs of the chief of state of the mightiest nation on earth have been tainted with grubby techniques out of the repertory of the shell-game artist and the green-eyeshade land dealer.

Yet the fact that whatever grounds Congress may find for Mr. Nixon's removal are more likely to be political and ethical in nature than criminal presents certain valuable opportunities to the President.

Since judgment is to be passed not in matters of black and white but in a gray area, the President stands a chance of redemption, compassion and forgiveness at the hands of the people (and hence a chance of reprieve, however grudging, from the people's representatives) if only he would begin moving now to earn that verdict. The pat-

tern of events, in other words, need not follow the inevitable denouement of Greek tragedy after all, but might be reshaped to another model from antiquity — that of Hebrew-Christian epiphany, wherein a lost soul like a Jacob or a Saul of Tarsus undergoes a divine transformation of his character and arises renamed and redeemed.

### A Plan for Change

"MOST PEOPLE don't much care any more what Nixon does," a Cabinet undersecretary observed recently to a friend of mine. "It's what he is that they've gone sour on." But suppose that dramatic and visible changes began to be manifest in what the President is."

For some, of course, this would not be enough. They would call it hypocrisy, expediency, a deathbed conversion, a cynical veneer, only the newest of many new Nixons. But this is the element that defines justice (at least for their *bete noirs*, though not so readily for some other categories of offenders dearer to the liberal heart) as sheer retributive punishment, no quarter given.

For a solid majority of Americans, though — generous and forgiving people that we are, conscious of our own sins and shortcomings — I believe that a Nixonian show of contrition, of resolve to start fresh, of a new leaf in the new year, would be received with enormous good will and profound relief. The common man's common sense, after all, tells him that justice does not require the nation to decapitate itself simply for justice's sake, at least not when the alternative exists of helping a man back on his feet who has finally admitted he's down by his own doing.

"Do I have to undress in the press room?" the President is said to have asked the advisers who were cajoling and dragging him toward December's financial disclosures. Of course not. No one wants to grovel, and the President should not have to. When I speak of a new demeanor for Mr. Nixon in this crisis of integrity, I'm not thinking at all of his donning the sackcloth and ashes in another

of those set-piece TV speeches from which genuineness and intellectual honesty seem to be excluded almost by definition. Rather it should be possible for him to undertake a whole series of more substantive actions which would initiate a fundamental new style of leadership and communications for him and so convey the openness, the humble recognition of mistakes made, and the determination to correct those mistakes, which Americans have yearned for from him these many months:

\* Let him first of all meet with each of the four investigative bodies now concerned with presidential conduct — the House Judiciary Committee's impeachment panel, Sen. Ervin's Watergate committee, the joint committee that is studying the Nixons' tax returns, and Mr. Jaworski's Watergate grand juries.

The sessions could be held on the Presi-

on his own terms and turf — at the White House, where he himself set a precedent of sitting up "testifying" before the House and Senate committees about to take up the bill of reprimands in June, 1972. He might as well answer their questions under oath; what could promise to tell the truth could do more so than his twice-sworn presidential oath anyway? As long as the meetings were arranged voluntarily and at his initiative, no precedent of coerced testimony by the executive would be established.

Against the backdrop of this extraordinary action, the President would be in a commanding position to stand off unreasonable fishing expeditions by subpoena into White House files and tape archives — though in my view he should make public many of the papers and tapes voluntarily — and he would be justified in adding his powerful voice to those calling for a swift up or down on impeachment.

• Then let the President carry his case to the people, and acknowledge his errors and his plan for correcting them at every whistle-stop.

You can count on one hand the times since June, 1972, that he has brought up Watergate of his own accord before a live audience; the times he has acted genuinely contrite about it are fewer still. But now he must do it, now or never; he must barnstorm, fuel crisis or no, and show the rest of America the spirit he showed the editors at Orlando, plus a bit of becoming humility.

• Let him begin holding a regular press conference weekly or biweekly at the least, and promise to keep up that pace through 1978. And let him furlough the honest but spent Mr. Ziegler to a nice undersecretaryship or a corporate vice presidency somewhere, and bring in a nationally respected professional journalist as press secretary.

• Then let him unload the blanks about study commissions and start shooting some real ammo at the bad or nonexistent law which allowed the Watergate horrors. Let's have some tough proposals for congressional action on campaign spending reform, on election dirty tricks, on the meaning and maintenance of national security in its domestic context, on the right to privacy, on moral ethics for federal officeholders.

This kind of a blitz in January and February, conducted in a spirit indicating that the new man was sincere and would be sustained, could hardly fail to pull the teeth of the impeachment dragon and start the President on a steady climb back up in public confidence and esteem.

The trouble is that all these steps are obvious enough, have been for months, and outlining them here is only the merest fanfare in the absence of the simple but indispensable decision on Mr. Nixon's part to start being different. A change of heart, a break with the past, an awakening — call it

what you will, it must be an event as decisive as the one Paul experienced on the road to Damascus, though probably by no means comparable in terms of melodrama or religious content.

## Digging In

AT PRESENT, unfortunately, the odds seem to point to a rather mean and messy test of wills in the issue in 1974, instead of the happier resolution I would hope for. The President gives no sign of a dawning repentance and renewal; on the contrary, there are indications that he has given up hope of clearing himself in the eyes of the public and now hopes only to stave off impeachment or resignation — an attitude of *gotterdammerung* fatalism which White House rumors as long ago as August were suggesting he had adopted.

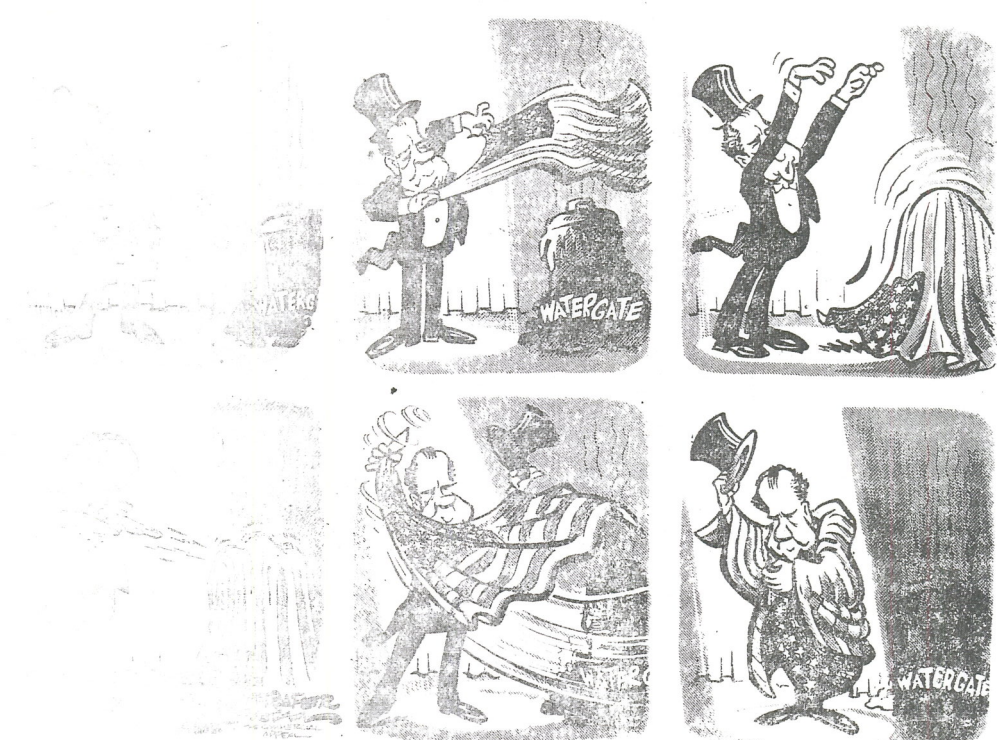
Only two factors that I can see might impel the President toward such a strategy — either an amoral disregard for the stature of character we have a right to expect from our leaders, or ugliest possibility of all, the actual presence of criminal culpability on his part.

In either case, it would be tragic for the strategy to be allowed to succeed — for him to cling to office by main force and cleverness, by exploiting the political avarice of his adversaries, the ambiguities in the law, the slack in the gears of the system, while this magnificent leadership position stood disgraced by him — stood, in moral terms, *vacant*—through 1976.

Far better to give over the reins of power to an honest, open, and workmanlike President Ford than to leave them clenched in the fists of a defiant and unrepentant Nixon, a Nixon who refuses to renounce the darker side of himself. If it comes to that once unthinkable and still abhorrent choice during the next several months, I believe the impeachment process lawfully can and properly should be used to make the needed change of leadership, and I hope half the House and two-thirds of the Senate will be able to find the courage to serve principle rather than personality or partisanship when the roll is called.

Most of all, though, I hope we can avert a showdown altogether. It takes a big man to stoop down and admit he has been wrong — but this Nixon can be a very big man. In all six of the crises that punctuated his public career before this one, he has shown elements of that bigness, elements unaccountably missing throughout the Watergate nightmare.

Where, for example, is the Nixon of 1960 today — the young Vice President who strictly policed his own partisans to prevent their playing on Kennedy's Catholicism; who refused Eisenhower's help till the final days before the election because of a secret plea from Mamie that Ike's doctors had said extensive campaigning might well kill him; who called a halt when investigative report-



Hill in The Commercial Appeal, Memphis

ers and suspicious officials seemed on the way to establishing that the Democrats had stolen the presidency from him, because he did not want to put the country through that wringer — where is that man now when we need him?

That Nixon, the one marked out for greatness, the one who in more recent years has worked near-miracles for peace and labored prodigiously to put the brakes on government centralization and paternalism, is still here somewhere, I believe — still inside the man inside the White House, cowering back in a corner behind the other Nixon who draws in and lashes back when attacked, cowering but surviving and capable of asserting itself again if only — when only — who can say?

**Impersonalizing Evil**

**N**O, THE PRESIDENT is not a crook— not a saint either. He's just a man like you or me — a patriot, a striver, a proud and stubborn cuss, introverted and shy, suicidally loyal to his friends, a middle American with all the good and bad that term implies — just a man trying the best he can, perhaps not quite large enough for the presidency, but then who among us really is?

Not one of his 36 predecessors, we are

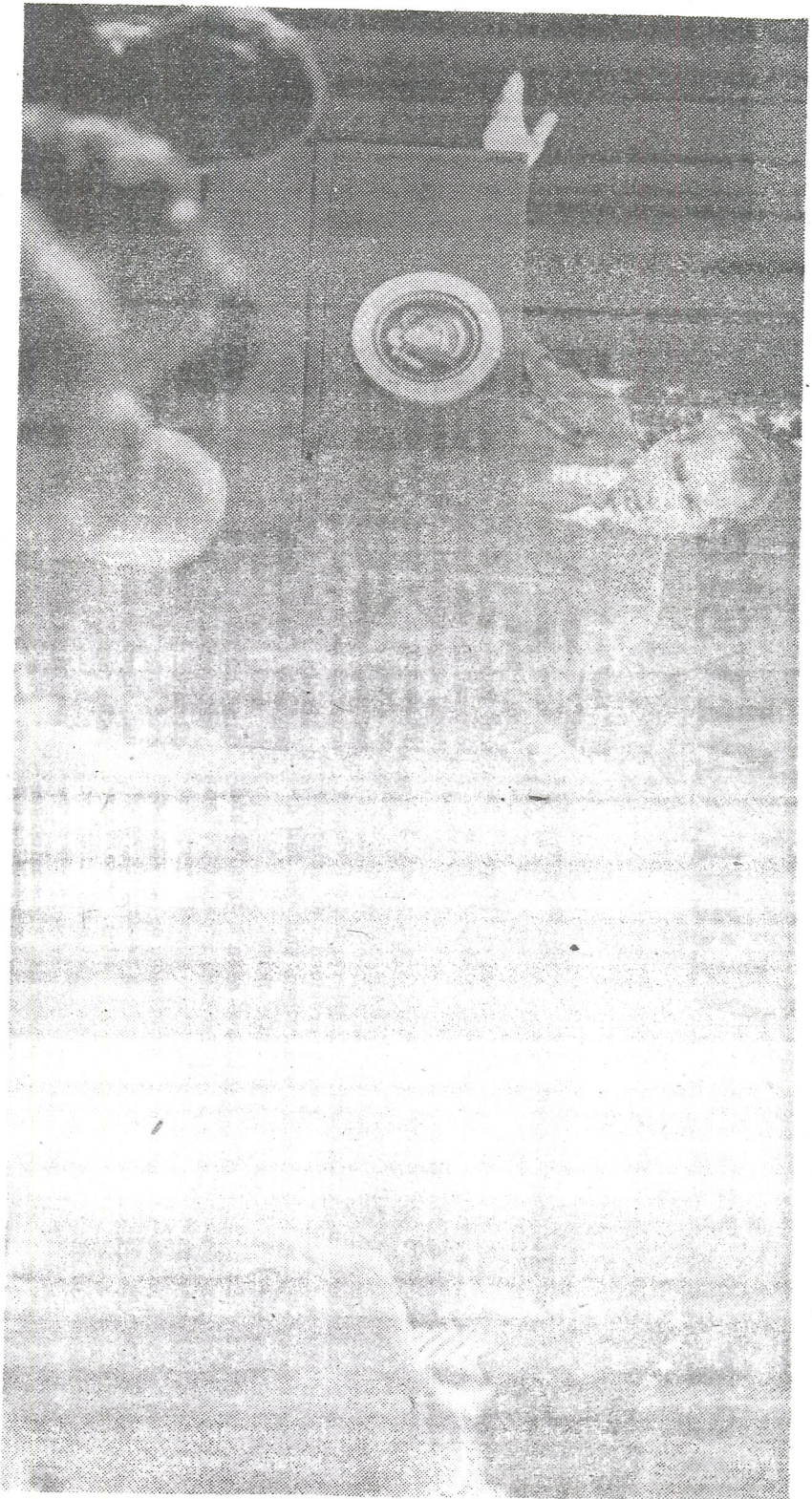
told, could have passed this microscopic moral scrutiny with any higher marks than he is getting. I am skeptical of that, but even if true it's really beside the point. At best it calls only for compassion in our personal verdict upon the man, not for tolerance of evils now uncovered, however ancient their precedent, or for half-measures in the remedies we apply. What is essential is that Mr. Nixon's successors must know that more is expected of them, and permissiveness in the current case will not achieve that.

Yet it is always possible to impersonalize evil. President Nixon still has it in his power, as he has had from the first, to separate himself from his mistakes. Only as he insists upon grappling them to his breast need he be dragged under with them.

My own wrestlings with the riddle of Nixon and Watergate bring me back again and again to St. Paul, who saw it all so clearly: "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against . . . spiritual wickedness in high places."

Americans can be more sure of winning this dark and costly battle for a higher standard of government if we target our fire more on that "spiritual wickedness" and less on the personalities which become its often unwitting tools.





*"He must do it, now or never: show America the spirit he showed the editors at Ontario, plus a bit of becoming humble."*

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